A GRADUÁLIS ÉS POSZTGRADUÁLIS KÉPZÉS folyóirata
Alapítva 1911-ben

2026. CI. évfolyam, 1. különszám

ORVOSKÉPZÉS 2026. CI. évfolyam, 1. különszám

ORVOS-KÉPZÉS

ORPHEUS CONFERENCE 2026

26th - 28th May

Sustainable Networks Through Interdisciplinary Partnerships

The Key to Quality Enhancements in Doctoral Education

orpheus
QUALITY IN DOCTORAL EDUCATION

DOCTORAL COLLEGE
SEMMELWEIS UNIVERSITY

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Nemzeti Kutatási, Fejlesztési és Innovációs Hivatal

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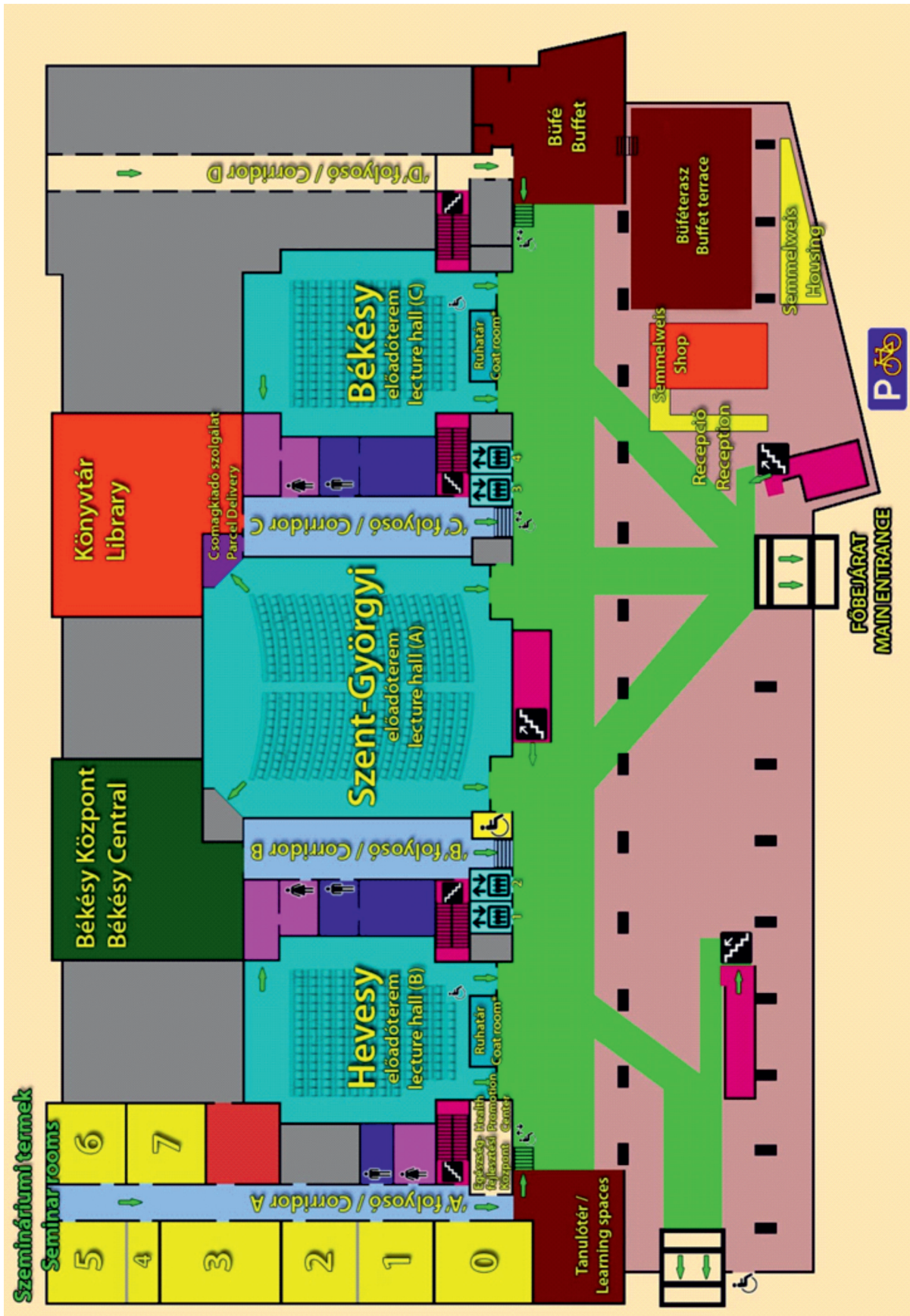
Orientation



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ORVOSKÉPZÉS
A graduális és posztgraduális képzés folyóirata
Alapítva 1911-ben
2026; CI. évfolyam, 1. szuppl.:1-80.
ORPHEUS KONFERENCIA, 2026

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The Organisation for PhD Education in Biomedicine and Health Sciences in the European System

ORPHEUS CONFERENCE 2026

Sustainable Networks Through Interdisciplinary Partnerships

26th – 28th May 2026

Budapest, Hungary

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

euniwell European University for Well-Being

GENERAL INFORMATION

ORGANIZER

Doctoral College, Semmelweis University
1085 Budapest, Üllői út 26. fsz. 9., Budapest, Hungary
https://semmelweis.hu/phd/en/

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VENUE

EOK Building, Semmelweis University
37-47 Tűzoltó street, 1094, Budapest

All information contained in this publication was correct at the time of closing on 12 May 2026.

DISCLAIMER: Neither the Orpheus nor the conference organizing committee takes responsibility for the content of published abstracts. No conflicts of interest were reported. Any mentioning of commercial products or brandnames is without any intent to promote that product or brand.

WELCOME MESSAGE

Dear Colleagues, Distinguished Guests, and Participants,

It is our great pleasure to welcome you to the ORPHEUS 2026 Conference, hosted by Semmelweis University in Budapest. Bringing together academic leaders, doctoral programme directors, supervisors, and PhD candidates from across Europe and beyond, this conference represents a key international forum dedicated to advancing the quality of doctoral education in the biomedical and health sciences.

Under the theme "Sustainable networks through interdisciplinary partnerships – the key to quality enhancements in doctoral education," the conference offers a platform for meaningful exchange on how collaboration across disciplines, institutions, and countries can strengthen doctoral training and ensure its long-term relevance.

Over the course of three days, we invite you to engage with a diverse and carefully designed programme featuring keynote lectures, thematic sessions, workshops, and poster presentations. These activities are intended not only to share best practices and innovative approaches, but also to foster dialogue on supervision, quality assurance, transferable skills, and the evolving expectations placed on doctoral education.

Equally important is the opportunity this meeting provides to build and strengthen professional networks. We encourage you to take full advantage of both the scientific programme and the social events to initiate new collaborations, exchange perspectives, and contribute to a shared vision for high-quality, resilient, and inclusive doctoral education systems.

As organizers, we are confident that ORPHEUS 2026 will serve as a catalyst for continued cooperation and innovation within our community. We thank you for your participation and wish you a productive, engaging, and inspiring conference in Budapest.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Zoltán Benyó
Chair of the Local Organizing Committee

Assoc. Prof. Levente Kiss
Co-chair of the Local Organizing Committee

Program overview

TUESDAY MAY 26TH		WEDNESDAY MAY 27TH		THURSDAY MAY 28TH	
9:00-9:30	Opening and Welcome	9:00-10:30	**Session IV.** "Quality Assurance/Quality Enhancement I."	9:00-10:30	**Session VII.** "Wellbeing"
9:30-11:00	**Session I.** "Trust"	10:30-11:00	Coffeee Break and Poster Viewing (Session III.)	10:30-11:00	Coffeee Break and P Poster Viewing (Session V.)
11.00-11:30	Coffee Break and Poster Viewing (Session I.)	11.00-12:15	**Session V.** "Networks"	11.00-12:30	**Session VIII.** "Quality Assurance/Quality Enhancement II.
11:30-13:00	**Session II.** Workshops "A"	12:15-13:30	Lunch	12:30-13:30	CLOSING AND FLAG CEREMONY, Presentation of Orpheus 2027
13:00-14:15	Lunch	13:30-15:00	**Session VI.** Workshops "B"	13:30-14:00	Box Lunch
14:15-15:45	**Session III.** "Sustainability"	15:00-15:30	Coffeee Break and Poster Viewing (Session IV.)	14.00-17:00	Guided Excursions to Budapest
15:45-16:30	Poster viewing (Session II.)	15:30-17:00	ORPHEUS GENERAL ASSEMBLY		
16:30-18:00	Welcome drink and bites (EOK Hall)	19:00-22:00	Gala Dinner on Danube (River Diva boat, Pier "Várkert Bazár")		
18:00-	Get toghether drink for PhD candidates (Élesztő PUB, 5 min walk from EOK)				

Supporters

The organizers are thankful for the kind support of the following organizations:

NATIONAL RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION OFFICE
HUNGARY

PROJECT FINANCED FROM THE NRDI FUND

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DETAILED PROGRAM

TUESDAY, MAY 26TH	
8.00-18.00	**Registration and information desk**
9.00-9.30	**OPENING AND WELCOME:** **John Creemers** (ORPHEUS President), **Béla Merkely** (Rector of Semmelweis University) and the Organisers (Semmelweis University, Doctoral College)
SESSION I.	**TRUST** (Szent-Györgyi Lecture Hall) Chairs: **Ana Borovečki, Zoltán Benyó**
9.30-10.00	**Sean Bex, Pascale Bisschops,** Ghent University, Belgium *Joint PhDs Reimagined: Trust-Based Models for In-Depth Partnership*
10.00-10.15	**Janet Carton,** University College Dublin, Ireland *The impact of advances in research assessment on doctoral training under the CoARA principles*
10.15-10.30	**Joana Palha,** University of Minho, Portugal. *Introducing the ORPHEUS Ph.D. Candidate and Supervisor Relationship Guide*
10.30-10.40	**Ekaterina Kldiashvili, Ana Mamiseishvili, Maia Zarnadze,** Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy, Georgia *Supervision as Quality Assurance of Doctoral Research in the Era of Artificial Intelligence*
10.40-10.50	**Gandes R Rahayu, Mohammad Hakimi, Harning N Wursattana, Fitri Haryanti, Adi Utarini** Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia *Cultivating Supervisory Excellence: A Four-Year Journey of Systemic Capacity Building at Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia*
10.50-11.00	Panel discussion
11.00-11.30	COFFEE BREAK AND POSTER VIEWING (SESSION I.)
SESSION II.	**WORKSHOPS „A”**
11.30-13.00	**Ádám Orosz,** Semmelweis University, Hungary; **Tamás Bozó**, Semmelweis University, Hungary ***WORKSHOP A1*** - **EUniWell workshop** - Navigating the PhD Journey: From Survival to Growth, Seminar Room 1 and 2
11.30-13.00	**Graça Baltazar**, University of Beira Interior, Covilhã, Portugal; **Pascal Madeleine**, University of Aalborg, Aalborg, Denmark, **Ákos Zsembery**, Semmelweis University, Hungary ***WORKSHOP A2*** - Leverage of PhD Students Exchange between ORPHEUS Universities, Seminar Room 0
11.30-13.00	**Péter Domján**, Semmelweis University, Hungary; **András Mándoki**, Association of Hungarian PhD and DLA Candidates; **Péter Vámosi**, Association of Hungarian PhD and DLA Candidates; **Patrik Kreuter**, Doctoral Students' Union, Semmelweis University, Hungary ***WORKSHOP A3*** - PhD/Postdoc workshop - The Connected Researcher: Strategies for Interdisciplinary Collaboration, Szent-Györgyi Lecture Hall
13.00-14.15	LUNCH
SESSION III.	SUSTAINABILITY (Szent-Györgyi Lecture Hall) Chairs: **Valéria Csépe, Ákos Zsembery**
14.15-14.45	**Kurt Deketelaere,** League of European Research Universities (LERU) *The tenth European framework programme (FP10) for research and innovation: its importance, relevance and impact for doctoral researchers*
14.45-15.15	**Ashley Brady,** Vanderbilt University, USA *Building and Sustaining Strategic Partnerships for Lasting Impact in Doctoral Education*
15.15-15.30	**Simon Marti,** Council for Doctoral Education, European University Association *Key results of the 2025 EUA-CDE survey*
15.30-15.45	Panel discussion
15.45-16.30	POSTER VIEWING (SESSION II.)
16.30-18.00	**WELCOME DRINKS AND BITES** (EOK Building Hall)
18.00-	**GET TOGETHER DRINK FOR PHD STUDENTS** (Élesztő PUB, 5 min walk)

WEDNESDAY, MAY 27TH	
8.00-18.00	**Registration and information desk**
SESSION IV.	QUALITY ASSURANCE/QUALITY ENHANCEMENT I. (Szent-Györgyi Lecture Hall) Chairs: **Gül Akdoğan, Levente Kiss**
9.00-9.30	**Ricardo León-Bórquez**, World Federation of Medical Education *The Future of Quality Assurance in Doctoral Education. A global view: standards, integrity, AI and others*
9.30-10.00	**Neil Osheroff,** Vanderbilt University, USA *Systematic faculty development in postdoctoral education - the key to quality*
10.00-10.20	**Giorgia Giovannetti**, University of Florence, Italy EUniWell lecture - Quality, Incentives and Wellbeing: An Economic Perspective on Enhancing Doctoral Education
10.20-10.30	Panel discussion
10.30-11.00	COFFEE BREAK AND POSTER VIEWING (SESSION III.)
SESSION V.	**NETWORKS** (Szent-Györgyi Lecture Hall) Chairs: **Neil Osheroff, John Creemers**
11:00-11.30	**Sibusiso Moyo**, Stellenbosch University, South Africa *The African Research University Alliance and its Impact on Doctoral Training in Africa: Perspectives from Stellenbosch University*
11.30-11.50	**Péter Hegyi,** Semmelweis University, Hungary. Systems education can train the next generation of scientists and clinicians
11.50-12.05	**Tinatin Kutchukhidze, A. Smith, J Williams, L. Brown, J. Dale,** New Anglia University, UK, University of Massachusetts Lowell, USA, Georgia Southern University, USA, University of Hertfordshire, UK *From Concept to Implementation: Evaluating a Transnational PhD Quality Framework across Caribean, US and UK Institutions*
12.05-12.15	Panel discussion
12.15-13.30	LUNCH
SESSION VI.	**WORKSHOPS „B"**
13.30-15.00	**Gül Akdoğan,** ORPHEUS Labelling Committee, IEU School of Medicine, Turkey; Joana Palha, ORPHEUS Labelling Committee, Minho University, Portugal ***WORKSHOP B1 -*** *ORPHEUS Labelling Procedure – Is labelling a way to ensure recognition and quality? Szent-Györgyi Lecture Hall*
13.30-15.00	**Ádám Orosz**, Semmelweis University, Hungary; Tamás Bozó, Semmelweis University, Hungary ***WORKSHOP B2*** - EUniWell workshop - *Navigating the PhD Journey: From Survival to Growth, Seminar Room 1 and 2*
13.30-15.00	**Gábor Varga, Szilárd Váncsa, Mahmoud Obeidat,** Centre for Translational Medicine, Semmelweis University, Hungary. ***WORKSHOP B3*** - *Building interdisciplinary support teams for clinical translational PhD training: why it matters and how to do it. Seminar Room 0*
15.00-15.30	COFFEE BREAK AND POSTER VIEWING (SESSION IV.)
15.30-17.00	**ORPHEUS GENERAL ASSEMBLY** *Szent-Györgyi Lecture Hall*
19.00-22.00	**GALA DINNER ON DANUBE** *(River Diva boat, Pier „Várkert Bazár")*

