Statutes for the Doctoral Forum “Complexity of Life”

Convenience translation - not legally binding. *This English translation is provided for information purposes only. Solely the German original (“Statuten für das Doktorandenforum ‚Complexity of Life‘“) is authoritative. In case of any discrepancy between this translation and the German original, the German version prevails.*

Preamble

These statutes are based on the Rectorate’s guideline on the establishment of doctoral forums at the University of Graz, in effect since 1 October 2025. All details and specific regulations are to be determined by the respective doctoral forum.

1. General Information

Name of the doctoral forum: **Complexity of Life**

Participating faculty/faculties: **NAWI, URBI, SOWI, GEWI, Idea_Lab**

Date of establishment: **30 June 2026**

2. Objectives of the Doctoral Forum

Support of doctoral candidates

The doctoral forum “**Complexity of Life**” is being established to create a research-intensive environment that, through regular exchange and joint scientific activities, enables a productive peer culture among the doctoral candidates and supervision by a team. The aim is to enable high-quality, interdisciplinary dissertations, to strengthen the integration of doctoral candidates into the scientific community, and to enhance their career prospects.

The aim of the doctoral forum is interdisciplinary exchange and methodological support for the participating doctoral candidates. Doctoral candidates (and their supervisors) receive concrete support in implementing their research projects by being able to present their work for discussion in an interdisciplinary team. An additionally drafted **Code of Conduct** defines the goals and tasks of the doctoral program as well as standards, services, and forms of supervision.

Scientific objectives

This doctoral forum investigates complex living dynamic interaction networks. By understanding complexity and interactions within and between components of living systems, it prepares for emerging changes in the biosphere and sociosphere. The methodology applied comprises optimization, decision theory, game theory, network theory, systems analysis, simulation-based and other computer-assisted methods.

3. Membership Structure

In accordance with the Rectorate’s guideline on the establishment of doctoral forums, the forum comprises the following membership groups:

Supervisors (Faculty)

The majority of the supervising members (minimum number 5, maximum number 15) must belong to the University of Graz. The supervising members of the University of Graz belong

to the following faculties or are active in the following research fields: Biology, Mathematics, Linguistics, Psychology, Environmental Systems Sciences, Operations and Information Systems, Idea_Lab, Educational Research, Movement Sciences, Economics, German Studies. From this body, one member is elected as Head and another as Deputy Head.

Postdocs (Mentors)

Postdocs are admitted upon approval and provided that the unrestricted continuation of their research work is ensured. The postdoc members of the University of Graz belong to the following faculties or are active in the following research fields: Biology, Mathematics, Psychology, Cognitive and Behavioural Sciences, Environmental Systems Sciences, Operations and Information Systems, Idea_Lab, Educational Research, Movement Sciences, Economics, German Studies.

Doctoral candidates

The doctoral candidate members of the doctoral forum (minimum number 5) belong to the following doctoral programs or doctoral schools: Biology, Mathematics and Scientific Computing, Psychology, Environmental Systems Sciences, Sport and Movement Sciences.

4. Admission Criteria for Doctoral Candidates

Admission as a doctoral candidate member requires:

Existing enrolment in a subject-relevant doctoral program or membership in a subject-relevant doctoral school at the University of Graz, as specified in Section 3.

Thematic proximity of the dissertation to the forum's overarching research theme/approach.

A further specific criterion for admission is a direct connection to complexity research, which must be ensured by two supervisors from different research fields.

The procedure of the admission process will be published on the forum's website.

5. Training and Support Program

The doctoral forum offers the following activities and events for scientific development and networking:

Regular meetings of doctoral candidates and faculty: interdisciplinary PhD seminars and subject-specific courses, DocDays, Focus Workshops, etc.

Activities organized by doctoral candidates: guest lectures, annual PhD retreats, retreats, summer schools, focus workshops, low-threshold leisure and exchange activities, online forums as communication channels.

Support by faculty and mentors in networking with the international scientific community. In addition, matching events with start-ups, corporates, NGOs, and the public sector are organized. Furthermore, coaching, peer career circles, and a structured alumni network are offered.

Professional Identity and Resilience Program: modules anchored in the curriculum for professional identity development and resilience support autonomy, self-initiative, and perseverance: strengths profiling, portfolio and narrative work ("Translating complexity skills"), career path clinics on innovation/administration/research/governance, as well as training in negotiation, project management, and responsible science communication.

6. Public Presence

The doctoral forum commits to setting up a website (including its own e-mail address) on which the following information is available:

Members (doctoral candidates with dissertation topics, faculty, postdocs)

Statutes

Admission criteria and procedure

Current activities

Contact details of the speakers and deputy speakers.

7. Quality Assurance

In accordance with the Rectorate’s guideline, the forum commits to regularly submitting activity reports to the Research Careers Campus:

First report: at the end of the second academic year after establishment.

Further reports: every three academic years.

8. Establishment

The forum is established by resolution of the Rectorate with effect from **30 June 2026**.