



University of Debrecen

University of Debrecen
Dictorial School of Linguistics, Literary and Cultural Studies
Linguistics Section
Quality Assurance Plan

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Mission of the Linguistics Section

The mission of the Linguistics Section is to provide high-level, internationally competitive research training in the field of linguistics; to prepare students interested in linguistics for conducting independent scientific research; and to offer them a versatile training program and professional support.

Graduates who obtain the degree become capable of carrying out independent research, building an academic career, performing teaching duties, engaging in innovative thinking, and assuming leadership roles. Through creating the human conditions for internationally recognized research, fostering talent, and promoting innovation across sectors and regions, the Section contributes not only to the development of the North Great Plain region but also to Hungarian-speaking areas beyond the borders.

The programs and sub-programs of the Linguistics Section cover classical fields of linguistics (Hungarian and Finno-Ugric languages, general linguistics, modern philologies) as well as interdisciplinary directions (e.g., computational linguistics, translation studies, pragmatics, language technology). The international recognition of the programs is indicated by the presence of foreign students and the global embeddedness of publication activities. The uniqueness of the Section lies in the diversity of research topics, its interdisciplinary approach, and research-oriented training.

The vision of the Linguistics Section includes further strengthening international embeddedness, enhancing students' publication performance, and fully exploiting the opportunities offered by interdisciplinarity and digitalization. The goal is for the doctoral school and its two sections—to continue the tradition—to remain the leading doctoral workshop in the region in their respective scientific fields.

Institutional Conditions and Mechanisms of Quality Assurance

• **University Frameworks.** The quality assurance system of the University of Debrecen (UD) is based on organizational self-assessment, which, during the establishment and operation of the quality assurance system, takes into account the following: the provisions of the applicable National Higher Education Act; the set of criteria adopted by the Hungarian Accreditation Committee (HAC) in Resolution No. 2019/6/VIII/1; international recommendations on quality assurance systems, with particular regard to the European standards for quality assurance in higher education, as set out in the Bergen document adopted in 2015: *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*. The University leadership is committed to operating and developing the quality assurance system and actively participates in both; the aim is to ensure that the University provides high-quality and continuously improvable knowledge that is applicable in both domestic and international labor markets. The University's quality assurance system—taking into account the tasks defined in the Charter—is a conscious and organized activity covering the entire University, serving the realization of the objectives declared in the quality policy, and focusing on meeting the needs of direct and indirect partners, with special attention to all students (regardless of their funding and training form), employers, clients of research and other services, and international and domestic professional and scientific communities. The documentation system of quality assurance is prepared by the Rector's Commissioner for Quality Assurance, reviewed by the Senate's Quality Development Committee, and adopted by the Senate. The Rector's Commissioner for Quality Assurance (currently Prof. Dr. Edit Szűcs) is responsible for developing the quality assurance system of doctoral schools and ensuring that their systems operate in accordance with HAC guidelines.

• **Doctoral Schools and Sections.** Doctoral Schools and Sections at the University of Debrecen operate a unified quality assurance system in line with the principles considered by this system.

Oversight of the operation of the quality assurance system is the responsibility of the head of the school/section. The Section's Quality Manager (MICS leader) is elected by the Section Council (SC) and appointed by the Section Head. The operational management of the Section's quality assurance system is the responsibility of the Section's MICS leaders. Each doctoral school and section submits a description of its quality assurance system to the University's Rector's Commissioner for Quality Assurance and consults with them. The UD Quality Development Committee periodically—at least once a year—invites the MICS leaders of doctoral schools and sections to the extended meeting of the Quality Development Committee to review best practices and, based on these, improve the quality assurance systems of doctoral schools and sections. Quality assurance documents are prepared by the Section's MICS leader, reviewed by the Section Head, and approved by the Section Council. Doctoral schools and sections must take into account the opinions of stakeholders when developing their quality assurance systems; therefore, each school and section regularly measures doctoral students' satisfaction and collects students' evaluations of instructors. For this purpose, UD provides a sample questionnaire, which the Section may use with the support of the EvaSys software and the assistance of the Rector's Commissioner for Quality Assurance and their staff.