THURSDAY, MAY 28TH	
8.00-14.00	**Registration and information desk**
SESSION VII.	**WELL-BEING** (Szent-Györgyi Lecture Hall) Chairs: **Joana Palha, László Rosivall**
9.00-9.20	**Yue Zhao**, University of Cologne, Germany EUniWell lecture - *Sustaining the doctoral journey: well-being, supportive networks, and growth in healthcare doctoral education*
9.20-9.40	**Anna Maria Papini**, University of Florence, Italy EUniWell lecture - *Strategic Mentoring Doctoral Researchers as Future Entrepreneurs within the EUniWell Alliance. The case of study of Peptide Innovations for Health, Beauty, and Well-Being*
9.40-10.00	**Beáta Dávid Pethesné,** Semmelweis University, Hungary EUniWell lecture - *Linking PhD Success and Well-being among PhD/DLA Students in Hungary. Methodological insights and preliminary results of the Hungarian big sample survey*
10.00-10.10	**Peter Macsek**, Helmholtz Juniors in the Helmholtz Association, Germany; German Cancer Research Center, Germany *The N^2 Survey: Longitudinal quantitative evaluation of Doctoral Researchers' quality of life as a powerful tool for advocacy in non-university academia*
10.10-10.20	**Daniel Josef Lindegger**, independent scholar, Switzerland *The Emotional Learning Curriculum: a Pathway to the Self-Empowered Scholar*
10.20-10.30	Panel discussion
10.30-11.00	COFFEE BREAK AND POSTER VIEWING (SESSION V.)
SESSION VIII.	**QUALITY ASSURANCE/QUALITY ENHANCEMENT II.** (Szent-Györgyi Lecture Hall) Chairs: **Hakan Orer, Beáta Dávis Pethesné**
11.00-11.20	**Andrea Olschewski**, Krems University, Austria *Institutional Responsibility and Academic Leadership in Doctoral Education*
11.20-11.40	**Valéria Csépe**, HUN-REN Research Centre of Natural Sciences, Budapest, Hungary *The crucial dimensions of quality in doctoral education*
11.40-12.00	**Franziska Höring**, University of Jena, UniWinD, Germany *The UniWinD network as a driver for cross-university exchange of good practices and the advancement and reforms of graduate education in Germany*
12.00-12.10	**Kim De Keyser, Patrick Calders,** Ghent University, Belgium *Fostering Doctoral Excellence – a Portfolio-Driven Pathway to High-Quality Research, Talent Development, and Impact*
12:10-12.20	**Philip Hallenborg,** University of Southern Denmark, Denmark *Fostering Interdisciplinary and Institutional Exchange in the Danish Advanced Research Academy - DARA*
12.20-12.30	Panel discussion
12.30-13.30	**CLOSING AND FLAG CEREMONY, Presentation of Orpheus 2027** *Szent-Györgyi Lecture Hall*
13.30-14.00	BOX LUNCH
14.00-17.00	**GUIDED EXCURSIONS TO BUDAPEST**

ORPHEUS CONFERENCE 2026 POSTERS

Posters will be displayed in the hall of the EOK Building and will remain on view throughout the entire conference. We kindly ask the poster presenters to be present during the poster viewing sessions as indicated in the program. This will be a valuable opportunity to meet and discuss your work with other conference delegates.

	POSTER SESSION I. - TRUST
1.	**Rudina Degjoni**, Memorial Regional Hospital of Fier, Albania *ALBANIAN HOSPITAL REFORM: THE ROLE OF AUTONOMY IN THE HOSPITAL SYSTEM*
2.	**Iurii Kuchyn, Lesya Lymar**, Bogomolets NMU, Kyiv, Ukraine *UKRAINIAN MEDICAL PHDS AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: OVERVIEW*
3.	**Aleksandra Nadiradze, Iuri Migriauli**, David Tvildiani Medical University, Georgia *THE FORMING (REFORMING) PONTENTIAL OF ETHICAL VALUES OF GEORGIAN ACADEMIC ECOSYSTEM*
4.	**Ehsan Omidvar[1], Jaime Oliveira[1,2]**, [1]University of Minho, Portugal; 2ICVS/3B's - PT Government Associate Laboratory, Portugal *EVALUATING AN AI TOOL FOR PHD ADMINISTRATION*
5.	**Andrea Srebačić, Đurđica Kamenarić, Lana Ružić**, University of Zagreb, Croatia *PUBLIC PROCUREMENT AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH IN CROATIA: LEGAL OBSTACLES AND THEIR IMPACT ON PHD STUDENTS*
	POSTER SESSION II. - SUSTAINABILITY
6.	**Seyma Nur Kirmic Cosgun, Deniz Ceylan, Binnur Temel**, Bezmialem Vakif University, Türkiye *FROM LAB TO MARKET: INTEGRATING ENTREPRENEURSHIP INTO TRANSLATIONALLY ORIENTED PHD TRAINING IN BIOMATERIALS*
7.	**Antonella Rupčić,** University of Zagreb, Croatia DOCTORAL STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON TRANSFERABLE SKILLS TRAINING AND ITS ROLE IN SUSTAINABLE PHD EDUCATION
8.	**Bahar Taşdelen**, Mersin University, Türkiye *CAREER DEVELOPMENT IN THE INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH ECOSYSTEM: A RESEARCHCOMP-BASED APPROACH AND THE MERSIN UNIVERSITY CASE*
9.	**Binnur Temel, Semra Özçelik, Ümit Uđurlu,** Bezmialem Vakif University, Türkiye *RESEARCH-DRIVEN AND SUSTAINABLE INTERDISCIPLINARY DOCTORAL TRAINING IN HEALTH SCIENCES: THE BEZMIALEM MODEL*
10.	**Sanem Vural, Kaan Mert Güven, Medi Kori, Günseli Bayram Akçapinar,** Acýbadem Mehmet Ali Aydýnlar University, Türkiye *UPDATING THE PhD EDUCATION FOR THE 21ST CENTURY: WHY AI, SUSTAINABILITY, AND SCIENCE COMMUNICATION ARE NO LONGER OPTIONAL?*

	POSTER SESSION III. - QUALITY ASSURANCE/QUALITY ENHANCEMENT
11.	**Maria Barnowska, Katarzyna Stolarz-Skrzypek, Grażyna Bochek, Christoph Sowada,** Jagiellonian University Medical College, Poland *ENGINEERING A MEDICAL PHD: CHALLENGES, BEST PRACTICES, AND INSTITUTIONAL SOLUTIONS FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY DOCTORAL EDUCATION*
12.	**Viktoria Čurila, Ema Eržić, Ana Stupin, Ivana Jukić, Jasenka Wagner Kostadinović, Domagoj Drenjančević, Ines Bilić-Ćurčić,** Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Croatia *FROM REACCREDITATION TO SUSTAINABLE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT: A DOCTORAL PERSPECTIVE INFORMED BY EARLY-STAGE STUDENT SURVEYS*
13.	**Başak Günçer, Sema Sırma Ekmekçi, Safiye Özkan Sarılı, Elif Bahar Tuna İnce, Gökçe Topal Tanyılmaz, Evrim Bayrak, Murat Coşkun**, Istanbul University,Türkiye *EVALUATION OF QUALIFICATION PROCESS, EXPECTED GRADUATION TIME, AND PUBLICATION PRODUCTIVITY OF ORPHEUS DOCTORAL STUDENTS: A CROSS-SECTIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE 2022-2023 FALL SEMESTER*
14.	**Kaan Mert Güven, Sanem Vural, Günseli Bayram Akçapýnar, Esra Bal, Levent Altintaş,** Acibadem University, I Türkiye *EMPOWERING BIOMEDICAL PHDS: CO-CREATING THE ACU IMPACT PLATFORM FOR 21ST-CENTURY COMPETENCIES*
15.	**Eva Kocianová, Silvia Pastoreková, Marián Grman,** Biomedical Research Center of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Slovakia *THE PILOT YEAR OF THE DOCTORAL SCHOOL AT THE BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH CENTER OF THE SLOVAK ACADEMY OF SCIENCES*
16.	**Bahar Taşdelen[1,4], Jennifer Yost[2,4], Hans Aage Lund[3,4],** [1]Mersin University, Türkiye, [2]Villanova University, USA, [3]Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, Norway, [4]Member of Steering Group of EBRNetwork, Norway *THE ROLE OF AN EVIDENCE BASED RESEARCH APPROACH IN A PHD THESIS*
	POSTER SESSION IV. – NETWORKS
17.	**Sarah Duk, Urszula M. Marcinkowska, Jagiellonian University Medical College, Poland** *INTERDISCIPLINARY AND INTER-INSTITUTIONAL COLLABORATION AS A FRAMEWORK FOR ENHANCING DOCTORAL TRAINING QUALITY: EXPERIENCES FROM THE CORONA MUMS PROJECT*
18.	**Mattia Giovenzana, Elena Grisafi, Giulio Sancini, Laura Musazzi**, University of Milano-Bicocca, Italy *AN INTERDISCIPLINARY AND TRANSLATIONAL MODEL FOR DOCTORAL TRAINING IN NEUROSCIENCE: THE MILANO-BICOCCA PHD PROGRAM*
19.	**Marián Grman, Eva Kocianová, Silvia Pastoreková,** Biomedical Research Center of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Slovakia *ALLIANCE FOR LIFE - BRIDGE PROJECT AS A PLATFORM FOR AN IMPROVEMENT OF RESEARCH CULTURE WITH IMPACT ON PHD EDUCATION AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT*
20.	**Gabriela Lampart, Grażyna Bochenek, Christoph Sowada, Katarzyna Stolarz-Skrzypek,** Jagiellonian University Medical College, Poland *INTERDISCIPLINARY DOCTORAL TRAINING IN MEDICAL SCIENCES, HEALTH SCIENCES AND PHARMACEUTICAL SCIENCES: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF MEDICAL AND HEALTH SCIENCES AT THE JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY MEDICAL COLLEGE*
21.	**Tullia Padovani,** University of Bern, Switzerland *THE GRADUATE SCHOOL FOR HEALTH SCIENCES: BUILDING INTERDISCIPLINARY NETWORKS TO ADVANCE CLINICAL AND ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE IN DOCTORAL TRAINING*
22.	**Luana Rosendo,** University of Beira Interior, Portugal *STRENGTHENING DOCTORAL ENGAGEMENT IN A MULTICENTRIC RESEARCH UNIT: THE ROLE OF THE RISE-HEALTH PHD STUDENT COMMITTEE*
23.	**Vice Tomičić, Katarina Kereta, Marija Hefer, Suzana Blažanović, Kristina Kralik, Lucija Kuna Roguljić, Tea Omanović Kolarić, Robert Smolić, Martina Smolić,** University of Osijek, Croatia *CLOSING THE GAP BETWEEN POSITIVE ATTITUDES AND PRACTICAL ENGAGEMENT: BUILDING SUSTAINABLE INTERDISCIPLINARY NETWORKS IN DOCTORAL EDUCATION*

POSTER SESSION V. – WELL-BEING	
24.	**Annas Zulfakhri Abidin, Krisztián Németh,** Semmelweis University, Hungary *EXPLORING THE WELL-BEING OF INDONESIAN DOCTORAL STUDENTS IN HEALTH SCIENCES AMONG HUNGARIAN UNIVERSITIES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN LABORATORY-BASED AND NON-LABORATORY-BASED RESEARCHERS.*
25.	**Đurđica Kamenarić, Andreja Srebačić,** Lana Ružić, University of Zagreb, Croatia *THE PRINCIPAL REASONS FOR DISSATISFACTION AMONG PHD STUDENTS IN KINESIOLOGY: LONGITUDINAL QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS (2019–2025)*
26.	**Lita Palomares[1,2,5], Greta Rizzi[3,5], Anna Romanova[4,5], Sarah Jerjen[4,5], Ann Walser[5], Kali Tal[5]**, [1]University of Basel, Switzerland; [2]ZHAW Zürich University of Applied Sciences, Switzerland; [3]Universitŕ della Svizzera Italiana, Switzerland; [4]University of Lucerne, Switzerland; [5]Swiss School of Public Health, Switzerland *LAUNCHING A SCIENTIFIC WRITING RETREAT FOR PHD STUDENTS*
27.	**Sylvya Pasca[1,2], Leo Gkekos[1,2]**, [1]Doctoral Students' Association, Medicinska Föreningen, Sweden; [2]Karolinska Institutet, Sweden *VOICES THAT MATTER: THE ROLE OF STUDENT UNIONS IN DOCTORAL EDUCATION*
28.	**Anja Topolovec, Zlatan Bilić, Lana Ružić Švegl**, University of Zagreb, Croatia *FACTORS INFLUENCING THE DOCTORAL EXPERIENCE: ATTENDANCE, ORGANIZATION, AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION*

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Program events related to EuniWell at the ORPHEUS 2026 Conference

TUESDAY, MAY 26TH	
SESSION II.	**WORKSHOPS „A”**
11.30-13.00	**Ádám Orosz**, Semmelweis University, Budapest, Hungary; **Tamás Bozó**, Semmelweis University, Budapest, Hungary; **Zsuzsanna Katalin Papp**, Semmelweis University, Budapest, Hungary. WORKSHOP A1 - EUniWell workshop - PhD Survival Lab, Seminar Room 1 and 2
WEDNESDAY, MAY 27TH	
SESSION IV.	**QUALITY ASSURANCE/QUALITY ENHANCEMENT I.**
10.00-10.20	**Giorgia Giovannetti**, University of Florence, Italy EUniWell lecture - TBA
SESSION VI.	**WORKSHOPS „B”**
13.30-15.00	**Ádám Orosz,** Semmelweis University, Budapest, Hungary; *Tamás Bozó*, Semmelweis University, Budapest, Hungary; **Zsuzsanna Katalin Papp**, Semmelweis University, Budapest, Hungary. WORKSHOP B2 - EUniWell workshop - PhD Survival Lab, Seminar Room 1 and 2
THURSDAY, MAY 28TH	
SESSION VII.	**WELL-BEING (Szent-Györgyi Lecture Hall)** Chairs: **Joana Palha, László Rosivall**
9.00-9.20	**Yue Zhao**, University of Cologne, Germany. EUniWell lecture - *Sustaining the doctoral journey: well-being, supportive networks, and growth in healthcare doctoral education*
9.20-9.40	**Anna Maria Papini,** University of Florence, Italy. EUniWell lecture - *Strategic Mentoring Doctoral Researchers as Future Entrepreneurs within the EUniWell Alliance. The case of study of Peptide Innovations for Health, Beauty, and Well-Being*
9.40-10.00	**Beáta Dávid Pethesné**, Semmelweis University, Budapest, Hungary. EUniWell lecture - *Linking PhD Success and Well-being among PhD/DLA Students in Hungary. Methodological insights and preliminary results of the Hungarian big sample survey*

INVITED SPEAKERS

JOINT PHDS REIMAGINED: TRUST-BASED MODELS FOR IN-DEPTH PARTNERSHIPS

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Universities are experiencing a growing demand for Joint PhDs, driven by increasingly international, interdisciplinary, and interinstitutional research practices. At the same time, European policy ambitions to integrate the higher education landscape— particularly within the European Research Area— signal an emerging push to simplify and stimulate Joint PhD uptake. Despite these converging pressures, Joint PhDs are mostly still negotiated on a case-by-case basis. This triggers lengthy, highly procedural negotiations in which institutions seek to defend their established doctoral practices—leading to unproductive debates about examination formats, jury composition, training requirements or publication expectations, all rooted in divergent regional or institutional traditions rather than academic rigour.

