KU LEUVEN

From the Salzburg Principles to the ORPHEUS Best Practices for PhD training and a Quality Label

John Creemers
Director Doctoral School Biomedical Sciences, KU Leuven
President ORPHEUS

orpheus
QUALITY IN DOCTORAL EDUCATION

HORIZON-MSCA-2025-DN-01-01

European Commission

28 May 2025	Launch of the call for proposals
24 June 2025	Info Days Read more
25 November 2025	Deadline for applicants to submit proposals
April 2026	Notification of applicants if their proposal has been selected (TBC)
July 2026	Grant agreement signature for successful projects (TBC)
	Hide 2 items ^
August 2026	First EU-funded projects start (TBC)

What does the funding cover?

All areas of research may be funded and Doctoral Networks can last for up to 4 years (up to 5 years in the case of Joint Doctorate projects).

orpheus

QUALITY IN DOCTORAL EDUCATION

This **Orpheus Label** is awarded to

Name of Institution

In recognition of excellent practice in their PhD training programme
in compliance with Orpheus Best Practices in Doctoral Education

Award Date
June 4th, 2025

Valid Until
June 3rd, 2031

Chair of Labelling Board

ORPHEUS QUALITY ASSURANCE

President of Orpheus

Michael Mulvany

Zdravko Lackovic

Gül Akdoğan

Joana Palha

AMSE wfme

https://orpheus-med.org/quality-assurance/

orpheus

QUALITY IN DOCTORAL EDUCATION

The labeling procedure starts with a self-assessment

Best Practices in
DOCTORAL EDUCATION

orpheus
QUALITY IN DOCTORAL EDUCATION

ORPHEUS QUALITY ASSURANCE

https://orpheus-med.org/best-practices-recommendations/

The Best Practices contain the following topics:

1. Research Environment
2. Outcomes
3. Admission Policy and Criteria
4. PhD Training Program
5. Supervision
6. PhD Thesis
7. Assessment
8. Graduate School Structure

The Best Practices are composed of Core & Advanced recommendations and Annotations

Core Recommendations

CR4.1-7, only 1-4 are shown; PhD Training Program

- PhD training programmes should be based on conducting original research, transferable skills development and disciplinary coursework as relevant. *(CR 4.1)*
- PhD programmes should be performed under structured supervision. *(CR4.2)*
- PhD programmes should ensure that candidates have appropriate training in research integrity and ethics. *(CR4.3)*
- PhD programmes should be structured with a clear time limit, a length equivalent to 3-4 years full time. Extension of the time frame should be possible, but be limited and exceptional rather than typical (e.g for parental leave, bereavement or sick leave). *(CR4.4)*

Advanced Recommendations

- For PhDs performed by clinicians, leave-of-absence from clinical duties should be provided for the research element of such programmes unless these are coincident. *(AR4.1)*
- PhD programmes should have an element of interdisciplinarity where at all possible. *(AR4.2)*

Annotations

- A 3-4 year full time (or equivalent) limit has several purposes *(An4.1)*:
  - » it guarantees that there is an upper limit to the amount of scientific work, which can be expected to be included in a PhD thesis and is an effective way to avoid the requirements for a PhD degree escalating over time. *(An4.1a)*

To obtain the ORPHEUS certificate of label, fill out the form

4 1-2 PhD TRAINING PROGRAMME

PhD training programmes should be based on conducting original research, transferable skills development and disciplinary coursework as relevant. *(CR 4.1)*

Yes [ ], No [ ], Maybe [ ]

PhD programmes should be performed under structured supervision. *(CR4.2)*

Yes [ ], No [ ], Maybe [ ]

Please provide following information.

- *Describe the content of PhD programmes.*
- *Describe how the supervision process is structured.*

Download the application form at: https://orpheus-med.org/quality-assurance/

orpheus
QUALITY IN DOCTORAL EDUCATION

From self assessment to certificate & label

1. Send the Self Assessment form to ORPHEUS
2. The form is evaluated by the Labeling Board (LB)
3. Recommendations for improvement are given
4. After implementation, an ORPHEUS certificate is awarded
5. To obtain a label, a site visit is performed
6. Two LB members (+PhD student) speak to all stakeholders
7. Recommendations for improvement are given
8. After implementation, an ORPHEUS label is awarded

~40 universities have already obtained a certificate or label

Label

Certificate

orpheus

QUALITY IN DOCTORAL EDUCATION

Testimonials

With this token of motivation, we will work with ORPHEUS for a constant improvement of graduate education in our institution.

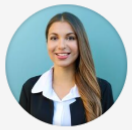
Mannheim, 2016

We take note of the recommendations for further improvement of the program.

Bergen, 2016

The process of evaluation, particularly the site visit was considered extremely useful by all participants (students, supervisors, administration). The suggestions have been very useful and actions are already in place to follow the advice provided.

Minho, 2019



I would like to thank ORPHEUS, for your valuable guidance to us in achieving our goals.

Dokuz Eylül, Izmir, 2015

What is the added value of the ORPHEUS quality label?

1. A self-reflection pinpoints your strengths/weaknesses
2. Objective evaluation by international experts
3. A good benchmark with European best practices
4. Preparation for internal/national accreditation
5. As leverage to influence authorities
6. A basis for international collaboration & joint doctorates
7. A quality label to use in funding applications
8. Renewal procedure to keep updated with changes

Concluding remarks

1. The ORPHEUS label was developed to meet European standards and to facilitate international collaboration
2. It serves both established and starting Doctoral Schools
3. It respects national regulations
4. It is updated on a regular basis
5. It currently aims at Biomedical Sciences but can easily be adapted by all sciences
6. Online workshops to get started with the application are organized twice a year (free of charge, also for non-members)

john.creemers@kuleuven.be secretary@orpheus-med.org