

How to go through the PhD programme Zoology at the Faculty of Science, University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice – a student's manual.

<https://www.prf.jcu.cz/en/study-at-the-faculty/information-for-phd-students>

<https://www.prf.jcu.cz/en/admissions/degree-programmes/study-programme?programme=3130w>

<https://www.prf.jcu.cz/en/admissions/phd-study/application-form>

Admission

The first step is to find the supervisor who will approve your thesis supervision (before admission). This is usually a professor (prof., doc) and or alternatively other academic employees who has been already approved/authorised to supervise PhD students by the Scientific Board of Faculty of Science, University of South Bohemia. The supervisor does not have to be an employee of FSci USB, but if you choose a supervisor from another institution, you also need a guarantor, which has to be the employee of FSci USB. This guarantor does not need to be involved deeply in the project (e.g. co-authoring the future publications), however he/she should be aware of what is it about, should e.g. attend the students presentation on seminars and should be a member of TAC (see below). There may be also a co-supervisor/supervisor specialist (one or two), who is involved in the project and provides you advices/assistance when needed.

The supervisor has to secure the PhD student employment money beyond the regular scholarship (see below). See vicedean provision for the actual salaries (www.prf.jcu.cz/images/PRF/studium/doktorske-studium/d127_doktorsky_studijni_prijem_novela-unor-2025_engfinal.pdf).

Once you have agreed with potential supervisor, fill all the necessary application documents/form (https://wstag.jcu.cz/portal/studium/uchazec/eprihlaska.html?pc_lang=en) by the 20th January in the winter semester; 20th May in summer semester. Immediately after receiving documents from Departments of Student Affairs, the chair of the Specialist Board (SB) Zoology will start organising of entrance examination, which is usually held twice in year; usually in the first half of February and in June.

SB is an assemblage of academics well recognised in the field Zoology, which evaluate your study throughout all the years (ISP, literature review, annual reports, remarkable changes in your thesis, etc.)

(<https://www.prf.jcu.cz/en/study-at-the-faculty/information-for-phd-students/dsp-specialist-boards>)

Check this website for all the necessary documents needed for admission:

<https://www.prf.jcu.cz/en/admissions/phd-study/admission-requirements>

also look at the dean's provision:

https://www.prf.jcu.cz/images/PRF/PRF-EN/about-faculty/documents/admission-procedure-documents/dsp_nove_rozhodnuti_prijimacky_eng_2023_2024tosenate.pdf

One of the documents is the “Dissertation project proposal”. This is particularly important for your Entrance examination. You should describe here your planned scientific research. It is usually not longer than one or two pages and is provided to all members of the admission board in an advance. Based on this document, the board members will ask you during the examination. Pay attention to this document, it is important and may speed up whole admission interview.

Entrance examination

The entrance examination is performed by the admission board appointed by the dean. Although it is titled examination, it is in fact an interview, where the board is supposed to evaluate your project proposal, ability to work creatively, independent scientific and research activities, ideas about your thesis project. You are supposed to show your professionalism and knowledge of the field, yet in case you are new in your supervisor’s field, you should at least show your determination to be involved in the project and abilities to discuss the topic.

Based on the communication with the Chair of SB, applicants can complete the admission interview online in case it is complicated to attend it in person.

Before the examination, plan together with your supervisor courses, you will attend during your study. Besides those which are obligatory (see the Individual Study plan form - <https://www.prf.jcu.cz/en/faculty/documents/forms>), two to four voluntary courses are usually added based mainly on your preference and research field, but also recommendation from the admission board. You need to find these in STAG (<https://wstag.jcu.cz/ects/fakulty/FPR?lang=en>). Make sure they are led in English in case you enrolled to the English form of the study program.

You are supposed to receive final decision on acceptance within two-three weeks from the entrance examination.