This talk argues for a fundamental reframing of Joint PhDs. At their essence, they are academic collaborations that unite complementary expertise, supervisory cultures, and training environments. As such, they should be built on trust rather than defensive legalism. At Ghent University, we have adopted a trust-based model that begins with an "info sheet" exchange outlining each partner's doctoral processes and legal context. This creates mutual understanding before any contractual drafting begins, helping to reveal the reasons behind institutional constraints and reducing friction. The approach has accelerated negotiations and enabled the creation of deeper framework agreements with partners. Examples include a forthcoming University Alliance- level template and advanced Belgian and Flemish interuniversity agreements requiring ever less information for new Joint PhDs. These experiences show that embedding trust at the administrative level allows Joint PhDs to scale, aligning with both bottom-up research collaboration and Europe's integrative policy direction.

BUILDING AND SUSTAINING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS FOR LASTING IMPACT IN DOCTORAL EDUCATION

Ashley Brady, Angela Zito, Janani Varadarajan, Aubrie Stricker, Kim Petrie

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Over the past several decades, the career landscape for biomedical PhD scientists in the United States has shifted significantly, with the majority of trainees now pursuing roles outside traditional academic faculty positions1-2. In response, the Vanderbilt University School of Medicine's Biomedical Research Education and Training (BRET) Office of Career Development launched the ASPIRE Program in 2013 as a comprehensive expansion of career development programming for approximately 1100 PhD graduate students and postdoctoral fellows3. Designed to facilitate exposure to the wide range of career paths pursued by our alumni, ASPIRE places a strong emphasis on building and sustaining strategic, interdisciplinary partnerships across faculty and staff, alumni, and employers. These partnerships have been critical to the development of scalable programs in career exploration, skill development, and experiential learning that enhance doctoral training and career preparedness.

Through these partnerships, and building on prior trainee and partner engagement, ASPIRE has developed three key experiential learning programs. ASPIRE Modules introduce foundational didactic and project-based exposure to professional skills and diverse career paths through collaborations with campus and external experts. The ASPIRE on the Road program provides immersive site visits, connecting trainees directly with professionals and alumni. The ASPIRE Internship Program offers flexible, part-time experiential learning opportunities that enable trainees to develop transferable skills, expand professional networks, and make informed career decisions while maintaining their full-time research effort.

Collectively, these programs demonstrate how a network of sustained partnerships inform program design, ensure alignment with workforce needs, and create valuable engagement opportunities for trainees' career preparedness.

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THE IMPACT OF ADVANCES IN RESEARCH ASSESSMENT ON DOCTORAL TRAINING UNDER THE COARA PRINCIPLES – Is everything that can be counted all that counts?

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Determination of 'doctorateness' has historically been articulated as the creation of new knowledge and today also includes independent researchers. Yet new knowledge is consistently determined quantitatively through publication related metrics translating to univeristy rankings, while independent researcher ability, 'simply' through completion of the doctorate itself. Key elements of 'doctoral determination' therefore remain unarticulated and seldom captured or measured.

COARA (Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment) is a collective of (800) organisations committed to reforming the methods and processes by which research, researchers, and research organisations are evaluated. Research organisations, funders, assessment authorities, professional societies, and their associations have agreed on a common direction and guiding principles to implement research assessment reform outlined in the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment published in July 2022. ORPHEUS is a COARA signatory and has therefore committed to the principles of recognisiing diverse contributions to research, embracing qualitative measures in determining research success, abandoning inappropriate use of journal and metric based evaluation and avoiding the use of rankings of research organisations in assessment. This is a significant change in our understanding and approaches to what we value, how we capture and measure what we value and in assigning appropriate value to quantitative metrics.

This presentation explores the impact of the commitment made by ORPHEUS and a broad biomedical community to the COARA principles and the implications for doctoral education provision and researcher development.

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THE CRUCIAL DIMENSIONS OF QUALITY IN DOCTORAL EDUCATION

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It has been succeeded to show in the last 15 years how important internal and external assurance (QA) and enhancement (QE) are and how many crucial dimensions of the quality of higher education, especially that of the doctoral programmes have. Moreover, QA+QE became a hot topic in many countries, so that different organizations and university associations started to focus on the quality requirements. Therefore, it is especially important to have a clear view on the system of general and medicine- specific standards used in evaluating new programs and outcome of the longer existing ones. There are several questions the presentation aims at answering. Here are the four questions regularly asked by PhD school and programme chairs, supervisors and students.

(1) How to measure the quality, especially that of the PhD studies?
(2) How to secure that a PhD training programme satisfies with the current and future needs for competence within research, development, as well as in guidance and teaching at universities?
(3) How well the general quality assurance (QA) requirements in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) comply with the specific requirements of medical education?
(4) What are the similarities and differences in the general QA standards (ESG - under revision, planned for acceptance by the ministerial conference of the EHEA countries in 2027) and those in medicine set for example by the standards of the World Federation of Medical Education?

The presentation will give a summary of existing correspondences between standards of the WFME Basic Medical Education 2020 (BME 2020) and the ESG2015 (based on the presentation at the WFME World Conference 2025) and the ESG 2027 with expected changes concerning research. Furthermore, a more detailed analysis on the principles and main goals of doctoral education will be given. The main sources of the overview are the Salzburg Principles 2005 and its actualization ten years after, the actual proposals of the Council of Doctoral Education of EUA (European Universities Association) and those of the ORPHEUS in the light of QA and QE practices developed and implemented by the Hungarian Accreditation Committee in collaboration with the medical faculties in Hungary.

LINKING PHD SUCCESS AND WELL-BEING AMONG PHD/DLA STUDENTS IN HUNGARY. METHODOLOGICAL INSIGHTS AND PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF THE BIG SAMPLE DATA SURVEY

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Research over the past decade highlighted a distressing trend of PhD students' mental health and the negative impact of doctoral studies on mental well-being. Findings suggest that the mental well-being of doctoral candidates falls significantly behind that of their peers with Master's degrees and the general population average. According to a systematic review by Hazell et al. (2020) doctoral students experience a more significant maladaptive imbalance between their available opportunities and resources and the expectations placed upon them. This leads to chronic stress, exerting a substantial impact on their mental health. A meta-analysis of 9 relevant publications representing data from 15,626 students, the prevalence of anxiety symptoms was estimated at 17% (Satinsky et al., 2021).

Nonetheless, comprehensive data on the well-being and doctoral experiences of PhD students in Hungary are still unavailable. Our study conducted by the "PhD Success and Well-being" research group at Semmelweis University, in collaboration with the National Association of Doctoral Students (DOSZ) aims to fill this critical gap. We aim to assess the doctoral experiences and the mental well-being of doctoral students in Hungary and to analyse the factors influencing it. The methodology applied allows us for the comparison with data from the general population and findings published in international literature.

We launched the cross-sectional online survey in April 2026. Out of the 11 000 doctoral students in Hungary we aim to reach a sample between 3000 and 3500 students. At the Orpheus conference we analyse a subsample of the Semmelweis doctoral students.

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QUALITY, INCENTIVES AND WELLBEING: AN ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE ON ENHANCING DOCTORAL EDUCATION

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Enhancing doctoral education from an economic perspective requires aligning incentives, improving quality, and supporting candidate wellbeing to maximize human capital development and research efficiency. This is necessarily connected to academic freedom and research autonomy, as well as to fair employment conditions and job security. Recent developments (EUA, 2025) seem to suggest that some „actions" have been taken in the direction of PhD's (and postdoc) research autonomy and, therefore, wellbeing increase. First, moving from a strong (and unique) relation with "the" supervisor, which has a key position in decision-making, to interaction with several colleagues. The "team-based" model enhances quality, fostering research autonomy and reducing risks to PhD students' wellbeing. It also ensures a more efficient allocation of resources. Second, somehow a consequence of the "team" model, and particularly relevant for STEM, is the sharing of (often very expensive) research infrastructures and laboratories. Not all Universities can afford all the necessary research infrastructures to provide the "best and most updated" research environment and being in a "team" and sharing infrastructures can improve efficiency as well as autonomy of research. Furthermore, sharing infrastructures, or working in a multidisciplinary environment (for social science), not only provides access to specialized equipment/knowledge, but can also foster international collaboration, and offer tailored training. Sharing, finally, enhances networking as well as mobility and wellbeing (not feeling lonely is important). Against this background, where PhDs (postdocs, faculty and staff) are better off if they have places and facilities where they can share experiences and where PhD programmes are still organised in very different ways in different members of Alliances as a reflex of the complexity of tasks a PhD programme involves and of different national regulations, European alliances have an important role to play. They have the possibility/opportunity of transforming PhD education (and early researchers careers). So far some Alliances have been fostering joint, transnational doctoral programmes and increasing mobility, sharing research seminars, providing joint supervisions (cotutelle), and having dedicated PhD "hubs" for mobility. However in a context where the number of PhDs and postdocs are rising and the PhD training is (more and more) strongly research focussed and competitive, Alliances can help (i) facilitating sharing of research infrastructures (through agreements on sensitive issues such as data sharing, ethics etc), (ii) organizing multidisciplinary fora (where social scientists can overcome the weight of autonomous research and the feeling of loneliness), (iii) overcoming the precarity in funding and (iv) increasing employment opportunities. More internationalisation through Alliances, furthermore, exposes doctoral candidates (and faculty) to diverse perspectives and to cutting-edge research from different EU countries. Amongst Alliances, EuniWell is a voice for wellbeing. Existing data (Bolotnyy et al, 2022) show that doctoral education suffers from a high prevalence of anxiety, stress, and depression* (25%) which acts as a barrier to productivity. EuniWell should then offer the necessary support in overcoming the burnout, consider training for supervisors that emphasizes mentorship and early detection of burnout as a way to enhance, rather than hinder, research efficiency; it can/should also implement specific measures, with emphasis on multidisciplinary and work in „teams", and provide insider information on the specific requests/necessities of the different systems of its partners countries to create a really open market for early researchers. It can also train PhD in transferable skills, which turns out to be crucial for instance for employment outside academia, increasing the relevance of doctoral degrees in a knowledge-driven economy.

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* Mental health issues are especially prevalent at the end of the PhD program: 36.7 percent of students in years 6+ of their program experience moderate or severe symptoms of depression or anxiety, versus 21.2 percent of first-year students.

SYSTEMS EDUCATION CAN TRAIN THE NEXT GENERATION OF SCIENTISTS AND CLINICIANS

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Scientific discoveries can only improve health outcomes if they are effectively translated into clinical practice, public health strategies, and sustainable healthcare systems. However, a persistent gap remains between research, education, and patient care. Traditional medical education often emphasizes theoretical knowledge and bedside practice, while scientific training may focus on narrow disciplinary expertise without sufficient attention to clinical relevance, implementation, and societal impact.

Systems education offers a new framework for training the next generation of scientists and clinicians. By integrating translational medicine, evidence-based methodology, clinical reasoning, data interpretation, and communication skills, this approach prepares students to understand the full cycle from scientific discovery to community benefit. Rather than separating research from healthcare, systems education encourages learners to identify clinically relevant questions, critically appraise evidence, generate robust scientific outputs, and apply findings in real-world settings.

The Centre for Translational Medicine has developed educational models based on "learning by doing" and "retaining by teaching", enabling PhD students, clinicians, and researchers to work simultaneously on systematic reviews, meta-analyses, clinical trials, registries, and real-world evidence projects. This structure supports scientific productivity while maintaining a strong connection to patient care and healthcare needs.

Embedding systems education into medical and scientific training can strengthen translational capacity, improve collaboration across disciplines, and accelerate the implementation of research findings. Such educational innovation is essential for building a new generation of professionals capable of transforming science into measurable health benefits.

Keywords: Translational Medicine, Education, PhD

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THE UNIWIND NETWORK AS A DRIVER FOR CROSS-UNIVERSITY EXCHANGE AND THE ADVANCEMENT OF DOCTORAL EDUCATION IN GERMANY

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The lecture will outline the peculiarities of the German academic system, as well as current debates and challenges. The German academic system is characterised by a high number of PhD graduates (over 75% leave academia), diverse pathways to a PhD, and a high degree of autonomy for universities regarding PhD regulations.

The presentation will also provide an insight into the work of UniWinD, the German University Association for the Qualification of Early-Career Researchers in Germany. Established in 2009, UniWinD mainly connects research managers from central graduate institutions but also university leaders and PhD candidates interested in higher education policy. UniWinD seeks to improve the conditions for doctoral candidates and postdocs through cross-university exchange.

In 2025 UniWinD published „Recommendations for a future-oriented qualification of doctoral candidates in Germany“ (available in English)*. Among other things, the paper recommends the separation of supervision and assessment of doctoral theses, the abolition of the current grading practice and adequate funding of doctoral projects for at least 3 years and at least 65 % of a full-time position.

* https://www.uniwind.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publikationen/2025-June-UniWinD_Recommendations_EN_web.pdf

THE FUTURE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN DOCTORAL EDUCATION: A GLOBAL VIEW OF STANDARDS, INTEGRITY, AI, AND OUTCOMES

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Doctoral education is a pivotal stage in the academic system, where researchers who will shape the future of knowledge are formed and new energy and perspectives enter the scientific community. Its rapid expansion, increasing internationalisation, and the transformation of research practices— particularly through technological advancements—have raised questions about how its quality should be assessed and assured. A central issue is whether existing frameworks developed for postgraduate education can adequately capture and support the nature of doctoral training, or whether its research-based character requires a distinct conceptual approach.

This presentation examines doctoral quality assurance within a global context, drawing on key works including the ORPHEUS, AMSE & WFME Standards for PhD Education in Biomedicine and Health Sciences in Europe, the Salzburg Principles and subsequent EUA Council for Doctoral Education reports, and wider international developments, including the INQAAHE International Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education and the CoARA Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment. These frameworks collectively emphasise that doctoral education should be understood not as a curriculum-driven programme, but as a process embedded within research environments, shaped by supervision systems and sustained by principles of research integrity.

Particular attention is given to the implications of digital tools and AI-enabled research for originality, authorship and evaluation, emphasising the need to preserve intellectual independence whilst adapting to evolving research conditions. The discussion argues that quality assurance must extend beyond programme structures to encompass the broader ecosystem in which doctoral research is conducted, including the conditions that underpin trust in knowledge.

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SUSTAINABLE NETWORKS THROUGH INTERDISCIPLINARY PARTNERSHIPS – A CASE STUDY OF THE AFRICA RESEARCH UNIVERSITY ALLIANCE PARTNERSHIP MODELS FOR DOCTORAL EDUCATION

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Recent demographic projections highlight the scale of Africa's emerging human capital. According to the Africa Youth Employment Outlook 2026 report produced by the Development Policy Research Unit of the World Data Lab in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation, Africa is expected to have the fastest-growing generation of young people globally. Youth aged between 15 and 35 already represent a substantial proportion of the population and will form a significant share of the future labour force, with projections indicating continued growth into the 2070s (Africa Youth Employment Outlook, 2026).

