

Rector's Directive 4/2024 on Rigorous Proceedings

Rigorous examinations and defences of rigorous theses at the University of Presov in Presov (hereinafter referred to as "the University") are carried out in accordance with the provisions of Section 53 par. 9-11, Section 63 of Act No.131/2002 on Higher Education and on Amendments and Supplements to Certain Acts (hereinafter referred to as "the Act") and in accordance with the Directive on the Requirements of Final Theses, their Bibliographic Registration, Originality Verification, Storage and Accessibility.

Art. 1 General Provisions

1. By Rigorous examination and defence of the Rigorous thesis, the candidate must demonstrate, based on independent study, that he/she has deeper knowledge in the field of study in its broader context and is capable of independent mastering of new knowledge of science and practice and is able to apply the acquired knowledge in a creative way in practical use.
2. The University implements Rigorous examinations and defences of Rigorous theses in accredited fields of study, after the completion of which the academic degree of "Master" ("Magister" in Slovak) is awarded.
3. Graduates of study programmes who have obtained the title of "Master"; or similar study programmes abroad, may undertake the Rigorous examination which includes the defence of a Rigorous thesis in the field of study in which the graduates obtained a university degree, or in a related field of study. The conformity relation of the related field of study is assessed by the Chairperson of the Committee for Rigorous Examination and is expressed in writing in an official report submitted to the relevant Vice-Dean.

Art. 2 Admission to the Rigorous Proceedings

1. Candidates may apply for the Rigorous Proceedings in the period from September to June of the relevant calendar year. The application form shall be handed in at the study department, where the protocol for the assignment of the thesis, the topic of the thesis and all the necessary documents will be reviewed.
2. The application form has a standardized format and is available on the Faculty's website or at the Dean's Office of the Faculty/Rectorate. The candidate for the Rigorous Proceedings must also fill in **the protocol on the assignment of the Rigorous thesis**.
3. The applicant must attach to the application form certified copies of documents confirming the completion of higher education (diploma and certificate), a curriculum vitae, a copy of the Diploma thesis and, if necessary, a document confirming the change of surname. A graduate of a foreign university must also enclose proof of recognition of the equivalence of education or a certified copy thereof.

4. The Dean/Rector returns the application within 30 days from the date of its receipt if the candidate has not submitted the required documents, or if it is a field of study in which the Rigorous examination is not held at the Faculty, or if the Rigorous thesis does not meet the specified requirements.
5. The Dean of the Faculty/Rector will consider (approve or disapprove) the application that fulfils all the requirements and within 30 days from the date of the statement, the study department will inform the applicant in writing of the result. Upon approval of the application, the study department registers the applicant in the MAIS system (Modular Academic Information System).
6. The Rigorous thesis topics are confirmed by the Chairperson of the Rigorous Proceedings and the Dean/Rector. The topic of the Rigorous thesis must not be identical to the topic of the candidate's Diploma thesis. The protocol on the assignment of the topic of the Rigorous thesis, confirmed by the Chairperson of the Rigorous Proceedings and the Dean/Rector, shall be prepared in two copies. One shall remain with the candidate, the other shall be submitted to the study department.

Art. 3 Rigorous Proceedings

1. Complex responsibility for the course of Rigorous Proceedings is vested in the Dean if the Rigorous Proceedings are carried out at the Faculty, or in the Rector if the Rigorous Proceedings are carried out in the University study programmes. The conception and implementation of the Rigorous examinations are the responsibility of the Vice-Dean/Vice-Rector, who is appointed by the Dean/Rector. The organisation and preparation of the supporting materials required for the Rigorous examination is the responsibility of the organisational unit of the Dean's office appointed by the Dean or, in the case of university departments, by the Rector.
2. Responsibility for the implementation of the Rigorous procedures is determined as follows:
 - a) the Dean/Rector approves the proposals and appoints or dismisses the Chairperson of the Rigorous Proceedings, Rigorous Committee and the members of Rigorous Committee, approves the dates and subjects of Rigorous examinations;
 - b) the Vice-Dean/Vice-Rector is responsible for conceptual materials related to Rigorous examinations, manages the heads of scientific and pedagogical organisational units in matters related to Rigorous works, submits to the Dean/Rector proposals for Chairpersons of Rigorous Examinations Committees, submits to the Dean/Rector proposals for Rigorous examinations to be approved, stating the names of candidates, the composition of Committees, including reviewers (opponents), and the subjects of the examination, and is responsible for compliance with this Directive and for graduations;
 - c) Dean's Office/Rectorate Unit ensures the preparation of Rigorous examinations according to the Vice-Dean/Vice-Rector's instructions, provides comprehensive materials of applicants, ensures written and personal contact with applicants, receives Rigorous works from applicants, fills in diplomas, is responsible for the course and organization of graduations, is responsible for achieving complete protocols on Rigorous examinations;
 - d) the Chairperson of the Rigorous Proceedings assesses the conformity relation of study fields, confirms the topics of Rigorous theses, confirms the protocol on the assignment

of Rigorous thesis, in which the wording of the topic is recommended, confirms the Rigorous work's supervisor, accepts Rigorous theses for defence and proposes the Chairperson, the members of the Rigorous Committee and the reviewers for the Rigorous Examinations.