Doctoral Study plan (Individual study plan, ISP)

The study plan is the most important binding document, and it must be submitted to Department of Student Affairs for an approval by SB within two months from the beginning of the PhD study. Everything, which is in the study plan must be fulfilled later. So, plan ISP carefully (it should include recommendation from the admission board such as suggested courses, co-supervisors etc. If you are not sure what was recommended particularly, pls ask Mrs. Korcová (study dept.) to send you copy of the protocol). Beside all the courses listed below, you have to describe your research and plan a timeline of your study activities for the standard study time (four years) and the first year in detail. Despite the maximum length of the study is six years, you are supposed to fulfil all your duties within the standard time. The state exam has to be passed until the end of the fifth year of your PhD study. Larger changes such as not passing assigned courses, and substantial changes of the topic of the thesis should be consulted and agreed by SB.

Thesis Adviser Committee (TAC)

All candidates enrolled in Doctoral Study Programme (DSP) at FSci USB must be supervised during their studies by the TAC, which is responsible for monitoring his/her progress, providing external advice and support to both student and supervisor. This is your/your supervisor responsibility to select committee members this has to be appointed within first 5 months since the enrolment. The proposal of TAC

members provided by PhD candidate and the supervisor must be delivered to the SB for the final approval. The TAC should consist of three to five members. At least three TAC members must have previous experience with the supervision of doctoral students. The TAC includes the supervisor and two members that do not come from the supervisor's research group; at least one of them should be external, not affiliated with FSci USB. The appointment of the specialist from abroad is highly recommended. The TAC should meet every six months during the PhD candidate's career. All scheduled meetings are mandatory and must take place in predefined periods. It is necessary to register for the course *TAC Meeting* in semesters when the Meeting is planned and realized. The Meeting can be held online (see *Chapter 4.2*). Initiating the organization of the meetings on time is very important. It is the PhD candidate's responsibility to invite the TAC members, arrange TAC meetings, and upload completed and signed TAC Assessment Reports (see *Annex*) to STAG. TAC Assessment Report has to be delivered also to the chair of SB.

Study duties

The mandatory courses listed within the Individual study plan involve some of the PhD study duties.

KZO 806 – Literature review: Within the first year of your study, you have to prepare a review of your research topic. This is typically about 10 standard pages of the text plus figures, tables and references with about one hundred of papers in the reference list. The aim is to present overview of knowledge on the topic of the thesis and the research field, good knowledge of literature and justification of your project. The review should touch all topics related to your thesis and summarize what has already been studied and which are the empty or weak points in the research that should be explained/fixed by your research. The text should end with plans and aims of your thesis (preferably including hypotheses to be tested). Pls note, if you do not have your review approved by SB within one year, your regular scholarship is dramatically reduced (see Provision of the Dean D58). Submit it latest by the end of the tenth month from the beginning of the study, so SB have enough time to go through the text and comment it, and you have time to correct it. The credit is awarded by the Chair of SB.

KZO 800 – Doctoral Thesis, Practical Part: Each semester you will get credits for progress on your thesis. The credits are provided by your supervisor. Our secretary is also authorised to do it after receiving positive information from the supervisor).

KZO 805 – Doctoral seminar: Once in a year (each year of your study, when you are enrolled to study), you are obliged to present the progress of your research on the seminar held by the Department of Zoology. It usually takes place in town Vodňany (<https://www.mevpis.cz/en>) at the end of January or in the beginning of February during a conference where all PhD students present their talks within 2-3 days along with a social event where all PhD students along with department employees may get familiar. In the first year, it is obvious that there are few results you may present. You are supposed to briefly (5-10 minutes) describe the topic of the thesis, outline your plans, hypotheses and methods. In the second year, you are supposed to present already some result, at least preliminary. Your supervisor is also supposed to comment your presentation in the first two years. In the third and fourth year, you are supposed to present results of a single project (a planned paper, preferably different topic each year) of your thesis in a form of a conference talk (10 to 15 minutes). In the case you are unable to attend this conference (the schedule is announced some months in advance) you may give your talk at the Student Seminar of the

Department of Zoology (schedules each Wednesday afternoon in both semesters). You are supposed to arrange this individually with the departmental secretary Jana Maxerová (zoo@prf.jcu.cz). Try to attend the conference, because it is a great (and rare) opportunity to meet with students and colleagues from all three PhD programmes organised by our department (Zoology, Entomology, Physiology). The credit will be awarded by the chair of SB. For our programme (and probably for remaining two programs organised by our Dept. as well) our secretary is authorised to do it also, because she knows best who presented or not. Head of the department awards the best rated talks with some money.