This demographic trajectory has important implications for African higher education institutions and their international partners. Building a strong pipeline into quality doctoral education is increasingly recognised as a strategic priority due to the close interconnection between high-level skills development, knowledge economies, innovation systems, and broader economic development.

Strengthening doctoral training is therefore directly linked to socio-economic transformation. However, African universities face a dual imperative: expanding doctoral enrolment while safeguarding the quality and relevance of doctoral training. Sustainable research networks and interdisciplinary partnerships offer an important mechanism for addressing this challenge by enabling resource sharing, collaborative supervision, and cross-border knowledge exchange (Jowi, 2021).

This paper examines how interdisciplinary and international partnerships contribute to strengthening doctoral education quality from an African perspective. Drawing on examples from collaborative doctoral training initiatives within the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) and other continental networks, the analysis highlights how structured partnerships facilitate joint supervision, researcher mobility, and access to research infrastructure that individual institutions may not provide independently. These collaborative ecosystems enable doctoral candidates to engage with complex societal challenges—including public health, climate change, and sustainable development—that require interdisciplinary approaches. The paper argues that sustainable doctoral networks must move beyond traditional North–South models toward more equitable partnerships that strengthen African institutional capacity while fostering global collaboration (Pelser, 2024).

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INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY AND ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP IN DOCTORAL EDUCATION

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Doctoral education has evolved from an individual master–apprentice model to a structured, programme- based responsibility embedded within institutional quality frameworks. This transition requires more than administrative reform – it demands active academic leadership.

In this lecture, I will discuss the institutional responsibilities that underpin high-quality doctoral education, including governance structures, supervision standards, research integrity, career development, and international networking. Particular emphasis will be placed on how university leadership can create sustainable frameworks that balance academic freedom with programme accountability.

Drawing on experiences from different institutional contexts and interdisciplinary research environments, the talk will explore how strategic leadership can strengthen quality enhancement processes while fostering vibrant doctoral communities within international networks.

SYSTEMATIC FACULTY DEVELOPMENT IN POSTDOCTORAL EDUCATION - THE KEY TO QUALITY

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Postdoctoral education occupies a pivotal position in the academic and professional formation of researchers, demanding high standards of mentorship, supervision, and scholarly guidance. In this context, systematic faculty development has emerged as a critical determinant of quality in postdoctoral training. Faculty members are expected not only to possess subject expertise, but also to demonstrate competencies in mentorship, research ethics, leadership, communication, and learner-centered pedagogy. However, many institutions continue to rely on informal or experience-based supervisory practices that may lead to inconsistencies in trainee outcomes and research culture.

This talk will describe faculty development at the Vanderbilt University School of Medicine that is designed to enhance the quality of faculty mentoring for trainees at all levels of graduate and postdoctoral education. It will also describe tools that are used to enhance mentor-mentee interactions, understanding, and communication. By promoting reflective practice, accountability, and educational leadership among supervisors, systematic faculty development strengthens the overall postdoctoral environment and ensures sustainable quality enhancement in graduate and postdoctoral education systems.

INTRODUCING THE ORPHEUS PH.D. CANDIDATE AND SUPERVISOR RELATIONSHIP GUIDE

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Effective supervision is central to successful doctoral training, yet expectations for Ph.D. candidates, supervisors, and institutions are often inconsistently defined. This presentation introduces the Ph.D. Candidate and Supervisor Relationship Guide, developed within the ORPHEUS framework, as a practical and adaptable model to strengthen doctoral education across diverse academic settings.

The framework informing this guide was developed by Ph.D. candidates from several member institutions as a collaborative endeavour of the ORPHEUS PhD Candidate Forum, ensuring that candidate perspectives are central to its design. Its final version reflects constructive interaction with the ORPHEUS Executive Committee, integrating both bottom-up insights and institutional expertise. Adoption of the guide will be under consideration at the ORPHEUS General Assembly, representing a key step toward broader implementation.

The guide frames the Ph.D. journey as a reciprocal partnership grounded in trust, transparency, and shared accountability. It defines essential qualities and responsibilities of Ph.D. candidates—such as independence, critical thinking, resilience, and ethical conduct—and aligns them with the roles of supervisors, including mentorship, research guidance, and career development support. It also highlights the role of institutions in ensuring clear policies, supervisor training, balanced workloads, and structured support mechanisms.

By integrating candidate, supervisor, and institutional perspectives within an international quality assurance context, this framework offers a holistic approach to enhancing doctoral outcomes, well-being, and supervisory effectiveness. This presentation will explore its development, structure, and potential for implementation and continuous improvement.

STRATEGIC MENTORING DOCTORAL RESEARCHERS AS FUTURE ENTREPRENEURS WITHIN THE EUNIWELL ALLIANCE. THE CASE OF STUDY OF PEPTIDE INNOVATIONS FOR HEALTH, BEAUTY, AND WELL-BEING

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This lecture addresses how interdisciplinary partnerships within the EUniWell Alliance enhance doctoral education quality through structured mentoring aligned with ORPHEUS principles of research excellence, transparency, and societal impact. Drawing on the PhD Program in Chemical Sciences at the University of Florence (training approximately 90 doctoral researchers annually), the proposed framework integrates academic rigor with entrepreneurial economics to improve career outcomes and innovation capacity.

The model is grounded in measurable quality indicators, including completion rates, time-to-degree, international mobility, intersectoral exposure, and employment trajectories. Interdisciplinary supervision, joint industrial PhDs, and international double degrees are implemented to ensure transferable skills acquisition. Mentoring is expanded to include training in innovation management, intellectual property, and business development.

Peptide science provides a demonstrative case study, positioning peptides as "wellness molecules" across health and beauty sectors. A notable example is the development of the KP1 peptide, originating from University of Florence research and patented with the spin-off EspiKem, later translated into the Definisse KP1 product line commercialized by RELIFE (Menarini Group). This successful pathway from doctoral research to market illustrates the impact of structured mentoring and university-industry collaboration [1,2].

Supported by initiatives such as the EUniWell Technology Transfer of Peptides for the Well-being Economy (TTPep) and Peptide Research Incubator, and enabled by European peptide synthesis infrastructures aligned with Green Chemistry in cooperation with companies, i.e., Gyros Protein Technology [3], this model fosters innovation-driven doctoral training. It demonstrates how evidence-based, interdisciplinary approaches can strengthen doctoral education and contribute to sustainable economic and societal development.

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SUSTAINING THE DOCTORAL JOURNEY: WELL-BEING, SUPPORTIVE NETWORKS, AND GROWTH IN HEALTHCARE DOCTORAL EDUCATION

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Doctoral education in healthcare is a long and demanding journey shaped by scientific uncertainty, academic pressure, clinical expectations, and evolving professional identity. While the quality of doctoral education is often measured through research output, supervision, progression, and completion, the lived experience of doctoral candidates is equally important for sustainable excellence. Well-being should therefore not be viewed merely as an individual resilience issue or a response to crisis, but as a foundational condition for meaningful learning, responsible research, and long-term academic and professional growth.

This presentation reframes well-being as an integral dimension of quality enhancement in healthcare doctoral education. Drawing on experience from well-being-oriented educational initiatives, including well-being space concepts, interdisciplinary summer school activities, and the Future Surgeon programme, it explores how supportive structures can be embedded into doctoral training. These initiatives demonstrate the value of peer connection, mentoring, reflective practice, professional identity formation, and cross-institutional collaboration.

Rather than treating well-being as separate from academic training, the presentation argues for a more integrated approach: one in which support is built into the doctoral journey itself. Through supportive networks and interdisciplinary partnerships, well-being initiatives can become part of a broader effort to strengthen the quality, sustainability, and human experience of doctoral education. In healthcare, this matters not only for doctoral candidates themselves, but also for the patients, communities, and wider public they will serve in the future.

SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

FOSTERING INTERDISCIPLINARY AND INSTITUTIONAL EXCHANGE IN THE DANISH ADVANCED RESEARCH ACADEMY - DARA

Philip Hallenborg

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The Danish Advanced Research Academy (DARA) is a national PhD academy established with a generous donation from the Novo Nordisk Foundation. The academy idea is not new to Denmark and our funder. DARA is standing on the shoulders of three other academies in our ambition to bridge young, excellent scientists. Compared to the three, scientifically thematic academies, DARA will link PhD fellows spanning all of the medical, natural, and technical sciences. DARA will do so by funding aspiring researchers through open calls and bringing the fellows together in a shared national environment for scientific training, networking, and professional development. DARA is on a mission to not only support outstanding individual researchers and their projects, but also to create a doctoral training model that combines disciplinary depth with broad scientific perspective.

A central feature of DARA is its community-building programme. Through educational events, networking activities, mentorship, and mobility opportunities, the academy connects fellows across research environments and scientific traditions. The exchange is designed to encourage fellows to seek inspirations beyond their own field, develop a wider scientific horizon, and build the collaborative competences needed to address complex societal challenges.

In the context of ORPHEUS 2026, with its focus on sustainable networks through interdisciplinary partnerships, DARA offers a case for how national graduate structures can foster high- quality doctoral education. We hope to exchange experiences with other graduate programmes across Europe and to explore future collaborations that prepare PhD fellows for research careers with strong scientific breadth.

References

www.daracademy.dk

FOSTERING DOCTORAL EXCELLENCE – A PORTFOLIO-DRIVEN PATHWAY TO HIGH-QUALITY RESEARCH, TALENT DEVELOPMENT, AND IMPACT

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The Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences at Ghent University is committed to ensuring both the high quality of doctoral research and the well-being of its doctoral students, while acknowledging the diversity of research domains and researcher profiles across the faculty. To support this mission, the faculty has transitioned from quantitative output metrics to a qualitative and holistic evaluation framework.

Central to this approach is the requirement that every doctoral student is supported by a Doctoral Advisory Committee (DAC) and a project counselor. The PhD trajectory begins with compulsory onboarding but includes no additional Doctoral School requirements, enabling a fully tailored career path. Throughout the trajectory, doctoral students develop a comprehensive PhD research portfolio documenting research progress, impact, and professional development across a broad set of competencies. Annual evaluation meetings involving the doctoral student, the DAC, and the project counselor ensure structured and continuous follow-up. The doctoral examination process includes written assessments, an internal closed defense, and a public defense evaluated by an independent jury. The trajectory concludes with an offboarding procedure consisting of a survey and an exit interview.

This transition has resulted in a single, streamlined system for all doctoral students, with no exceptions or parallel procedures. The portfolio-driven framework promotes equal opportunities, supports publication choices within a quality-driven research philosophy, and recognizes diverse contributions such as teaching, supervision, and other academic responsibilities. Impact is interpreted broadly complemented by a mandatory societal outreach initiative that further enhances the societal relevance of the doctoral trajectory. The framework was developed in line with the ORPHEUS Handbook for Best Practices, and the faculty leads the procedure to obtain the ORPHEUS certificate for Ghent University faculties involved in life sciences and medicine.

SUPERVISION AS QUALITY ASSURANCE OF DOCTORAL RESEARCH IN THE ERA OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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Doctoral programmes that are still developing their research culture often need to define evaluation criteria at the same time as adopting new research technologies. During the initial implementation of the medical sciences and public health doctoral programmes at Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy, early progress reviews showed that supervisors assessed candidates' independence differently. Some focused on publications and practical usefulness of results, while other examined how the candidate justified methodological choices. The use of advanced analytical and generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools made this direction less clear and created uncertainty for both candidates and reviewers.

To address this, the programmes introduced common assessment approach aligned with responsible research assessment (CoARA) principles. Instead of counting outputs, reviews now require candidates to document their reasoning formulation of the research problem, alternatives considered, justification of selected methods, interpretation limits, and short statement describing the role of AI tools. Reviews are organized as a discussion between candidate, supervisor and an independent academic member using shared criteria centred or intellectual contribution.

After introduction of this procedure, evaluation discussions became more consistent and focused on the logic of the work rather than volume of results. Candidates provided clearer explanations of their decisions and supervisors reported greater confidence in judging independence, while research remained oriented toward societal needs. The experience suggests that AI mainly affects doctoral education by making contribution harder to recognise. Structured supervision discussions can therefore function as a practical quality safeguard in programmes working in technology-intensive environments.

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FROM CONCEPT TO IMPLEMENTATION: EVALUATING A TRANSNATIONAL PHD QUALITY FRAMEWORK ACROSS CARIBBEAN, US, AND UK INSTITUTIONS

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The recent increase in globalization of doctoral education exposed inconsistencies in quality assurance processes, progression criteria, supervision practices, and competency development across different academic systems. To address these gaps, a transnational PhD quality framework integrating Caribbean, US, and UK standards was co-developed and implemented across three partner universities. The framework was evaluated through a mixed-methods,multi-institutional survey of doctoral candidates (n=84) and supervisors (n=36), complemented by programme monitoring data, progression records, and completion benchmarks over a 12-month implementation period. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of an integrated transnational quality assurance framework in improving supervision, progression, transparency, and doctoral training outcomes. The survey explored key quality domains, including supervision quality (clarity of roles, accessibility, and feedback timeliness), doctoral environment(institutional support and interdisciplinary exposure), progression systems(milestones transparency, assessment fairness), and transferable skills development(research, leadership, communication, and career readiness). Quantitative data were collected using Likert-scale instruments, while qualitative insights were obtained through open-ended responses on perceived strength, gaps, and improvement needs. The framework introduced harmonised learning outcomes aligned across systems, structured multi-supervisor models(minimum two supervisors across institutions), unified progression milestones(annual reviews,competency-based assessments), and embedded transferable skills modules co-delivered across partners. Findings demonstrate improved clarity in supervision roles (78%), increased satisfaction with feedback quality (74% enhanced interdisciplinary engagement(82%), and higher perceived preparedness for diverse career pathways(76%). Additionally, 69% of candidates reported improved transparency in progression criteria, while 71% of supervisors noted increased consistency in evaluation practices. Key challenges included regulatory misalignment (reported by 64% of supervisors), communication gaps in distributed supervision (58% of candidates), and variability in institutional administrative support(61%). Targeted solutions included the introduction of standardised supervision agreements, joint digital monitoring platforms for real-time progression tracking, cross-institutional supervisor training(participant rate 87%), and structured communication protocols. The experience demonstrates that sustainable, interdisciplinary doctoral networks can enhance programme quality when supported by harmonised standards, robust monitoring systems, and continuous stakeholder feedback. The findings offer a practical, scalable model for quality assurance in transnational doctoral education, shifting from fragmented structures to an integrated,network-based PhD training.

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THE EMOTIONAL LEARNING CURRICULUM: A PATHWAY TO THE SELF-EMPOWERED SCHOLAR

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Contemporary education systems have traditionally prioritised cognitive attainment, often overlooking the structured development of students' emotional capacities. This research argues that a deliberately designed emotional learning curriculum, embedded within a formal educational curriculum, can serve as a critical pathway to forming a self-empowered scholar. Drawing on psychological frameworks such as emotional intelligence, self-determination theory, and social and emotional learning, this research proposes a systematic, measurable, and pedagogically actionable approach to emotional development.

Emotional growth should not remain an implicit by-product of schooling but instead be explicitly defined through competencies such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, resilience, empathy, and intrinsic motivation. Research shows strong links between these competencies and academic performance, well-being, and long-term professional success.1 Complementary findings highlight autonomy, competence, and relatedness as key drivers of sustained engagement and personal growth.2 The research introduces Key Performance Indicators tailored to emotional learning outcomes, including psychometric instruments, behavioural indicators like persistence and collaboration, and reflective assessments such as self- reporting and portfolios. These tools enable longitudinal tracking and data-informed curriculum refinement.