The UD EDHC determines the aspects related to the operation of doctoral schools' quality assurance systems, sets quality objectives at its first meeting each year, and evaluates the results of doctoral schools and sections at its last meeting each year. The UD EDHC communicates the quality objectives and mandatory indicators it has defined to the doctoral schools and sections. The Section Council determines the Section's quality objectives and indicators in consideration of these but may also specify additional objectives and indicators beyond those defined by the UD EDHC. The documents are submitted for approval to the Scientific Doctoral Council. At the end of the year, the Section Council—through the operational involvement of the MICS leader—collects and evaluates the fulfillment of quality objectives and indicator data and forwards them to the MTDT. The MTDT aggregates the data of the doctoral schools and sections under its scope and sends the data in a transparent format to the UD EDHC for evaluation at its last meeting of the year.

In its operation, the Linguistics Section observes the following principles enforced at the University level:

- Principle of professional control and quality orientation: Throughout the entire process of doctoral training and degree awarding, the control of international and domestic scientific communities must be ensured.
- Principle of publicity: The main phases of the quality assurance system are widely public to the professional and scientific community; that is, publicity must be ensured throughout the entire process of doctoral training and degree awarding (opponents' opinions are published on the doctoral school's website prior to the public defense). Every event of the degree-awarding process is published on the school/section's website (dates of the comprehensive exam, workplace debate, and public defense). The dissertations and theses submitted for public defense are also available on the school/section's website. The dates of public defenses are announced on the National Doctoral Council's website, where the dissertations and theses of degree holders can also be found.
- Principle of compliance with Scientific Ethical Requirements: During the establishment and operation of the quality assurance system, the relevant positions of the Scientific Ethics Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (HAS) must be enforced. In the event of any scientific ethical issues, the Section acts in accordance with the provisions of the University of Debrecen's Ethical Code. The University has a detailed Ethical

Regulation, which was adopted by the Senate with due consideration of the ethical norms of the international scientific community and the relevant provisions of the HAS. Under this regulation, the University operates an Ethics Committee (EC), which is authorized to initiate ethical proceedings based on incoming reports. In addition to qualified teaching, research, and student members, the Committee includes a doctoral student representative with voting rights. The EC regularly reviews the rules governing its operation and, if necessary, proposes amendments or supplements to the Senate. In general, both objective and subjective deadlines apply to the initiation of ethical proceedings; however, certain types of cases—particularly investigations of plagiarism, considered one of the most serious violations in academic life—may be conducted without time limitation. Any member of the University community, as well as individuals not affiliated with the institution but affected by an alleged ethical violation, may request the initiation of proceedings.

The institution makes every effort to prevent scientific ethical violations. Accordingly, as part of doctoral procedures conducted within the doctoral school/section, submitted dissertations undergo plagiarism checks. Based on the resulting report, the opponents recommend whether to proceed with or terminate the procedure. In practice, no suspicion of ethical misconduct has arisen within the Section (or the former doctoral school), and plagiarism checks have not provided grounds for interrupting doctoral procedures; thus, the scientific ethical activity of the Section's (or former school's) instructors and supervisors can be considered effective.

- Principle of feedback: Stakeholders in the operation of the school/section—namely instructors, supervisors, and members of various bodies of the doctoral school/section—receive continuous feedback on the quality of their activities and have the opportunity to provide input based on their experiences.
- Principle of intellectual property protection: Doctoral training is fully aligned with the legislation of the European Union and Hungary concerning the protection of intellectual property.
- Principle of individual responsibility: In doctoral training, responsibilities and tasks are clearly defined and transparent.
- Principle of process documentation: Documentation is prepared for all decision points related to doctoral training and degree awarding. At the same time, the Section strives to minimize the administrative burden on instructors and researchers involved in training and degree-awarding procedures when operating the quality management system.