OJZ 940 – TOEFL for Doctoral Students – Examination: is a preceding course you have to finish before Doctor's English exam. You may have already finished it from your Master studies or private courses. These are accepted only in case you meet the limits for Doctor's English exam at our faculty (<https://www.prf.jcu.cz/en/faculty/departments/language-department/examinations/description-of-examinations>).

OJZ 950 – Doctor's English Examination: should be finished within the standard study length (four years) and should test your English language skills. The credits are given by the head of the Language Department.

KZO 801-803 – Study stay I.-III.: You are supposed to visit an abroad (meaning not Czech) research institution within your study (internship). These institutions can be of any kind, universities, museums, institutes etc, but these should be always a renowned scientific institution in lab of scientifically well recognised foreign researcher. You are supposed to carry research there, which might or might not be associated with your thesis topic. It is supposed to include learning new scientific methods and approaches. The internship is supposed to enrich you in terms of scientific career capability and progress. The length and number of stays is up to you, but the minimum time you are obliged to spend within an international internship during your PhD studies is one month (four weeks). There are three options (courses) you are supposed to enrol to, in the semester, where the internship takes place: "FPR 801 – Study stay I." for internships lasting from two to four weeks, "FPR 802 – Study stay II." for stays lasting one to three months and "FPR 803 – Study stay III." for longer internships. Before your internship starts, you have to fill a form and send it to our International office (Barbora Okosy – bokosy@prf.jcu.cz) to announce your plan for a PhD study stay. You need to prove (a signed document) you have realized the stay. The credit is awarded by the Vice-Dean for doctoral studies (<https://www.prf.jcu.cz/en/faculty/faculty-management>).

To have clue about sources to cover the costs of your stay abroad see <https://www.prf.jcu.cz/en/study-at-the-faculty/information-for-phd-students/financial-support>. Generally, you may get money from project of your collaborators (usually supervisor's project), GAJU (team or individual, see below), ERASMUS, or you may apply the Vice-Dean of FSci for the International mobility project. In case your stay is expensive, you have to use multiple sources, as each of these sources is limited.

KZO 907 – Conference Presentation (in foreign language)- doctoral studies: You are supposed to present your research (oral or poster) at an international conference at least once during your PhD study. You enrol for the course in the semester when the conference takes place and get the credits from the chair of SB after providing information about your contribution (e.g. electronic copy of the book of abstracts).

FPR D1 – State Doctoral Examination: The state doctoral exam is about to be cancelled soon. It is obligatory to be undertaken by the students already enrolled to the PhD programme at FSci USB.

However, students newly admitted (starting from February 2026) are freed from this obligation. This is the final exam, which you are supposed to undertake during your standard study period plus one year (maximum in your fifth year). You have to fulfil all your study duties before you can enrol for this course and pass the exam. The exam purpose is to test your knowledge in your research field. The committee consists of five to nine experts who are authorised to examine the students. Part of them are members of the SB, part of them is from other institutes. Their expertise is usually related to your PhD topic. They ask questions related to your research and want to make sure you are well versed in your field; nevertheless, generally this should be a friendly discussion rather than a real exam. The exam usually lasts from 30 to 60 minutes. The questions should cover all fields associated to your research. E.g. when your topic is predator recognition in birds, you should know something about ecological interactions with focus on predation and something about birds and their cognition. You may be also asked on methodological approaches, which can be utilized to study it. Nevertheless, this exam does not finish your PhD study. The PhD study is finished by the defence of your PhD thesis. Both, the state exam and defence can be done in one day.

Annual report: Each year you are supposed to prepare an annual report summarizing the progress in your study latest by the end of October. In case you enrolled to the programme in summer semester, you report only from the first semester. For that purpose, use an excel form (provided and partly pre-filled by the Department of Student Affairs – blue cells), where all duties are prepared to be commented. Do not change the information from previous years, just add new ones for the particular year you report in subsequent years of your study.