It further explores pedagogical strategies grounded in empirical research, including metacognitive reflection, growth mindset interventions, and experiential learning.3 Such approaches strengthen self-regulation and adaptive learning.

The central claim is that intentionally designed, systematically monitored, and meaningfully assessed emotional learning fosters self-empowered scholars who demonstrate agency, resilience, and reflective capacity, with implications for curriculum design, policy, and teacher training.

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THE N² SURVEY: LONGITUDINAL QUANTITATIVE EVALUATION OF DOCTORAL RESEARCHERS' QUALITY OF LIFE AS A POWERFUL TOOL FOR ADVOCACY IN NON-UNIVERSITY ACADEMIA

Peter Macsek[1,2] and Helmholtz Juniors

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The N2 Survey Report presents a series of large-scale surveys assessing multiple aspects of doctoral researchers' quality of life, examining working conditions, mental health, witnessed and experienced instances of sexual harassment, bullying, and discrimination, reporting rates and barriers to reporting, desires to quit doctoral programs, and overall satisfaction with supervision quality, workload, and available scientific or administrative support.

Conducted biennially, the surveys are carried out by Helmholtz Juniors in close collaboration with the doctoral researcher representatives of the Max Planck Society and the Leibniz Association. Together, this "network of networks" (N2) promotes data-driven approaches to improving doctoral working conditions, an essential foundation for responsible, effective, and sustainable improvements in the quality of doctoral education and the well-being of doctoral researchers. This coordinated effort provides a unique cross-institutional perspective on early-stage researchers pursuing a doctorate within Germany's non-university research environment.

Over the years, the N2 surveys allow longitudinal monitoring of trends and institutional responses to major events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The collected data provide crucial evidence-based insights that inform advocacy for better working conditions across multiple governance levels, from PhD program offices, scientific councils, and management boards, as well as policy-relevant actors such as ombudspersons, equal opportunities officers, and DEI management representatives.

References

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KEY RESULTS OF THE 2025 EUA-CDE SURVEY

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The 2025 EUA-CDE survey results capture a comprehensive picture of the current landscape of doctoral education in Europe, with particular attention to how institutional structures and practices reflect the Salzburg Principles. It explores central themes such the organisation of doctoral education in Europe, the development of supervision practices, internationalisation, quality assurance, and how universities are supporting doctoral candidates when it comes to interdisciplinarity and transferable skills to help them succeed in a labour market that is wider than academia.

In addition, the survey results provide insights on a topic at the centre of current European research policy discussions: perspectives and expectations of doctoral education leaders on the next generation of European research and innovation programmes for the period 2028-2034.

The two 2025 survey reports provide an important resource for universities and stakeholders who wish to understand how doctoral education has evolved, identify where challenges remain and explore opportunities for further development.*

* Marti, Simon; and Peneoasu, Ana-Maria (2025): Doctoral education in Europe today: enhanced structures and practices for the European knowledge society. 2025 EUA-CDE survey report, part I. Geneva. And: Marti, Simon; and Peneoasu, Ana-Maria (2026): Policies in doctoral education: navigating geopolitical change and technological acceleration while advancing Europe's society and competitiveness. 2025 EUA-CDE survey report, part II. Geneva.

CULTIVATING SUPERVISORY EXCELLENCE: A FOUR-YEAR JOURNEY OF SYSTEMIC CAPACITY BUILDING AT UNIVERSITAS GADJAH MADA, INDONESIA

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Doctoral supervision is essential for ensuring timely completion and high-quality research outcomes. However, the growing complexity of PhD programs requires supervisors to develop technical, relational, and strategic competencies. In response, Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM) implemented the Good Practice in PhD Supervision (GPPS) training program as a systemic capacity- building initiative. This study evaluates the implementation, outcomes, and impact of the GPPS program over four years (2022–2025), focusing on changes in supervisor knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and perceived effects on doctoral students.

The program combined asynchronous and synchronous methods, including pre- and post-tests, readiness questionnaires, in-person lectures, discussions, case-based learning, and flipped classrooms. A total of 209 doctoral supervisors participated across nine batches. Focus group discussions were conducted three and six months post-training to assess long-term application and impact.

Participant knowledge increased by an average of 11%, from 58% (pre-test) to 69% (post-test). Focus group discussions revealed positive shifts in supervisor mindsets, including increased confidence, shared responsibility for student success, and more collaborative relationships. Behavioral changes included more structured supervision, regular consultations, and proactive communication. Supervisors applied key materials such as doctoral regulations, systematic and scoping review methods, and mentoring approaches. Students showed improved research progress, productivity, communication, and motivation. Further development is needed in student mental health, communication ethics, and publication strategies.

The GPPS program enhanced doctoral supervision capacity at UGM, with measurable improvements in supervisor competencies and positive student outcomes. It offers a scalable model for institutional capacity building in doctoral education.

Keywords: doctoral supervision, capacity building, supervisor development

References

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3. *Anne Lee (2008) How are doctoral students supervised? Concepts of doctoral research supervision, Studies in Higher Education, 33:3, 267-281.*

WORKSHOPS

WORKSHOP A1
26th of MAY, 2026
11:30-13:00

EUniWell workshop – PhD Survival Lab

Venue: Seminar Room 1 and 2, ground floor, EOK building

Description: The PhD Survival Lab offers a safe, interactive space for PhD students and postdocs to reflect on stress, writing guilt, academic pressure, and blurred boundaries between research and private life. Guided by two key questions — Why is PhD life mentally so demanding? and What strategies can support resilience and well-being? — participants will share experiences and co-create ways to navigate burnout, rejections, and "publish or perish" challenges.

Target audience: Active PhD students and postdocs

Facilitators:

Dr. Ádám Orosz, Assistant Professor, mental health specialist, zen meditation teacher, Department of Biophysics and Radiation Biology, Faculty of Medicine, Semmelweis University, Budapest, Hungary,
orosz.adam@semmelweis.hu
Dr. Tamás Bozó, Assistant Professor, PhD-coach, mentor, Department of Biophysics and Radiation Biology,
Faculty of Medicine, Semmelweis University, Budapest, Hungary,
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Dr. Zsuzsanna Katalin Papp, Assistant Professor,
Institute of Mental Health, Faculty of Health and Public Services, Semmelweis University, Budapest, Hungary,
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Additional information: Workshop will take place in person only (not hybrid/online).

Participant limit: Maximum 32

WORKSHOP A2
26th of MAY, 2026
11:30-13:00

Leverage of PhD Students Exchange between ORPHEUS Universities

Venue: Seminar Room 0, ground floor, EOK building

Description: The workshop will provide an interactive forum for ORPHEUS member institutions to share experiences and develop practical strategies to strengthen international PhD exchange. Through short contextual inputs from Denmark, Portugal, and Hungary followed by structured small-group (6-8 people) discussions, participants will identify the main barriers to doctoral mobility and propose concrete institutional and network-level solutions. Special emphasis will be placed on financing mechanisms, administrative formalization, and sustainable collaboration models within ORPHEUS. The session will conclude with priority setting and the definition of actionable next steps to enhance coordinated doctoral mobility across member universities.

Target audience: Active PhD Students and Supervisors/Mentors, Administrators

Facilitators:

Dr. Graça Baltazar,
University of Beira Interior, Covilhă, Portugal,
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Prof. Pascal Madeleine,
University of Aalborg, Aalborg, Denmark,
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Dr. Ákos Zsembery,
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Additional information: Workshop will take place in person only (not hybrid/online).

Participant limit: Maximum 30

WORKSHOP A3
26th of MAY, 2026
11:30-13:00

The Connected Researcher: Strategies for Interdisciplinary Collaboration

Venue: Szent-Györgyi Lecture Hall, ground floor, EOK building

Description: The workshop aims to equip early-career researchers with practical strategies for overcoming barriers to interdisciplinary work and to map out how interdisciplinary communication and collaboration actually work in everyday academic practice. As research increasingly takes place at disciplinary boundaries, these skills are becoming essential components of high-quality doctoral and postdoctoral training.

Through interactive modules, participants will engage in the "Complex Problem Shuffle", combining disparate PhD topics to propose theoretical joint-research projects that address global challenges (e.g., Pandemic Preparedness). The session also includes an institutional audit to explore how universities support science communication and collaboration, concluding with the co-creation of best practices and recommendations for the "One Big Idea."

Target audience: Early-career researchers (active PhD students and postdocs)

Facilitators:

Péter Domján – ORPHEUS PhD Candidate Forum Chair,
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Dr. András Mándoki – President of the Medical and Health Sciences Section (DOSZ-OEO),
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Dr. Péter Vámosi – Assistant professor, president of the Association of Hungarian PHD and DLA Candidates (DOSZ),
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Dr. Patrik Kreuter – President of the Doctoral Students' Union,
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Additional infiormation: The workshop will take place offline, in person.

Participant limit: Maximum 45

WORKSHOP B1
27th of MAY, 2026
13:30-15:00

ORPHEUS Labelling Procedure – Is labelling a way to ensure recognition and quality?

Venue: Szent-Györgyi Lecture Hall, ground floor, EOK building

Description: This workshop is designed to provide an in-depth understanding of the labelling process for PhD institutions. ORPHEUS Labels are awarded to institutions that comply with the Core Recommendations of the ORPHEUS Best Practicesdocument. To apply, institutions should complete an application which will be reviewed. This may lead to interaction with the applicants, for any requested clarifications. Based on this, the institution might be invited to host a site visit, for interaction among the various stakeholders (PhD candidates, supervisors, administration) with the evaluators. A report by the evaluators is reviewed by the Labelling Board, for a final decision on whether the Label should be awarded. In case the Institution still does not comply with some of the requirements, it may be awarded an 'ORPHEUS Evaluation Certificate', in recognition of the efforts for such accomplishment. The purpose of these tools and processes is to assist institutions to reflect on their doctoral training programmes, towards excellency in PhD training.

Target audience: Heads of PhD programs, faculty involved in PhD training, quality assurance personnel, administrative and legal staff.

Facilitators:
Dr. Gül Akdoğan, Chair, ORPHEUS Labelling Committee, IEU School of Medicine, Izmir, Turkey
Dr. Joana Palha, Co-Chair, ORPHEUS Labelling Committee, Minho University, Braga, Portugal

Additional information: The workshop will take place in person only (not hybrid/online).

Participant limit: unlimited participants

WORKSHOP B2
27th of MAY, 2026
13:30-15:00

EUniWell workshop – PhD Survival Lab

Venue: Seminar Room 1 and 2, ground floor, EOK building

Description: The PhD Survival Lab offers a safe, interactive space for PhD students and postdocs to reflect on stress, writing guilt, academic pressure, and blurred boundaries between research and private life. Guided by two key questions — Why is PhD life mentally so demanding? and What strategies can support resilience and well-being? — participants will share experiences and co-create ways to navigate burnout, rejections, and "publish or perish" challenges.

Target audience: Active PhD students and postdocs

Facilitators:

Dr. Ádám Orosz, Assistant Professor, mental health specialist, zen meditation teacher,
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Dr. Zsuzsanna Katalin Papp, Assistant Professor,
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Additional information: Workshop will take place in person only (not hybrid/online).

Participant limit: Maximum 32

WORKSHOP B3
27th of MAY, 2026
13:30-15:00

Building Interdisciplinary Support Teams for Clinical Translational PhD Training – Why It Matters and How to Do It

Venue: Seminar Room 0, ground floor, EOK building

Workshop Description: Translational medicine aims to accelerate the journey from scientific discovery to improved patient care. However, traditional PhD structures often fail to provide the interdisciplinary mentoring and systemic support required for effective translation.

This interactive workshop presents our unique clinical translational PhD training model, designed to ensure the rapid application of medical discoveries through structured interdisciplinary support teams. The model is grounded in the Translational Medicine Cycle, as described in Nature Medicine ("Accelerating the translational medicine cycle").

Participants will:

- Explore the structure and principles of our interdisciplinary PhD mentoring system
- Understand how the Translational Medicine Cycle supports faster clinical implementation
- Learn practical strategies for building effective supervisory and support teams
- Discuss how to reach out for institutional and international collaboration
- Identify pathways for publishing in high-impact journals
- Reflect on how to integrate multiple healthcare-related disciplines into PhD training

Through short presentations, moderated discussions, and small-group exercises, the workshop will offer concrete tools for implementing similar models at other institutions.

Target audience: Active PhD students (clinical and translational fields). PhD program directors. University leaders and decision-makers. Supervisors and mentors involved in doctoral education.

Facilitators:

Dr. Gábor Varga, Professor, deputy-director for operation
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Dr. Mahmoud Obeidat, Senior Scientific Methodology Supervisor,
obeidat.mahmoud96@gmail.com
Centre for Translational Medicine, Semmelweis University, Budapest, Hungary

Additional information:

Workshop will take place in person only (not hybrid/online), however if there is high demand for online participants we can organize it.

Participant limit: Maximum 30

POSTERS

ALBANIAN HOSPITAL REFORM: THE ROLE OF AUTONOMY IN THE HOSPITAL SYSTEM

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Memorial Regional Hospital of Fier, Albania

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Hospital autonomy has become a central component of health sector reform in Albania, reflecting broader efforts to modernize governance and improve the performance of public hospitals. Traditionally characterized by a highly centralized management structure, the Albanian hospital system faced persistent challenges related to inefficiency, limited managerial flexibility, and weak accountability. Reform initiatives have introduced greater financial, administrative, and managerial autonomy, aiming to enhance resource allocation, service quality, and institutional accountability. By shifting the role of the Ministry of Health from direct control to regulation and oversight, hospital autonomy seeks to promote performance-based management and strengthen decision-making at the institutional level. However, the effectiveness of this reform depends on the development of robust accountability mechanisms, managerial capacity, transparent financing systems, and clear performance indicators. While autonomy offers significant potential to improve efficiency and responsiveness within the hospital sector, its success requires a balanced framework that combines independence with strong governance and regulatory oversight. The purpose of this study is to examine the role of hospital autonomy within the ongoing health system reforms in Albania and to assess its impact on governance, efficiency, financial management, and quality of care in public hospitals. Specifically, the study aims to analyze how increased managerial, financial, and administrative independence influences hospital performance and accountability mechanisms. It further seeks to identify the key challenges and opportunities associated with the implementation of autonomy reforms, evaluating whether the shift from centralized control to decentralized decision-making contributes to improved service delivery and institutional sustainability within the Albanian hospital system.

This study uses a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative policy analysis and quantitative secondary data review to evaluate hospital autonomy reform in Albania. Qualitative data were collected through analysis of national legislation, strategic health reform documents, governmental reports, and institutional guidelines related to hospital governance and financing. Semi-structured interviews with hospital managers and health policy stakeholders (if applicable) were used to explore perceptions of autonomy, managerial capacity, and implementation challenges. Quantitative data were drawn from publicly available health system indicators, hospital performance reports, and financial statistics to assess changes in efficiency, service utilization, and resource allocation following the introduction of autonomy reforms. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis for qualitative findings and descriptive statistical methods for quantitative indicators, allowing for a comprehensive assessment of the governance, financial, and operational impact of hospital autonomy within the Albanian hospital system.