3. A change in the topic of Rigorous work is allowed only in justified cases and with the consent of the Dean/Rector.
4. The applicant must submit the Rigorous work within eighteen months from the registration of his/her application.
5. If the candidate does not submit the Rigorous work within the set deadline, he/she may request, in writing, the Dean/Rector to extend the Rigorous Proceedings by a maximum of twelve months. The Dean/Rector will assess the application and consider the viewpoint of the Chairperson of the Rigorous Proceedings in the given field of study.
6. The Dean/Rector may allow the applicant, at his/her request and with the consent of the Chairperson of the Rigorous Proceedings, to submit a Rigorous thesis in a language other than Slovak. In this case, the thesis must have a summary in the state official language in the range of eight to ten standard pages. At the request of the applicant, the Dean/Rector may also agree that the defence of the Rigorous thesis and the Rigorous examination be held in the language in which the submitted Rigorous thesis is written.
7. A candidate may not submit his/her Diploma thesis or other qualifying thesis, nor any work of a compilation nature as his/her Rigorous thesis.
8. The Rigorous thesis must be the original result of the student's own and independent activity, the Rigorous thesis must not unlawfully interfere with the rights or legally protected interests of third parties, in particular it must not violate the intellectual property rights of a third party or unlawfully interfere with classified information or with personal data, confidential information, or trade secrets of a third party.
9. The condition for admission of the graduate to the defence of a Rigorous thesis is, except in cases under the Section 63 par. 11 of the Act, a written consent of the graduate of the study programme for the Rigorous thesis to be published and made available to the public pursuant to Section 63 par. 9 of the Act for the period of its storage pursuant to Section 63 par. 7 of the Act without the right to remuneration.
10. To assess the Rigorous thesis, the Dean/Rector appoints two reviewers who meet the minimum qualification requirement of a third-level university education, or a relevant equivalent and who are experts in the field of study.
11. The reviewers will submit a written assessment report on the Rigorous thesis to the relevant Vice-Dean/Vice-Rector within thirty days from the date of assignment of the work for assessment. In the report, they shall state whether the work meets the requirements determined by the Chairperson of the Rigorous Committee.
12. Rigorous thesis can be accepted for defence if it has been recommended for defence by at least one of the reviewers. The Vice-Dean/Vice-Rector announces to the Dean/Rector the acceptance or non-acceptance of a Rigorous thesis and at the same time delivers the reviewers' assessment reports.

13. The reviewers will make their assessment reports available by uploading them to the MAIS at least 10 days before the Rigorous examination is to take place.

Art. 4
Rigorous Examination

1. If the applicant meets all the conditions that are stipulated by Act for the Rigorous examination, the Dean/Rector will notify him/her of the date, the subjects, and the location of the examination.
2. A Rigorous examination shall be carried out in the presence of an Examination Committee. The procedure of the Rigorous examination and the announcement of its results shall be public. The Examination Committee's decision making on the results of the Rigorous examination will take place at a non-public Examination Committee meeting. In times of crisis and emergency situations, the Rigorous examination and its defence may be conducted by videoconference or by other means of information and communication technology without physical presence.
3. In times of crisis and emergency situations, the public part of the Rigorous examination and the public part of the Rigorous thesis defence shall also be considered public if the University makes their audio recordings available to the public to be heard on the premises of the University for a period of three months following the end of the crisis or emergency situation.
4. The right to examine at the Rigorous examination shall be vested with the university teachers working in the positions of Professors and Associate Professors and relevant specialists approved by the Scientific Board.
5. The composition of Committees for the Execution of Rigorous Examination is determined by the Dean/Rector from among the persons authorized to examine, and the Dean/Rector also appoints and dismisses the Chairperson of the Rigorous Committee.
6. The Examination committee shall have at least four members. The supervisor and the reviewer of the Rigorous thesis, if they are not members of the Examination Committee, will only participate in the defence of the Rigorous thesis. A quorum of the Rigorous Committee requires the presence of an absolute majority of all the members of the Committee, but not less than four.
7. The Rigorous examination begins with the defence of the Rigorous thesis and following a successful defence, an oral examination of the specified subjects is held.
8. The overall assessment of the Rigorous examination is pass/fail.
9. If the candidate did not attend the Rigorous examination at the specified date and his/her absence was not excused, the candidate shall be evaluated as failed.
10. An applicant who has not defended a Rigorous thesis does not proceed with the Rigorous examination. He/she will rework the thesis based on the reviewers' assessment reports and may retake the defence no earlier than six months following the date of the Rigorous examination, usually at the next Rigorous examination date after the submission of the revised thesis, observing all the deadlines set in connection with the preparation of the reviewer's reports and administrative procedures.