- At the first sheet, there is a summary of your study plan, where you are supposed to present the aims of your study in the first year and optionally change these aims in subsequent years. Do not forget to justify the changes in the aims. (Remember that substantial changes, i.e. more than one aim/goal should be discussed with SB).
- Second sheet is the overview of your abroad stays in particular years of your study differentiated into three categories based on their length (the same way as the three related courses are).
- Third sheet summarizes conferences you attended in particular year. You are supposed to differentiate local conferences led in Czech language from international conferences and also poster and oral presentations. Write a citation of your conference talk or poster in standard way, i.e. the authors, the title of presentation, the name of conference, dates, and location.
- Fourth sheet summarizes papers (manuscripts) you plan to include into your thesis. Other publications are supposed to be included in the sheet "Student's report". For each paper, the status should be described (use number codes for each stage, click on cell B1 "Type of publication" to see the explanation for codes). Papers in prep should be listed only in the case when you are already writing the manuscript, with the title and authors resolved.
- "Courses" sheet is filled by the Department of Student Affairs.
- Pedagogical activities are voluntary for all abroad PhD students. Czech students are obliged to conduct 42 hours of teaching during their study. You may get involved in some course, e.g. to lead some practices or excursions – this should be summarized here including the time you spent on these lessons together with the time spent on preparation (maximum one half of the teaching hours). You just have to secure that the particular course guarantor includes you in the list of teachers in STAG. You will be rewarded for these activities once you submit an application to the PhD Vice-Dean (<https://www.prf.jcu.cz/images/PRF/fakulta/dokumenty/formulare/pro->

[studenty/doktorandi/eng_form_reimbursement_vii_2023.pdf](#)). Beside teaching, you may also supervise a bachelor or high school student (maximum of 21 hours per semester for bachelor and 15 for high school, may be increased based on your supervisor support). Any other work you did for the faculty, such as guarding exams, reviewing theses or student grant proposal, being part of any committees and science popularization may also be rewarded and included in your teaching activities, do not hesitate to list them here.

- Sheet “Student’s report” should describe progress in your thesis, data collection and analyses of particular sub-projects. Do not describe research not included in the thesis here. Information about stays, abroad, conferences etc. belongs to other sections of annual report. Try to be concise, informative and clear, use all 1500 characters. Pay attention to it, because this is most relevant part for evaluation by the members of SB.
- Your supervisor is supposed to include also an evaluation of your progress.

The annual report is evaluated by the SB. You get written feedback, which may suggest some changes or additions. There are three grades you get – A is perfect with no important comments and rebuke, B is worse grade, you fulfil your duties, but there are some rebukes, typically, you are still not preparing manuscripts in your fourth year of study. You are supposed to improve it within the next year. C means you do not fulfil your duties, you did not improve your status from the previous year (where you already graded B), and the SB suggests some sanctions to the dean (e.g. decrease in scholarship) or the termination of your study.

Scholarship

<https://www.prf.jcu.cz/en/study-at-the-faculty/information-for-phd-students/financial-support>

Basic scholarship you get from the very first month of your study is 11.700 CZK monthly. If you do not make it to have an approved literature review and present your work at the seminar within first 12 months of your study, the amount of your scholarship will be reduced to 1.000 CZK. Once you fulfill these duties, you are back at 11.700 CZK.

Once you have fulfilled the duties of literature review and seminar presentation, you may propose for an increase of the scholarship based on:

- personally presented poster at an international conference or co-author an article published in a journal with an impact factor –1.000 CZK for at least one of these options (non-additive)
- personally given oral presentation at an international conference –1.500 CZK
- first-author publication in a journal with an impact factor –2.500 CZK

Based on non-fulfilment of other study obligations, SB can suggest to the dean the reduction of the scholarship of a particular student by up to 75% or complete withdrawal.

Further, there is some extra money (usually 3.000 CZK monthly), you may get in case you fulfil the following criteria:

- you are in third to eighth semester of a full-time study
- you perfectly fulfil your duties (grade A from previous annual report)
- your supervisor is a key employee of the faculty (decided by the dean)

Doctoral Study Income (DoStuP) is a newly introduced, legally guaranteed minimum monthly income for full-time doctoral students during the standard length of their studies. From 1 September 2025, this income must reach at least 1.2 times the minimum wage in Czechia, which in the academic year 2025/2026 corresponds to 24,960 CZK per month. DoStuP may consist of a doctoral scholarship, a salary or wage for research and academic activities directly related to the doctoral thesis, or a combination of these components.