The findings indicate that the introduction of hospital autonomy in Albania has led to moderate improvements in managerial flexibility and internal governance structures within public hospitals. Hospitals with increased financial and administrative authority demonstrated greater control over budget allocation, procurement processes, and internal organization of services. In some cases, this contributed to more efficient resource utilization and improved responsiveness to local patient needs.

However, the results also reveal that the implementation of autonomy remains partial and uneven. While formal decision-making powers have expanded, financial dependence on central funding mechanisms and limited managerial capacity continue to constrain full operational independence. Weak performance monitoring systems and insufficient accountability frameworks further limit the measurable impact of the reform on quality of care and cost efficiency. Overall, the reform has strengthened institutional governance structures, but its effectiveness in significantly improving hospital

performance depends on continued development of financing mechanisms, managerial training, and transparent evaluation systems.

The introduction of hospital autonomy in Albania represents a significant step toward modernizing the governance and management of the public hospital system. The reform has enhanced managerial flexibility and laid the foundation for performance-oriented decision-making. However, the impact of autonomy on efficiency, financial sustainability, and quality of care remains constrained by limited institutional capacity, incomplete decentralization, and insufficient accountability mechanisms. For hospital autonomy to achieve its intended outcomes, it must be supported by strengthened regulatory oversight, transparent financing arrangements, robust performance monitoring systems, and continuous managerial capacity building. A balanced approach combining institutional independence with clear accountability will be essential to ensuring that autonomy contributes to sustainable improvements in hospital performance and overall health system effectiveness.

Keywords: Albania, hospital autonomy, health system reform, public hospitals, governance, health financing, decentralization, accountability, health policy, efficiency.

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UKRAINIAN MEDICAL PHDS AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: OVERVIEW

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The problem of PhD students' academic integrity is relevant under increasing digitalisation and high publication pressure. Academic misconduct in PhD training manifests not only in classical forms, such as plagiarism or falsification, but also in uncritical reliance on digital tools. This undermines the fundamental principles of education, intended to develop independent research competence, ethical responsibility, and scientific reasoning.

Medical PhD students can be exposed to misconduct due to heavy clinical workload, limited time for research, high publication expectations, and insufficient training in research ethics. In the absence of clear institutional regulations AI overuse may turn into a pragmatic coping strategy. This can be reinforced by inconsistent supervision, with declarative warnings against misconduct. In the absence of zero tolerance to academic misconduct in the academia, extrapolated onto the institutional practices, the problem becomes urgent,

The consequences of misconduct in medical PhD training extend beyond individual violations, as it leads to a decline in research quality, poor reputation, and risks for evidence-based science. Those PhD students who have not developed authentic research may later transfer this lack into clinical decision-making and medical teaching, which is critical for healthcare.

Therefore, the core problem lies not solely in individual behaviour, but in structural and pedagogical PhD training gaps. Effective solutions require a shift from punishment to prevention, clear institutional policies on academic integrity overall, with the AI particularly, and differentiation between acceptable and unacceptable support. Furthermore, tutors must use the digital tools in their teaching, to teach PhD students how to use them responsibly.

THE FORMING (REFORMING) PONTENTIAL OF ETHICAL VALUES OF GEORGIAN ACADEMIC ECOSYSTEM

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The practice of medicine is fundamentally linked to ethical values. Established 35 years ago, David Tvildiani Medical University (DTMU) was founded on a commitment to academic integrity and professional ethics within Georgia's post-Soviet landscape. This foundational "micro-environment" has since expanded into a robust national ecosystem through the Erasmus+ project, "Responsible Conduct of Research – Research Integrity and Ethics in Georgian Universities" (ETHICS), marking a strategic shift from internal ethical adherence to effective science communication as a bridge for interdisciplinary partnership.

Moving from theoretical ethics to systemic improvements, DTMU implemented several targeted interventions. Notably, while DTMU had already been utilizing ORPHEUS standards for its PhD self- evaluation processes, the project allowed for further quality enhancements. These included the "professionalization" of the Research Ethics Committee – which acquired an educational function and where committee activity is now formally recognized as remunerated scientific work. To ensure sustainability, a local Research Integrity MOOC was developed on participating universities' Moodle platforms, complemented by mandated staff participation in ethics training (CPD/CME). Furthermore, as a member of the European Network for Academic Integrity (ENAI), DTMU localized international expertise through translated materials and established a proactive framework for ethical AI use. A central pillar of this initiative is the Science Communication Strategic Plan.

The first session of science communication readiness was held at the SYSSA scientific conference: PhD students as presenters – MD students as target audience, results were analyzed; changing target audience with non-medical students is planned, which is a promising environment for interdisciplinary cooperation and new project ideas. Ultimately, these partnerships serve as the key to enhancing doctoral education quality, ensuring research integrity remains the cornerstone of a sustainable, knowledge-based society.

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Evaluating an AI Tool for PhD Administration

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Administrative and procedural demands can add substantial friction to the doctoral journey, limiting students' autonomy and increasing reliance on institutional support. To address this, we developed an AI-based platform designed to provide accessible guidance on doctoral administrative procedures, specifically processes related to scholarship renewal, and explored its perceived usability, feasibility, and acceptability among PhD students and key doctoral-context stakeholders.

A cross-sectional survey study was conducted using two parallel questionnaires administered to PhD students and stakeholders involved in doctoral education. Analyses included descriptive statistics for demographic and item-level responses, calculation of composite scores, internal consistency analysis for student-reported perceptions, and exploratory non-parametric comparisons.

Responses were obtained from 35 students and 6 stakeholders. Students evaluated the platform positively overall, with the highest ratings observed for speed of obtaining information (M = 4.34/5), ease of use (M = 4.26/5), clarity of responses (M = 4.09/5), and likelihood of regular use (M = 4.03/5). Ratings were comparatively lower, though still favourable, for accuracy and reliability (M = 3.80/5), increased autonomy in managing procedures (M = 3.83/5), and reduced need to contact staff or supervisors (M = 3.86/5). The full 7-item student scale showed good internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .83$), and no significant differences emerged across student age range, gender, or PhD year.

Stakeholders also reported very positive perceptions and tended to rate the platform more favourably than students on several shared items, although these comparisons were exploratory given the small stakeholder sample.

These findings suggest that AI-based support tools may strengthen doctoral support systems by improving access to timely, clear, and usable procedural information.

PUBLIC PROCUREMENT AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH IN CROATIA: LEGAL OBSTACLES AND THEIR IMPACT ON PHD STUDENTS

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Public procurement in Croatia follows EU directives that focus on transparency, market competition, and responsible spending. However, these rules create real challenges for academic and research institutions, especially when it comes to buying scientific equipment.

These issues are mostly visible within research projects involving PhD students, where their work often depends on specific equipment with strict technical specifications. Unfortunately, the procurement procedures tend to focus on formal compliance and, in most cases, the lowest price. As a result, contracts may go to cheaper options that meet basic requirements but don't truly fit the scientific goals of the project. This mismatch can harm data quality, force researchers to change their methods, and cause delays in students earning their degrees.

Additionally, the way that Croatian faculties handle procurement can make these delays worse. Usually, one person oversees many complex procedures, often without expertise in scientific equipment. Turning detailed technical specifications into legal tender documentation can be a demanding task. Worries about making mistakes or dealing with appeals can slow things down further.

PhD students and their supervisors often feel stuck in this system, needing quick access to the right tools but having little influence over procurement choices. The situation in Croatia highlights the critical need for more flexible and research-friendly procurement procedures that balance legal requirements with the realities of scientific work and the needs of researchers and their PhD candidates.

These points encourage conversation about possible changes that could improve how procurement operates to better support academic and scientific progress.

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FROM LAB TO MARKET: INTEGRATING ENTREPRENEURSHIP INTO TRANSLATIONALLY ORIENTED PHD TRAINING IN BIOMATERIALS

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PhD education in biomedical and health sciences has traditionally been based on disciplinary excellence and publication-oriented outcomes. However, increasing societal, clinical, and economic expectations necessitate that doctoral graduates develop translational and entrepreneurial competencies in addition to strong scientific foundations [1]. The lack of structured integration of entrepreneurship into PhD education often leads to learning processes relying on individual initiative rather than institutional design, limiting sustainability and quality assurance [2].

This study proposes a Translational Doctorate (T-PhD) education model that systematically integrates entrepreneurship as a competency framework into PhD education in the field of biomaterials. The term "Translational Doctorate (T-PhD)" is used here as a descriptive framework rather than as a formal degree structure. The model is organized around five interrelated modules: (i) basic scientific research, (ii) preclinical and biological validation, (iii) translational planning and technology readiness level (TRL) awareness, (iv) intellectual property and regulatory literacy, and (v) sustainable academia- industry-clinical networks. In this approach, entrepreneurship is not framed as mandatory company formation; rather, it is conceptualized as a transferable skill set that enhances research quality, societal impact, and employability.

The proposed framework is illustrated through a translational research example involving a PhD student from a Biotechnology Program and a faculty member from the Faculty of Pharmacy. During this process, interaction with a national innovation and entrepreneurship program provided a structured learning environment for identifying clinical needs, user-centered problem formulation, intellectual property awareness, and translational decision-making. This experience functioned as a practical example of how translational and entrepreneurial competencies can emerge within doctoral training contexts.

Integrating entrepreneurship into PhD education in a structured and institutionally supported manner contributes to quality enhancement in PhD education, strengthens sustainable academia– industry linkages, and supports the institutionalization of translational competencies within PhD programs. The proposed model is transferable across biomedical fields and offers a scalable approach for institutions aiming to strengthen the translational impact and long-term educational quality of PhD programs.

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DOCTORAL STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON TRANSFERABLE SKILLS TRAINING AND ITS ROLE IN SUSTAINABLE PHD EDUCATION

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Transversal (transferable) skills are professional practice skills common across many occupations and of importance to the social engagement of academic research• These skills are becoming increasingly important to doctoral completion, employability and the sustainability of doctoral education, but are poorly and inconsistently included in many doctoral programs (1,2).

Here we report a study that collated information regarding doctoral students' view on the value, availability, quality and institutional support of transferable skills training, using an anonymous online survey with 10 closed items, which was addressed to 23 doctoral students and analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Most of the participants were in the Biomedical and Health Sciences (6.6%), Social Sciences (17.4%) or Interdisciplinary (13.0%) disciplines. In general, strong personal importance was attached to the transferable skills surveyed with the participants rating them as 4.61/5 for completion of a PhD and 4.39/5 for employability outside of academia. Despite this knowledge, there seems to be variable implementation (39% mandatory, 30% optional and 30% limited or not visible), and the quality of training was most frequently seen to be average. The institutional support for the program, which was rated 3.43/5, also suggests that there is room for improvement.

The most commonly developed transferable skills were scientific communication, research ethics and integrity, project and time management, and collaboration and teamwork, with career planning skills less frequently developed.

Overall, while doctoral candidates clearly value transferable skills, findings emphasise the need for clearer institutional strategies, improved visibility, and more consistent curricular embedding within doctoral education frameworks.

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CAREER DEVELOPMENT IN THE INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH ECOSYSTEM: A RESEARCHCOMP-BASED APPROACH AND THE MERSIN UNIVERSITY CASE

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In today's rapidly changing research and innovation ecosystem, it is no longer considered sufficient for researchers to possess only deep academic expertise (vertical competencies). There is a growing need for "transversal" competencies that facilitate the transition from academia to professional life and increase the production of social benefits. European data (the MORE4 study) indicates that researchers experience significant training gaps in "transferable skills" critical for career advancement, which limits collaboration with non-academic sectors.

This study shares the results of the "Interdisciplinary Research Skills Workshop" model, planned under the leadership of the Mersin University Institute of Health Sciences. The primary objective of the study is to implement the "T-Shaped Researcher" model by equipping researchers with the seven core competency areas defined by the European Competence Framework for Researchers (ResearchComp). While awareness of these skills has been raised among students and supervisors through the "Transferable Skills Course Pool" added to the Doctoral curricula of the Institute of Health Sciences, this workshop aims to transform this awareness into competence within an interdisciplinary environment.

The event, creates an interdisciplinary setting where doctoral students from the Graduate Schools of Health, Natural, Education and Social Sciences come together. The workshop includes applied sessions such as:

- Cognitive abilities
- Self-management
- Working with others
- Managing research funding
- Well-being

Furthermore, "ResearchComp Self-Assessment tools" will be utilized to measure participants' competencies. Through the workshop, it is intended to enhance researchers' skills in writing interdisciplinary research questions, managing complex projects, and transforming findings into value for different sectors. The results of the study are expected to serve as a sustainable "good practice example" to improve the quality of doctoral education in Türkiye and increase the competitiveness of graduates beyond academia.

Keywords: Transversal Competencies, Research Comp, Interdisciplinary Research.

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RESEARCH-DRIVEN AND SUSTAINABLE INTERDISCIPLINARY DOCTORAL TRAINING IN HEALTH SCIENCES: THE BEZMIALEM MODEL

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High-quality doctoral education in health sciences increasingly requires research environments that promote interdisciplinary collaboration and sustainable academic networks [1]. As biomedical challenges such as complex diseases, drug discovery, and translational medicine span multiple disciplines, doctoral training must integrate diverse scientific perspectives and methodologies. In this context, research-driven doctoral education, in which students are actively embedded in collaborative research settings, plays a key role in enhancing both the quality and impact of doctoral outcomes [2].

This presentation introduces the doctoral training model implemented at the Institute of Health Sciences of Bezmialem Vakif University, which emphasizes research-centered learning and interdisciplinary partnerships. Particular attention is given to interdisciplinary doctoral programs such as Biotechnology, Drug Discovery and Development, and Pharmacognosy and Natural Products Chemistry, where students are trained at the interface of multiple scientific fields. These programs bring together expertise from areas including pharmaceutical sciences, biomedical sciences, chemistry and biotechnology, enabling doctoral candidates to address complex scientific problems through integrated research approaches. Within this framework, doctoral students are embedded in active research projects and collaborative research groups, facilitating the development of interdisciplinary competencies, critical thinking skills, and sustainable academic networks. Institutional strategies such as collaborative supervision, project-based research training, and participation in national and international research collaborations further support this model. These structured mechanisms collectively promote a more coherent, research-intensive doctoral experience.

While these interdisciplinary programs represent a core component of the doctoral training strategy, the research-driven and collaborative approach is not limited to them. The same principles can also be extended to more discipline-based doctoral programs, such as Medical Microbiology, Medical Biochemistry, and related biomedical fields, thereby strengthening the overall quality and coherence of doctoral education across the Institute. This integrative perspective ensures that both interdisciplinary and discipline-specific programs benefit from a unified educational philosophy.

By presenting this institutional approach, the study highlights how research-driven and interdisciplinary doctoral training can contribute to building sustainable doctoral ecosystems in health sciences and support the continuous enhancement of doctoral education quality in line with international standards. Overall, the model demonstrates the institution's commitment to aligning doctoral training with evolving global expectations and best practices.

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UPDATING THE PhD EDUCATION FOR THE 21ST CENTURY: WHY AI, SUSTAINABILITY, AND SCIENCE COMMUNICATION ARE NO LONGER OPTIONAL?

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Doctoral education has traditionally prioritised disciplinary depth through focused investigation of a defined research problem. However, contemporary biomedical research is increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence, sustainability constraints, and the need for societal engagement. These shifts call for a redefinition of what constitutes core doctoral competence.

