

Training on Quality Assurance in PhD



*Dissertation and mentorship: what standards should
there be?*

by Mariangela SCIANDRA

Guidelines and Principles for Accreditation

Aim: to illustrate the main Principles for the Accreditation and the Institution of Doctoral Programs (February 2013 Decree) in Italy established by Italian “Ministero dell’Istruzione, dell’Università e della Ricerca” (MIUR) .

1. Introduction
2. Scope and Guiding Principles for Accreditation
3. Subjects that can be accredited for a PhD Program
4. Features of PhD courses in Italy

1. Introduction

- Which are the organizations and institutions that can be accredited?
- Conditions asked in order to be accredited and circumstances to revoke it;
- Criteria regulating the institution and the operation of a doctoral program.

2. Scope and Guiding Principles for Accreditation

The institution of a new PhD program requires the accreditation: MIUR based on ANVUR opinion according to European guidelines

Accreditation is intended to protect the interests of students, benefit the public, and improve the quality of teaching, learning, research, and professional practice.

Accreditation criteria:

- **Mission and integrity:** the organization operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes involving the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students;
- **Not-for-profit organization;**
- **Continuity:** documented teaching and research activities in the five years before the application for accreditation;
- **Financial resources availability:** to ensure the effective sustainability of the PhD program;
- **ANVUR evaluation:** successful evaluation by ANVUR in the last assessment.

3. Subjects that can be accredited for a PhD Program

Accreditation for a PhD program can be given to:

- a) Italian universities satisfying the accreditation criteria (in agreement with other Italian and/or foreign universities or research institutions);
- b) Qualified Italian institutions of advanced education and research;
- c) Consortia among universities of which at least one Italian \Rightarrow double, multiple or joint title;
- d) Universities in agreement with companies, also of several countries;

University + Other research structure \Rightarrow but the “the PhD qualification” has to be issued by the university.

Application for accreditation

- Application for accreditation have to be sent to Italian Ministry with a document that states the fulfilment of all the criteria;
- Initial evaluation + periodical re-evaluation of the accreditation criteria;
- The number of positions for which accreditation is required;
- Subjects without previous accreditation can apply for (their first) accreditation as long as they have been involved in other programs by other structures;

MIUR → ANVUR → Final dis/approval in 60 days.

4. Features of PhD courses in Italy

- **Duration of a PhD program:** A PhD course lasts 3 years (or “minimum period”) plus 1 year completion max. (This is not compulsory but can be used for the write-up stage);
- **Steering Committee:** the Steering Committee has to be composed at least by 16 academics who are considered “active” in their specific scientific sector in the last 5 years;
- **Number of positions:** the number of positions offered by a PhD course should not exceed 6 and not less than 4;
- **Admission requirements:** PhD candidate requires a Master degree (Laurea Magistrale) or equivalent degree;
- **Supervision:** PhD students must be supervised by at least a professor or assistant who are members of the “Steering Committee”.

PhD program funding

(Limited) Funding from MIUR

MIUR can establish the amount according to:

- quality of research activity of the Steering Committee;
- internationalization of the PhD course;
- attractiveness of the course;
- career opportunities after PhD.

Conclusions

- No constraints about final dissertation;
- No restriction on the number of student for supervisor;
- University Local Rules (Statute) (how to run a PhD program, how many professors, how to recruit students, scholarships, how to make agreements with other national and international institutions, how to manage the final dissertation exam, ect.) have to be decided yet.