11. An applicant who has failed at least one subject in the Rigorous examination may resit the Rigorous examination in that subject not earlier than three months from the date of the Rigorous examination, usually at the next date of the Rigorous examination.
12. If the applicant repeatedly fails, he/she may re-apply for the entire Rigorous Proceedings, but not earlier than three years following the execution of resat Rigorous examination.
13. A protocol on the Rigorous examination will be prepared on the day of the examination, which will be signed by the Chairperson of the Committee, reviewers, and other members of the Committee present at the examination. Documentation, including the protocol, is archived at the Faculty in accordance with applicable regulations.

Art. 5 Award of Title

1. After successful completion of the Rigorous examination and defence of the Rigorous thesis, the University awards the academic title to the applicants:
 - a) in natural sciences study programmes “Doctor of Natural Sciences” (abbreviated to “RNDr.”);
 - b) in the social sciences, fine-arts and health-care study programmes “Doctor of Philosophy” (abbreviated to “PhDr.”);
 - c) in teacher training programmes and physical education study programmes “Doctor of Pedagogy” (abbreviated to “PaedDr.”);
 - d) in theological study programmes, except for study programmes in the field of Catholic theology, “Doctor of Theology” (abbreviated to “ThDr.”).

Art. 6 Fees associated with the Rigorous Proceedings

1. The fee associated with the costs of the admission procedure is determined by the current Directive on Tuition Fees and Study-Related Fees of the University of Presov in Presov. The fee is to be paid upon submission of the application for the Rigorous Proceedings.
2. The fee for services related to the Rigorous Proceedings and the defence of the Rigorous thesis is determined by the current Directive on Tuition Fees and Study-Related Fees of the University of Presov in Presov. This fee is to be paid upon submission of the thesis for defence.
3. The fee for the services related to the issuance of a diploma of awarding an academic title to graduates of Master's studies who have passed the Rigorous examination is determined by the current Directive on Tuition Fees and Study-Related Fees. This will be paid after the successful defence.
4. Further fees related to the Rigorous Proceedings shall be as specified in the current Directive on Tuition Fees and Study-Related Fees.

Art. 7

Invalidation of the Rigorous Examination or part thereof and Renunciation of the Academic Title

1. The Rector shall decide on the invalidity of a Rigorous examination or a part thereof if the graduate who has been awarded an academic title in Rigorous Proceedings:
 - a) has been legally convicted of a deliberate criminal act and, by committing that criminal act, has obtained a benefit which has had an impact on the successful completion of the Rigorous examination or on the commencement of the Rigorous Proceedings,
 - b) has committed academic fraud as a participant of Rigorous Proceedings,
 - c) has made unauthorised use of the outcome of the protection of the intellectual property of another person, and has thereby obtained a benefit which has had an impact on the successful completion of Rigorous examination or on the commencement of the Rigorous Proceedings, or
 - d) has ceased to meet the condition for the commencement of the Rigorous Proceedings as a result of a decision that the state examination or part thereof is invalid or as a result of the renunciation of the academic title.

2. A natural person may irrevocably renounce an academic title by written notification with an officially certified signature delivered to the Rector of the higher education institution which awarded the academic title to the person concerned. On the date of delivery of the written notification, the person concerned shall lose the academic title in question. A written notification without a certified signature shall be disregarded. If a natural person renounces an academic title awarded after completing a programme of study, he/she shall be deemed not to have duly completed that programme of study and the documents certifying that he/she has completed that programme of study shall become null and void on the date of receipt of the written notification of the renunciation of the title in question. If a natural person renounces the academic title awarded in the Rigorous Proceedings, the document awarding the title shall become null and void on the date of receipt of written notification of the renunciation of the relevant title.

Art. 8

Final Provisions

1. This Directive shall enter into force and take effect on March 20, 2024.
2. Further specifications of the Rigorous Proceedings are regulated in the separate documents of the Faculties.

Presov, March 18, 2024

Dr. h. c. prof. PhDr. Peter Kónya, PhD.
Rector