In response, we have systematically embedded three transversal competencies — responsible use of AI in research, sustainability, and science communication — into the syllabus of an ORPHEUS-aligned doctoral lecture at Acýbadem Mehmet Ali Aydýnlar University. Rather than treating these areas as optional or supplementary, the course positions them as integral to research design, execution, and dissemination.

The lecture introduces structured components across the research lifecycle: (i) critical and responsible use of AI tools in hypothesis generation, data analysis, and scientific writing; (ii) sustainability-aware research practices, including consideration of environmental impact and broader societal relevance; and (iii) science communication training that enables doctoral candidates to translate complex findings for diverse audiences without compromising rigour.

Beyond classroom content, the model is reinforced through institutional integration. Doctoral candidates actively participate in the Climate Change and Sustainability Commission, contributing to research prioritisation and campus policy, and in the Social Transcript Task Force – Science and Future Division, where engagement in outreach and public communication is formally recognised within their academic development. These mechanisms ensure that competencies introduced in the syllabus are enacted in practice.

This initiative also surfaces key tensions — between rigour and accessibility, innovation and reproducibility, and curricular reform and institutional inertia. By aligning structured teaching with participatory governance mechanisms, we propose a model in which doctoral training evolves from knowledge transmission to capacity building for responsible and impactful research.

Within the ORPHEUS framework, this work offers a practical, transferable approach to embedding emerging competencies into doctoral education. We invite participants to reflect on their own curricula and to co-develop principles for a PhD training model that is responsive to the scientific and societal demands of the 21st century.

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ENGINEERING A MEDICAL PHD: CHALLENGES, BEST PRACTICES, AND INSTITUTIONAL SOLUTIONS FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY DOCTORAL EDUCATION

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Sustainable doctoral education increasingly depends on the ability of institutions to build genuine interdisciplinary partnerships that bridge traditionally separate academic cultures. This paper presents a case study of a biomedical engineering graduate entering the Interdisciplinary Education PhD Programme at the Jagiellonian University Medical College (UJMC), examining how structured institutional networks can transform disciplinary boundaries into collaborative strengths.

Biomedical engineering is inherently cross-disciplinary, yet the transition to a medical doctoral school reveals persistent structural barriers. The primary challenge was identifying an institution and supervisor capable of sustaining a genuine engineering–medicine partnership. This required evaluating not only academic titles, but publication impact, doctoral supervision track records, and current student capacity — criteria formally embedded in UJMC's Research Topic Submission Form, which itself functions as a quality assurance mechanism. This form exemplifies best practice in partnership governance: supervisors must declare disciplinary affiliation, document research methods, define student tasks and time commitments. Each research topic submitted is evaluated by a committee experienced in scientific research in the relevant field of medical science, pharmaceutical science or health science, and publicly announced. Candidates complete electronic registration, and attend a formal interview — creating a transparent, quality-driven selection network.

This experience demonstrates that sustainable interdisciplinary doctoral networks require more than goodwill: they demand formalised partnership structures, transparent supervisor profiling, and dedicated orientation for candidates crossing disciplinary boundaries. Three concrete recommendations emerge: establish cross-faculty supervisor matching services; introduce discipline-bridging orientation programmes for incoming non-medical doctoral candidates; and simplify administrative registration pathways to reduce barriers for engineers entering medical doctoral schools.

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FROM REACCREDITATION TO SUSTAINABLE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT: A DOCTORAL PERSPECTIVE INFORMED BY EARLY-STAGE STUDENT SURVEYS

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High-quality doctoral education is essential for developing research capacity and sustaining institutional excellence. Following reaccreditation, continuous quality monitoring is necessary to ensure alignment with international standards, including ORPHEUS recommendations.

This study evaluated perceived programme quality, mentorship, organisational support, and early career outcomes in a doctoral programme. A cross-sectional survey was conducted in 2023 among enrolled doctoral students and programme graduates at the Faculty of Medicine Osijek. The survey assessed mentorship, teaching quality, organisational support, and acquired competencies. Overall satisfaction with the programme was high, with most respondents indicating they would choose the programme again (87.5% of students; 82.8% of graduates). Mentorship was consistently rated positively. Employment outcomes were favourable, with 93% of graduates working in academic, clinical, or research-related roles. Areas for improvement were identified primarily in organisational aspects, including administrative support and communication. In addition, some participants reported limited opportunities for developing transferable skills such as project management and scientific communication.

The programme demonstrates strong overall performance, particularly in mentorship and career outcomes. Structured feedback from students and graduates provides a valuable basis for targeted improvements in organisation, communication, and transferable skills development, supporting continuous quality enhancement beyond reaccreditation processes.

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EVALUATION OF QUALIFICATION PROCESS, EXPECTED GRADUATION TIME, AND PUBLICATION PRODUCTIVITY OF ORPHEUS DOCTORAL STUDENTS: A CROSS-SECTIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE 2022-2023 FALL SEMESTER

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The monitoring of doctoral students' progress and scientific productivity is an important component of doctoral education quality. This study aimed to evaluate the qualification exam status, expected graduation timeline, and publication productivity of ORPHEUS doctoral students in the 2022–2023 fall semester. The study included 73 doctoral students in the qualification stage.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the distribution of students according to their qualification exam period, expected graduation year, and publication experience with their advisors.

The findings showed that nearly half of the students (46.57%) took the qualification exam in the 4th term, while smaller proportions took it in the 5th term (15%) and 3rd term (9.58%). A considerable proportion of students (26%) had not yet attended the qualification exam, while a small number were waiting either due to traditional procedures (2.73%). In terms of productivity in research, most students (82.6%) reported that they had not published any papers with their advisors outside their thesis-related work, while only 14.7% had such publications. Among those who had published additional articles (n=11), almost half had publications in Q1 journals (45.46%), followed by Q2 (27.27%) and Q3 (27.27%) journals.

These findings suggest that while a small proportion of doctoral students demonstrate high-quality publication outputs, overall research productivity and expected timely graduation rates remain limited. Strengthening mentoring, encouraging collaborative research, and supporting early publication efforts may contribute to improving doctoral training outcomes and academic productivity within ORPHEUS doctoral programs.

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EMPOWERING BIOMEDICAL PHDS: CO-CREATING THE ACU IMPACT PLATFORM FOR 21ST-CENTURY COMPETENCIES

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Biomedical PhD programs traditionally emphasize research output, often lacking structured frameworks to cultivate transferable skills. To bridge the gap between scientific training and the 21st-century competencies outlined by the World Economic Forum, we developed ACU IMPACT: an e-portfolio and microlearning platform tracking six core areas: Healthy Living, Arts and Culture, Career Development, Science and Future, Nature and Humanity, and Social Responsibility.

Crucially, ACU IMPACT is built through multi-stakeholder co-creation. Development relies on interdisciplinary teams comprising professors working directly alongside Bachelor, Master, and PhD students. This participatory approach ensures the platform addresses the authentic, practical needs of trainees across different academic stages.

The platform features tiered competency expectations. While foundational levels are established, our co-creation teams are currently designing the advanced Master and PhD tiers. Every student completes a mandatory basic microlearning module for each of the six competencies. Beyond these modules, students earn credits and digital badges by mapping their extracurricular activities—such as scientific organizing committees, NGO work, or student advocacy—to relevant competencies. These achievements populate an e-portfolio that generates an official transcript upon graduation, formally recognizing their holistic development.

Involving PhD candidates directly in the design process has proven essential for tailoring the modules to the complex realities of advanced biomedical research. Ultimately, ACU IMPACT provides a scalable, co-created model for institutions to systematically foster and officially credit the soft skills required for the future scientific workforce.

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THE PILOT YEAR OF THE DOCTORAL SCHOOL AT THE BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH CENTER OF THE SLOVAK ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

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Alliance4Life is a consortium of life science institutions from Central and Eastern Europe, established to strengthen research capacity, enhance collaboration, and address key challenges in health sciences. Initially supported by Horizon 2020, it now brings together 12 leading institutions from 11 countries. The consortium promotes knowledge sharing, identification of best practices, and the development of a strong culture of research excellence. Its activities have contributed to strategic institutional changes, improved research management, human resources, and increased regional competitiveness.

The Biomedical Research Center of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (BMC SAS) has been an active member of Alliance4Life from its beginning. As part of its efforts to improve research quality and promote good scientific practice, it launched a PhD School in September 2025 as a pilot project. The main goal is to provide a supportive environment for PhD students to develop professionally and personally. The Doctoral School includes lectures and workshops focused on both soft and hard skills, as well as opportunities to learn new laboratory methods across its departments.

During the Doctoral School program, students will have the opportunity to participate in a joint PhD conference, where they will present their results, receive feedback from senior researchers, and build professional networks. The Doctoral School represents one of the key activities contributing to the development of a high-quality research environment. It supports the transformation of the institution towards excellence in science and researcher well-being. In the long term, the Doctoral School contributes to shaping a new generation of well-trained, confident, and collaborative researchers. Finally, the Doctoral School can increase visibility of BMC SAS within faculties and universities, thereby attracting new Ph.D. students.

This activity was supported by the Alliance4Life BRIDGE project, funded by the European Union under Grant Agreement No. 101136453.

The role of an Evidence Based Research Approach in a PhD Thesis

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To undertake research without systematically considering what has been done before is unethical, unscientific, and wasteful. The questions and methods of new studies should be informed by systematic reviews. Results from new studies should be placed in context by explicit consideration of prior evidence, ideally by incorporating the new results in a systematic review. Evidence-Based Research Network (EBRNetwork) was established to raise awareness of this, to facilitate evidence-based research, to identify and conduct research projects to inform the methodology and implementation of evidence-based research, to develop and disseminate scientific products about evidence-based research and to make evidence-based research a fundamental part of the research culture in all scientific disciplines.

In a doctoral thesis, the EBR approach lends depth and academic legitimacy to the thesis by systematically outlining the scientific background, current debates and theoretical framework of the research topic. By critically analyzing existing knowledge, it identifies gaps in the research, prevents duplication and enhances methodological rigor. Using the EBR approach enables;

- Identifying Research Gaps: By identifying the limitations, conflicting findings and unexplored areas (gaps) in existing studies, this highlights the thesis's originality.
- Scientific Foundation and justification: By ensuring the research is grounded in sound theoretical and methodological foundations, it enhances the justification of the thesis.
- Methodological Development: By analyzing the methods used in previous studies, it enables the researcher to select the most appropriate methodology, avoid potential pitfalls, and improve existing methods.
- Conceptual and Theoretical Framework: By clarifying the fundamental concepts, theories, and debates related to the topic, it structures the thesis's conceptual framework.
- Avoiding Duplication and Saving Time: By identifying previous studies on the same topic, it preserves the originality of the work and prevents wasted time.

Young researchers are key interest holders for EBR Network. For this reason, we aimed to share EBR approaches and EBR Network with audience and we added an inclusion video and a survey.

Key Words: PhD thesis, Systematic Review, Evidence-Based Research

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INTERDISCIPLINARY AND INTER-INSTITUTIONAL COLLABORATION AS A FRAMEWORK FOR ENHANCING DOCTORAL TRAINING QUALITY: EXPERIENCES FROM THE CORONA MUMS PROJECT

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Contemporary public health challenges increasingly require interdisciplinary research approaches, creating new demands for doctoral education systems. Ensuring high-quality doctoral training therefore requires structures that enable collaboration across disciplines and institutions while supporting the development of transferable competencies. When doctoral researchers are involved in large multidisciplinary projects, effective coordination is essential to ensure timely academic development and simultaneous compliance with Doctoral School requirements.

This contribution describes experiences from a research environment involving biologists, public health researchers, physiotherapists, and psychologists collaborating within the Corona Mums Project [1]. The initiative brings together researchers from different universities and research units, creating an inter-institutional framework in which doctoral researchers benefit from diverse supervisory expertise. Currently, three doctoral theses in psycho-physiology, stress biology, and Developmental Origins of Health and Disease (DOHaD) are being created within this collaboration.

Doctoral candidates are supported through interdisciplinary supervisory structures, seminars, and collaborative analytical meetings. These elements strengthen research design, broaden methodological perspectives, and support the development of transferable skills such as teamwork, communication, and project coordination. Collaboration across institutions also exposes PhD students to diverse academic cultures and research practices.

Interdisciplinary and inter-institutional doctoral training presents both opportunities and organisational challenges. For example, collaboration can broaden methodological competencies and expose researchers to diverse perspectives, while coordinating supervision and aligning expectations across institutions may require additional organisational effort. Our experiences highlight how collaborative research networks can support sustainable doctoral education environments and quality enhancement in PhD programmes.

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AN INTERDISCIPLINARY AND TRANSLATIONAL MODEL FOR DOCTORAL TRAINING IN NEUROSCIENCE: THE MILANO-BICOCCA PHD PROGRAM

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The PhD Program in Neuroscience at the University of Milano-Bicocca represents an innovative and interdisciplinary training model designed to merging clinical, experimental, and psychological perspectives in neuroscience. By transcending traditional academic silos, the program equips candidates from medicine, biology, and psychology sharing a core interest in neuroscience, fostering a comprehensive approach to neuronal physiology and complex disorders.

This PhD program is an interdepartmental, multisite enterprise based at the School of Medicine and Surgery of the University of Milano-Bicocca. The mission is to provide an environment of excellence for training in research based on the coexistence and cooperation of Italian and International Universities, Hospital-based research centre and the pharmaceutical Industry with a strong vocation to innovation.

The PhD program is structured into 2 tracks:

- Experimental Neuroscience
- Clinical Neuroscience

A key strength of this framework is its ability to bridge the gap between bench and bedside, creating a collaborative ecosystem where preclinical insights directly drive clinical breakthroughs. This translational potential is exemplified by high-impact, cross-disciplinary projects ranging from clinical trials, to the identification of biomarkers, study of animal and cellular models of neuronal diseases, non-invasive brain stimulation and development of neuromodulation protocols.

Overall, this integrated structure transforms PhD candidates into translational scientists capable of navigating the complexity of neuroscience. By demonstrating how multi-level analysis can enhance research quality, the Milano-Bicocca model serves as a blueprint for high-quality doctoral training aimed at fostering innovative therapeutic strategies and improving global human health.

ALLIANCE FOR LIFE_BRIDGE PROJECT AS A PLATFORM FOR AN IMPROVEMENT OF RESEARCH CULTURE WITH IMPACT ON PHD EDUCATION AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

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Alliance4Life (A4L) was established as an EU-funded project in 2018 to enhance institutional governance, research management and research culture in Central and Eastern European countries (CEE). Through benchmarking and best practice exchange, partners identified key areas for improvement and collaborated in thematic working groups. Over time, A4L has evolved into a long-term initiative advancing research and innovation excellence in Central and Eastern Europe, strengthening institutional capacity and regional competitiveness.

The A4L_BRIDGE project was initiated in 2024 with the aim to strengthen research and innovation performance across the EU by advancing higher education in the R&I dimension at health research-performing institutions. Building on the strategic partnership established by the Alliance4Life, the project is dedicated to reducing disparities in research and innovation excellence within Europe. The A4L_BRIDGE consortium consisting of 12 partners from 11 Widening countries of the Europen Union implements its project tasks within 16 workpackages that include a number of activities dedicated to PhD students and young researchers (see https://alliance4life.com/our-projects/alliance4life_bridge). Among them, the most important are activities supporting development of soft and hard skills through

(1) Open accredited courses on E-learning platform, (2) Mentorship program connecting student and ESR with experts in the field, (3) Virtual research centre as a hub creating new opportunities for research collaborations with mobility program facilitating internships and seed fund projects, (4) Skills academy with a series of workshops, trainings, and webinars focused both on academic and non-academic careers, (5) Internships providing opportunities to learn, network, collaborate and exchange good practices. All these activities are in line with HRS4R principles of inclusiveness and equality of opportunities and fully respect COARA mission.