Grant Agency of USB (GAJU)

(<https://www.jcu.cz/cz/veda-a-vyzkum/grantova-agentura-ju> and <https://www.prf.jcu.cz/en/study-at-the-faculty/information-for-phd-students/financial-support>)

University of South Bohemia provides funding for PhD students. There are two ways how to get some money from this source.

Team

The PI of the team projects is (usually) the Chair of the SB and the project lasts for 3 years. New students, who enrolled in the programme when the GAJU project was already running are also included in some of GAJU projects (most probably Zoology). There is money for two purposes – regular monthly stipends (2.000 CZK) and stipends covering travel costs (primarily conference attendance, or field data collecting and stay abroad). The regular stipends are automatically sent to each student included in the project. The travel money is awarded based on an application to the Chair of the SB. You have to fill following form “Rozhodnutí o přiznání prémiového stipendia”. Unfortunately, it is in Czech, so pls as the chair of SB/solver of GAJU for prefilled form with explanations. You are supposed to write a simple description of your aim, where, when and why you plan to go and what is your budget.

Individual

Each year, there is competition for individual GAJU projects to cover costs related to your research and where you can get additional scholarship (Up to 3000 CZK/per month). You are supposed to submit a proposal of your project, which should be linked to your PhD topic. See comments (https://www.jcu.cz/images/veda-a-vyzkum/gaju-2024/ga-ju-2024-explanatory-notes-projects-starting-2024-fin-o-07092_p15381.pdf) to find out all the details necessary to complete the form (<https://www.jcu.cz/cz/veda-a-vyzkum/grantova-agentura-ju>). The project can be one or two years long, and you can apply for money for equipment, travel costs, services and stipends (not only for you but also for one MSc student included in the project). The success rate of the individual GAJU project is usually around 30 %. Within the course KZO 108 Practical writing and Communication you will have chance to learn how to write such proposal, so try to enrol this course before applying for individual GAJU.

University PhD conference

University of the South Bohemia holds yearly a conference, where PhD students present their topics. The purpose of this action is to gather students from different faculties, get an overview of the science conducted on different faculties and possibly also find new friends. See <https://www.jcu.cz/en/science-and-research/usb-conference-of-doctoral-students> for further details.

Combined study

Our PhD programme can be undertaken also in a combined form. This form is suitable for students who are already employed, but do not have enough time to attend a full-time study but desire a PhD title.

There are few differences from the full-time study.

- 1) You won't get any scholarship
- 2) You won't be included in the team GAJU project
- 3) You cannot apply for individual GAJU
- 4) You don't have to teach
- 5) The standard study length is 6 years

You still have to fulfil all the study duties as the full-time student, including stay abroad, conference and visiting courses. The courses listed in the Study plan, from which you have to choose at least two, are supposed to be led not only in presence but also online, to be available also to combined students.

Student in a fulltime study may decide to go to the combined study, based on personal situation. SB can recommend the student to go to combined study programme in case, they feel the student is unable to fulfil all the duties. The duties for combined study are thus applicable from the moment the student changes the form of the study.

Study interruption, childcare and study prolongation

For any reason, you may interrupt your study for a period of maximum 2 years (may be in multiple bouts). You don't have to explain the reasons, you simply announce your intention to interrupt the study at the Department of Student Affairs. You only have to state when the interruption ends.

In case of maternity leave, there are two options. The first one is to remain in the student status, your standard study time is prolonged (at least 28 weeks) and your study duties are postponed accordingly. Another option is to interrupt your study. The interruption caused by the maternity leave (maximum four years for each child) does not count into the total time of study.

Thesis

When you have fulfilled all your study duties, passed the Doctor's English Examination and the State Doctoral Examination, your last goal is to finish your PhD thesis. There have to be at least three scientific chapters (manuscripts/papers and the main precondition of the PhD thesis is that it includes one study, where you are the first author and the paper is at least accepted for publication in a journal with impact factor at least 0.5 (in last four years) in DP Zoology. This paper cannot be the same, on which base you obtained the RNDr. title at the same time.