The Linguistics Section's Quality Assurance Principles and Systems

The Section formulates its own quality assurance principles and vision based on the strategic objectives of the University of Debrecen. Its goal is to remain one of the leading intellectual workshops in the field of linguistics in the North Great Plain region and, more broadly, in the northeastern area of the Carpathian Basin. In this context, it continues its significant cross-border and international engagement in both education and research.

The Section has established its own Quality Assurance Committee, which includes the Section Secretary, the Section's Quality Assurance Officer (currently Dr. Anita Rácz), and one instructor from each of the two programs constituting the Section (preferably those without ongoing supervisory duties). The Section's quality objectives and indicators are defined annually or biennially by the Section Head in cooperation with the Quality Assurance Committee, in

alignment with the criteria set out in the UD Institutional Development Plan, and submitted to the Section Council for approval.

The Section operates according to the PDCA cycle principle: planning operations, implementing the objectives set out in the plan, monitoring performance, and making adjustments as necessary based on tracked indicators.

The foundation and aim of the Section's quality assurance policy is to continuously ensure—and, where possible, enhance—the professional and scientific standards of doctoral training and, consequently, the labor market competitiveness of the degrees awarded. The Section Council periodically (every 2–3 years) evaluates the educational structure and identifies key areas and specific tasks for development. Incorporating new research findings into teaching occurs both at the level of individual courses and in supervisory and quality control activities (e.g., opponent and expert reviews).

Our instructors publish in leading domestic and international journals, providing insight into the developmental trends of their fields. Course and curriculum development within doctoral training also generates impulses for improving programs and courses at the undergraduate and master's levels. The Section regularly hosts foreign instructors and researchers who support doctoral students' development through lecture series. Additionally, the Section encourages and supports doctoral students in gaining experience both domestically and abroad and in participating in national and international conferences.

The Section's professional and scientific quality assurance system enforces strict and consistently applied professional principles regarding students' research work—from admission criteria to the public defense of completed dissertations. These principles and criteria are made accessible to students via the Section's online platforms. Admission to the Section is subject to the requirements set out in the UD Doctoral Regulations, ensuring the quality of work by admitted doctoral students. We require language proficiency as stipulated by university regulations, a diploma with at least a "good" grade, and a well-considered research plan that can be implemented within the available timeframe and yield appropriate scientific results. (Current semester application requirements and admission information are available at: <https://edu.unideb.hu/>). Only those listed as supervisors in the doktori.hu system may act as supervisors in our Section. Supervisors are approved by the Doctoral Council. Supervisors are obliged to support the development of their assigned candidates, monitor their progress, guide their research work, and promote their scientific and research connections. Preparing and scheduling the training-research plan is a joint task of the doctoral student and the supervisor, but any member of the Section may be involved as an advisor.

Throughout the training, independently prepared papers and studies play a major role; these ensure that doctoral students' written analytical, interpretative, evaluative, and expressive skills develop continuously and reach the level required for degree awarding, as do the skills enabling doctoral students to engage in professional dialogue with the literature. Writing chapters also supports the completion of the dissertation: in the Section's sub-programs, chapter writing is emphasized among students' tasks during the semesters following the acquisition of the absolutorium.

Doctoral students must prepare a written progress report each semester (templates for semester reports are available at: <https://denydi.unideb.hu/en/end-semester-progress-report>). The data provided in the report must be agreed upon in advance with the supervisor, who also evaluates the student's performance during the given semester.

The training plan and the Section's Organizational and Operational Regulations both define the control points and related protocols intended to guarantee the scientific quality of research and the dissertation throughout the training process. These points and their associated protocols are fully public and transparent. At the end of the second academic year (and the first year in some cases), such a quality control point is the comprehensive examination, while at the end of the third academic year, it is the topic presentation lecture. (For a detailed description and protocol of the control points, see the Section's Organizational and Operational Regulations: https://denydi.unideb.hu/sites/default/files/inline-files/SzMSz_angol_0.pdf).