We believe that the project will allow us to increase a capacity of CEE universities and research institutions for attracting the best talents thanks to institutional changes, new research avenues discovered through increased international collaborations, and increased visibility and recognition of CEE health research.

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INTERDISCIPLINARY DOCTORAL TRAINING IN MEDICAL SCIENCES, HEALTH SCIENCES AND PHARMACEUTICAL SCIENCES: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF MEDICAL AND HEALTH SCIENCES AT THE JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY MEDICAL COLLEGE

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Interdisciplinary collaboration has become an increasingly important element of contemporary research addressing complex health-related challenges. As a result, doctoral education is evolving towards training environments that encourage cooperation across closely related scientific disciplines. Doctoral schools play a key role in creating institutional structures that support such collaboration while ensuring high standards of doctoral education.

This presentation explores how interdisciplinary doctoral training can contribute to strengthening research quality in doctoral education in medical sciences, health sciences and pharmaceutical sciences. The discussion draws on the experience of the Doctoral School of Medical and Health Sciences at the Jagiellonian University Medical College, which brings together doctoral candidates representing these three disciplines within a single doctoral training environment.

Integrating medical sciences, health sciences and pharmaceutical sciences within one doctoral school creates opportunities for collaboration across research teams, clinical environments and laboratory-based settings. Such an interdisciplinary framework supports the exchange of scientific perspectives and methodological approaches, while fostering the development of transferable research skills and collaborative competencies among doctoral candidates. At the same time, the specific nature of each discipline is reflected in the curriculum through dedicated educational paths that include optional courses, which doctoral candidates select from the second year onwards in accordance with their individual research interests.

The presentation will discuss how integrated doctoral school environments enhance doctoral training through shared educational activities, interdisciplinary interactions and exposure to diverse scientific cultures, contributing to sustainable research networks and quality enhancement in doctoral education.

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL FOR HEALTH SCIENCES: BUILDING INTERDISCIPLINARY NETWORKS TO ADVANCE CLINICAL AND ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE IN DOCTORAL TRAINING

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The PhD program at the Graduate School for Health Sciences (GHS) offers a structurally innovative model centred on psychological and physiological factors shaping health across individual, social, and environmental contexts. The program emphasizes clinical and patient-oriented research addressing physical and mental health, development, and wellbeing.

The GHS is an interfaculty program jointly organized by the Faculties of Medicine, Human Sciences, and Vetsuisse at the University of Bern, reflecting the University of Bern's strategic commitment to interdisciplinary collaboration and sustainable academic networks. Doctoral candidates are supervised by a diverse pool of experts across three Expert Committees covering Public Health and Methodologies, Clinical Neurosciences, and Clinical Sciences. A notable feature is the 50–50 model for candidates under the Clinical Sciences committee, which combines clinical practice with academic research—a unique opportunity in Switzerland to pursue dual careers in both domains.

While varying across committees, a substantial share of candidates engages in interdisciplinary research, highlighting the GHS's role as a platform that structurally fosters interfaculty exchange and cross-institutional collaboration. Candidates choose courses tailored to their individual interests and needs, enabling them to become highly qualified, independent researchers.

The annual GHS Symposium—the program's flagship event—brings together candidates, supervisors, and leading experts, promoting valuable exchange and reflection across diverse presentation formats. Ethics and scientific integrity are central pillars of the program, reinforced through a dedicated symposium workshop, stimulating critical thinking and a separate mandatory two- day course likewise organized by the GHS.

Upon successful completion, candidates receive an internationally recognized PhD degree jointly awarded by the three faculties—a degree that reflects the GHS's core principle: that excellence in doctoral education grows also from the strength of its collaborative foundations.

STRENGTHENING DOCTORAL ENGAGEMENT IN A MULTICENTRIC RESEARCH UNIT: THE ROLE OF THE RISE-HEALTH PHD STUDENT COMMITTEE

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Doctoral education increasingly emphasises the creation of collaborative and supportive research environments that promote scientific excellence, transferable skills, and active student engagement. In large multicentric research units, doctoral candidates are frequently distributed across multiple institutions and disciplines, which may create challenges in terms of communication, representation, and community building.

RISE-Health is the largest research unit in Portugal dedicated to health sciences, bringing together more than 1,300 researchers across a distributed network of academic and clinical institutions. Researchers within the unit are involved in 21 doctoral programmes covering diverse areas of biomedical and health research. In such a complex ecosystem, initiatives that strengthen the interaction among doctoral candidates and promote dialogue with institutional structures are essential.

The Doctoral Students' Committee of RISE-Health (CED RISE-Health) was created to enhance the integration, representation, and engagement of PhD Students within the research unit. As a Doctoral student in Biomedicine and a member of this committee, I have contributed to initiatives that enhance support, collaboration, and the overall experience of PhD students within RISE-Health.

Activities promoted by the committee include scientific seminars, PhD Talks sessions, training workshops focused on transferable skills, and networking opportunities that encourage interdisciplinary interaction among doctoral candidates from different institutions and research areas. In addition, the committee facilitates communication between PhD Students and institutional leadership, helping to identify training needs and opportunities for improving doctoral programmes.

Student-driven initiatives such as these contribute to the reinforcement of the research culture, promoting collaboration and supporting the development of a cohesive doctoral community within large and geographically distributed research units.

CLOSING THE GAP BETWEEN POSITIVE ATTITUDES AND PRACTICAL ENGAGEMENT: BUILDING SUSTAINABLE INTERDISCIPLINARY NETWORKS IN DOCTORAL EDUCATION

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Interdisciplinary collaboration is a keystone of high-quality doctoral education, especially in biomedical sciences, yet its implementation often remains limited.

This survey included 43 doctoral candidates and recent alumni from the interdisciplinary doctoral study programme "Molecular biosciences" at the University of Osijek. It assessed knowledge, attitudes, practices, and barriers related to interdisciplinary collaboration and research networks.

Attitudes were strongly positive, with over 90% agreeing that interdisciplinary collaboration improves the quality of doctoral education, however, engagement was limited, with less than half of the respondents having participated in interdisciplinary projects or research. Women showed a significantly higher level of understanding of interdisciplinary research compared to men (Mann-Whitney U test, $p = 0.04$). Correlation between the age of the respondents and their knowledge and attitudes about interdisciplinary collaboration was negatively correlated with understanding of interdisciplinary research (Spearman's correlation coefficient, $\rho = -0.397$), awareness of collaboration opportunities ($\rho = -0.365$), recognition of the importance of academic partnerships ($\rho = -0.420$), and familiarity with research networks ($\rho = -0.414$). Full-time students demonstrated higher levels of understanding ($p = 0.001$), greater awareness of collaboration opportunities ($p = 0.02$), stronger recognition of long-term partnerships ($p = 0.008$), and better familiarity with research networks ($p = 0.001$) compared to part-time students.

In conclusion, this survey reveals a clear gap between positive attitudes toward interdisciplinary research and actual engagement in it. Tackling structural barriers through mentorship, improved access to networks, and institutional support is the way forward to developing sustainable interdisciplinary doctoral education.

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EXPLORING THE WELL-BEING OF INDONESIAN DOCTORAL STUDENTS IN HEALTH SCIENCES AMONG HUNGARIAN UNIVERSITIES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN LABORATORY-BASED AND NON-LABORATORY-BASED RESEARCHERS

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Doctoral education in health sciences differs in many criteria, such as research approach, resource dependencies, academic pressures, and institutional support. In one aspect, the use of laboratory equipments is one of the significant factors, leading to varied experiences in research progression, researchers' wellbeing, and the reproducibility of their studies. This qualitative study explores these perceived differences among Indonesian doctoral students across medicine, pharmacy, chemistry, sport science, and public health. Through semi-structured interviews (n=8, max. 20 minutes), we aim to compare perceived wellbeing, access to funding, publication pressures, confidence in on-time graduation, and the perceived adequacy of university-provided resources and supervisors mentorship.

Preliminary results suggest students generally appreciate the support provided by their universities, but laboratory-based researchers expressed a rather pessimistic perception towards on- time graduation and publication opportunities, except in one who claimed that synchronised teamwork provided considerable supports toward these goals. In contrast, even with less funding opportunities, non-laboratory-based researchers perceived an efficient spending in all aspects, including conference attendance opportunities, in comparison with the funds spent on laboratory equipments/reagents by laboratory-based researchers. Non-laboratory-based researchers also claimed obstacles with primary/secondary data collection and access. In both categories, cultural background played a significant role in shaping their experiences, with some students feeling hesitant to ask for help or assert themselves due to Indonesian cultural norms.

By highlighting these perceived challenges, this study contributes evidence for universities to initiate tailored, field-specific support structures that address distinct stressors, to improve student well- being and program completion rates across all healthcare disciplines.

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THE PRINCIPAL REASONS FOR DISSATISFACTION AMONG PHD STUDENTS IN KINESIOLOGY: LONGITUDINAL QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS (2019–2025)

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According to van Rooiji et al. (2021), factors such as relationship with mentor quality, content of program with PhD project alignment, and workload are related to PhD candidates' satisfaction in PhD programs. The presented study investigated the principal reasons for dissatisfaction among PhD students enrolled in PhD at University of Zagreb Faculty of Kinesiology.

The open-ended quality survey data gathered from six academic cohorts (2019/20–2024/25) were analyzed. The data included short narrative answers (open type) about general satisfaction. The data were coded through segmenting and labeling text, and labels were examined longitudinally across generations to reveal possible patterns and trends over generations.

Principal causes of dissatisfaction were: (1) Repetition of prior knowledge for those already trained in kinesiology (2) Poor alignment with dissertation topics as courses required assignments unrelated to students' topics (3) insufficient practical courses regarding equipment (4) many theoretical lessons but limited applied training in software in statistics (5) delayed or inconsistent communication with professors. Dissatisfaction was at its highest in 2022/23 cohort. Earlier generation (2019/20) was primarily affected by pandemic related problems in organization and lack of in person lectures. On the contrary, the 2024/25 generation exhibited higher satisfaction, with fewer organizational concerns and perceived better teaching quality and support.

Interestingly, though we thought that the overall workload may be the problem, the main reason for dissatisfaction were problems raising from communication disruption and the slowness of mail response of some academics. Longitudinal findings point to some institutional adaptation, as recent generations reported improved academic support.

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LAUNCHING A SCIENTIFIC WRITING RETREAT FOR PHD STUDENTS

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The Inter-university Graduate Campus (IGC) of the Swiss School of Public Health (SSPH+) organizes a range of PhD courses, training opportunities, and academic events in public health sciences across its fourteen partner universities in Switzerland. We aim to share the experience of organizing, launching and promoting a new course, the "Scientific Writing Retreat" (SWR), and report on its significance and benefits.

The SWR is a 3-days full-residential course designed to support PhD students, MD students, and postdocs of the SSPH+ IGC by offering the opportunity to focus exclusively on their academic writing projects (proposals, papers, thesis). A professional substantive scientific writer guides participants through structured writing sessions, feedback rounds, and reflective discussions. The SWR combines protected writing time and guided workshops through which participants learn principles of scientific writing, practice new organizing and writing skills in interactive exercises, learn practical strategies for streamlining the writing process, and bring their writing to the next level. Participants are grouped by the type of study they are working on (e.g., qualitative and social sciences, literature and systematic reviews), so they can benefit from targeted peer exchange and feedback sessions with the facilitator.

The SWR was initiated and organized by IGC student representatives and launched on 24 February 2026. The first workshop will take place from 26-28 August in Wattwiller, France. We will conduct a structured evaluation of the workshop to determine whether it reached our goals of strengthening participants academic scientific writing skills, providing protected and structured writing time, receiving expert guidance and feedback, learning practical strategies to organize and streamline the writing process, connecting with other SSPH+ IGC students and postdocs, and building a supportive peer learning network.

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VOICES THAT MATTER: THE ROLE OF STUDENT UNIONS IN DOCTORAL EDUCATION

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Doctoral student unions play a crucial role in supporting candidates throughout their PhD journey by tackling key aspects of doctoral education: information and guidance, student representation, and community building. Adequate support has been linked to increased doctoral progress and lower likelihood of dropout.1 Here, we present examples from the Doctoral Students' Association (DSA) at Karolinska Institutet.

First, student unions provide accessible resources that help PhD students navigate the complexities of doctoral studies. For instance, our PhD Information booklet and Mentorship platform offer guidance on institutional structures, career development, and common challenges during doctoral training. These initiatives assist doctoral students to better understand available support systems and expectations.

Next, student unions give doctoral candidates a voice in university decision-making. Through central (Faculty Board, Committee for Doctoral Education, etc) and departmental (educational and safety-related) representation, DSA can advocate for improvements in doctoral education. This representation bridges communication, ensuring that doctoral researchers' perspectives, concerns, and needs are considered.

Finally, PhD students value peer support, especially when tailored to their needs.2,3 Our newly initiated PhD Connect program creates opportunities for connection and community building across the university. Additionally, events such as the PhD Conference provide a space for discussions on career development, collaboration, and sharing of research and experiences.

Together, these examples demonstrate how student unions can contribute to a supportive and inclusive doctoral environment by addressing academic, professional, and social needs. Therefore, we encourage universities to foster systems that ensure doctoral students' voices are heard and promote collaboration between students and institutional leadership.

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FACTORS INFLUENCING THE DOCTORAL EXPERIENCE: ATTENDANCE, ORGANIZATION, AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION

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The doctoral program at the Faculty of Kinesiology, University of Zagreb, lasts three academic years. During the first two years, regular classes are held on Saturdays and Sundays, which is uncommon in other PhD programs. A survey among first-year doctoral students (N = 37), reflecting the typical enrolment structure (54% kinesiology, 46% other disciplines), examined relationships between attendance, organizational factors, and subjective experiences.

Attendance was significantly associated with the perception of alternative teaching organization, such as weekend classes ($\chi^2 = 26.562$; $p = 0.001$), and with sense of belonging ($\chi^2 = 16.212$; $p = 0.013$), indicating that greater class involvement is linked to a more positive experience and stronger group belonging. Reasons for absences were significantly associated with fatigue ($\chi^2 = 29.358$; $p = 0.015$) and perception of teaching organization ($\chi^2 = 31.749$; $p = 0.007$), suggesting that physical and organizational factors influence attendance. Place of residence was strongly associated with travel time ($\chi^2 = 33.998$; $p < 0.001$) and the need for overnight accommodation during lessons ($\chi^2 = 37.000$; $p < 0.001$), emphasizing the importance of logistical factors. Prior acquaintance with peers was associated with previous education ($\chi^2 = 17.451$; $p = 0.002$), while workload perception was linked to prior education, with kinesiology students perceiving the program as less demanding ($\chi^2 = 18.952$; $p = 0.004$). Clarity of study information was strongly associated with clarity of information from professors ($\chi^2 = 41.614$; $p < 0.001$), emphasizing the importance of communication.

Overall, these findings indicate that higher attendance, weekend organization, logistical factors and social integration as well as clear communication form the positive experience during the PhD program.

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