The PhD thesis at FSci USB is accepted in two forms. First, seldom used, is standardly structured text (intro, methods, results, discussion) where you summarizes all your research. The text cannot be less than standard 10 pages, and should be more (15-20 pages), excluding, Figures, Tables and References. Such text has to be supplemented by paper(s) resulting from your research.

The other and more frequently used (and preferred) form is a commented compilation of at least three publications (at least one of them is accepted for publication and you are the first author). The commentary (Introduction) usually has a form of a review, describing your field of interest and identifying

the gaps in knowledge you are about to fill (ideally updated literature review you submitted in the first year of studies, if still corresponds with the outputs of dissertation). Subsequently, you present the full text of all your papers. You may include also manuscripts, which has never been submitted to any journal. All your studies included in the thesis need to be affiliated to FSci USB. You may include study on which you had obtain RNDr., but in that case you have to include on more first-author paper.

For all the papers, you are supposed to have a signed list of authorship from your co-authors and you are obliged to deal with the copyright of already published articles (using copyright clearance center - <https://marketplace.copyright.com/rs-ui-web/mp>).

Thesis defence

Once you feel your thesis is finished and your supervisor is fine with it, you submit it to the Department of Study Affairs, which will start the process of PhD defence. Firstly, your supervisor might suggest several reviewers to head of SB. Usually, there are two reviewers for a PhD thesis, who are respected experts in the field. Preferably, one is Czech and the other foreign. Their personal presence during the defence is welcomed and desired, but an online form is also acceptable. Reviewers prepare a review, which you obtain before the defence, and you are supposed to prepare responses to their comments and questions. The defence itself is not an exam, it should be rather a discussion on your topic, where you are supposed to show that you are an expert in your field. The committee proposed by the SB finally evaluates your thesis and gives grades passed/did not pass. You are not supposed to arrange any logistical support for the defence (e.g. refreshments for the committee), but an invitation to the pub after the defence is pleasant 😊.

RNDr. (Dr. rer. nat., *Doctor rerum naturalium*)

Doctor of Natural Sciences is a traditional title provided by our faculty. Formerly, it was the only doctoral title provided to people with finished pre-gradual study (Master). Recently, PhD is the main doctoral title; nevertheless, it did not replace the RNDr. title. PhD is provided to those who successfully finish their post-gradual study. Formerly, in Czech Republic, this equated to title CSc., Candidate of Sciences. CSc. title was replaced by PhD in Czech Republic in nineties. Recently, RNDr. is recognized as something useless, but there are still some potential employees who may increase your salary based on this title (compared to MSc, not PhD).

RNDr. title award is based on a thesis, which usually has a form of a publication of original research in a journal of any kind or a book. Alternatively, the RNDr. thesis may be at least 20 pages of text on the research topic, which is very scarce at our faculty. You have to be a Master or equivalent to propose for this title. If your thesis is a paper published in journal with IF more than 0.3, your thesis is not reviewed by a reviewer. In case you are not the first author of the paper, other co-authors (at least the first author or senior researcher) have to confirm your important participation on the paper (expressed in percent). The paper used for RNDr. must not be the paper which is the base for the PhD thesis. You have to have another impacted first-authored paper for PhD. The RNDr. thesis has its own defence, where the committee evaluates the importance and the quality of the research. Beside the defence, you have to undergo the RNDr. exam, which is supposed to test your expertise in the field of the research presented in your RNDr. thesis. The examination committee may be the same as in case of defence (at least five members, one outside the USB).

The RNDr. exam may be passed along with your Master exam. The Master exam and defence only have to precede the RNDr. exam (may take place the same day morning). Only the committee for RNDr. exam is significantly larger (min. five people) than for the Master exam (usually three people). Other option is to combine the RNDr. and PhD exam. In such case the committees may be the same or very similar, besides the PhD exam, there are some additional questions, which are listed in the protocol for the RNDr. exam. The defence of the RNDr. thesis must be combined with the RNDr. exam (are conducted with one committee in one day). Preferred situation is that you also combine it with both, PhD exam and PhD defence (may be the same committee). Nevertheless, PhD exams usually precedes the defence in most of students.

»» Guide to a year of study