An important tool of quality assurance is that candidates must have an adequate number and quality of publications by the time of the comprehensive examination and, ultimately, the defense. Admission to the defense requires meeting the minimum publication requirements related to the dissertation topic; however, mere numerical compliance with these requirements is not sufficient for admission to the defense. The Section Council evaluates scientific performance—primarily the quality of publications—taking into account the supervisor's opinion and decides on admission to the defense. (The minimum publication requirements for obtaining the degree are set out in the Linguistics Section's Training Plan and Operational Regulations: (https://denydi.unideb.hu/sites/default/files/2025-11/training_plan_from2025.pdf ; https://denydi.unideb.hu/sites/default/files/inline-files/SzMSz_angol_0.pdf).

Before finalizing the dissertation, it must undergo a preliminary (workplace) debate attended by at least one core member of the Section, as well as one external and one internal reviewer. Preparation for the preliminary debate includes a text similarity check of the completed dissertation. A record of the preliminary debate is prepared. Based on the discussion, the student finalizes the dissertation, which must be submitted only after the candidate uploads all publications to the University and National Library's publication database. The library then prepares the candidate's publication list, which is approved by the Section Secretary. Subsequently, the library authenticates the publication list, which the candidate submits together with the dissertation to the Scientific Doctoral Council. The Section Council assesses the quality of publications individually for each candidate. For the protocol of workplace and public debates, as well as information on dissertation criteria, submission, and thesis booklet, see: <https://btkphd.unideb.hu/forms-and-documents-english>.

Continuous Monitoring and Feedback

The Section Council continuously analyzes the current state of its training system; this monitoring activity ensures up-to-date feedback on training quality. The Council regularly receives feedback related to doctoral training. The Section maintains active relationships with numerous domestic and foreign doctoral training institutions, and external lecturers involved in the program also provide continuous feedback to help assess training effectiveness. When designing the Section's training program, we take into account the latest developments in the scientific fields, which is reflected in both the course structure and the content of individual doctoral courses.

The Section continuously monitors doctoral students' opinions regarding the training, supervision, and operation of the school. Considering the presence of Stipendium Hungaricum scholarship holders, the Section has expanded the questionnaire recommended by UD for measuring doctoral students' satisfaction (see Annex 1). Surveys are conducted using EvaSys software. The satisfaction questionnaires are evaluated by the Section's Quality Assurance Officer and two instructor members of the Quality Assurance Committee (the Section Secretary does not participate because a significant part of the questionnaire evaluates their work). Based on the

responses, evaluators make recommendations to the Section Head; these recommendations and other findings from the surveys are discussed by the Section Council, and corrective measures are introduced if necessary, in consultation with instructors.

Additional Feedback Mechanisms

In doctoral training, quality assurance tools used in undergraduate programs—such as anonymous course evaluations—can only be implemented to a limited extent; due to the small number of students and the frequent involvement of multiple instructors in a single course, student evaluations of courses cannot be conducted. However, students have several other ways and forums to express their opinions about courses.

The Section Council maintains continuous contact with doctoral students through the voting doctoral student representative, who raises issues and concerns not addressed by satisfaction questionnaires or course evaluations. The student representative is selected from a different doctoral sub-program each academic year.

Feedback from former students also provides important quality assurance input for the Section, although maintaining contact with graduates and those who left without completing the degree exceeds the Section's human resources. Primarily, tracking is feasible for former doctoral students employed in higher education or research careers. From 2025 onward, students who drop out of doctoral training at any stage are asked to complete the Section's exit questionnaire (see Annex 3).

The Section has also developed a questionnaire for measuring the satisfaction of instructors and staff (see Annex 2), as their feedback can significantly contribute to the Section's effective operation.

Commitment to Student Well-being

The Section considers it an essential element of quality assurance to provide all possible support to doctoral students beyond strictly professional assistance, paying increased attention to students' well-being and mental health needs. The Section actively combats all forms of intolerance and discrimination, as reflected in its satisfaction questionnaire. For years, the Section's programs have included best practices aimed at promoting student well-being.

Annexes

1. [Questionnaires for Measuring Student Satisfaction](#)
2. [Questionnaire for Measuring Instructor and Staff Satisfaction \(Hungarian\)](#)
3. [Exit Questionnaire of the Linguistics Section](#)