

Minutes of the Academic Board of the SAAF PhD n. 17 (cycles XXXVIII-XXXIX-XL)

Meeting of 05 June 2025

Composition of the Academic Board:

			P	JA	A
1.	Abdelfattah	Ahmed			X
2.	Abenavoli	Maria Rosa		X	
3.	Agosteo	Giovanni	X		
4.	Barreca	Francesco			X
5.	Bernardi	Bruno	X		
6.	Bombino	Giuseppe	X		
7.	Campolo	Orlando	X		
8.	De Luca	Anna Irene		X	
9.	Di Fazio	Salvatore	X		
10.	García-Ruíz	Roberto			X
11.	Giuffrè	Angelo Maria	X		
12.	Gulisano	Giovanni	X		
13.	Li Destri	Giulia	X		
14.	Lombardi	Fabio	X		
15.	Lucas-Borja	Manuel Esteban		X	
16.	Lupini	Antonio		X	
17.	Marcianò	Claudio			X
18.	Marziliano	Pasquale	X		
19.	Modica	Giuseppe			X
20.	Monti	Michele	X		
21.	Muscolo	Adele Maria			X
22.	Nicolosi	Agata		X	
23.	Palmeri	Vincenzo	X		
24.	Piscopo	Amalia Rosa Maria	X		
25.	Poiana	Marco	X		
26.	Porto	Paolo		X	
27.	Proto	Andrea Rosario		X	
28.	Schena	Leonardo	From remote		
29.	Sicari	Vincenzo		X	
30.	Sorgonà	Agostino		X	
36.	Spampinato	Giovanni		X	
31.	Strano	Alfio	X		
32.	Sunseri	Francesco			X
33.	Tassone	Valentina C.			X
34.	Zema	Demetrio Antonio	X		
35.	Zimbalatti	Giuseppe		X	

The meeting takes place in in the Francesco S. Nesci room of the Department of Agriculture. Since the Coordinator Prof. Leonardo Schena was unable to chair the meeting for health reasons, and since the Dean, Prof. Giovanni Gulisano, was unable to follow its preparation, the meeting is chaired Prof. Marco Poiana, Director of the Department. Prof. Leonardo Schena assists remotely in the role of participant. Prof. Bruno

Bernardi acts as secretary for the minutes. The special channel "PhD SAAF (Cycles XXXVIII/IX/XL) - MEETINGS" created by the Coordinator in the Microsoft Teams platform is activated to allow the participation of the members of the Board residing abroad (Dr. Abdelfattah, Prof. García-Ruíz, Dr. Lucas-Borja, Valentina C. Tassone). Dr. Lucas-Borja is considered absent justified having previously sent a request by e-mail to the coordinator. Dr. Abdelfattah, Dr. Tassone and Prof. García-Ruíz are considered absent because they have not sent any request and do not connect to the meeting on the platform.

The Director of the Department, having noted that the Board has been duly convened by invitation sent by e-mail on 30 May 2025 and that can deliberate, declares the meeting open at 09:40. The agenda is as follows:

1. Approving minutes of meeting n. 15 (18.03.2025)
2. Communications
3. Criteria and timing for the evaluation of activities the first year
4. Appointment of the PhD Advisory Board
5. Proposal of PhD renewal (cycle XLI)
6. Authorization of the foreign period

In addition, considering the e-mail sent by the Director of the Department to all members of the PhD Board on June 4, 2025, the following point is integrated into the Agenda:

7. Authorization of external assignment Dr. Giada Zucco

1. Approving minutes of meeting n. 15 (18.03.2025)

The Director of the Department reminds those present that the draft of the minutes of meeting no. 15 of 22.01.2025 drawn up in Italian and English was sent on 13 March 2025 to all members of the Board, together with the convocation of this Board. The minutes, in both versions (Italian and English) are approved unanimously.

2. Communications

The Director of the Department announces that following the results of the elections for the renewal of the role of Coordinator of the PhD Course in "Agricultural, Food and Forestry Sciences" which took place in meeting no. 16 of 26 March 2025, Prof. Leonardo Schena has received the renewal for another three years of the mandate of Coordinator of the PhD Course for all active cycles (DR. No. 107/2025 of 03.04.2025). The Director of the Department therefore wishes Prof. Leonardo Schena the best of luck in his work.

3. Criteria and timing for the evaluation of the first year of activity

The Director of the Department recalls that in previous PhD cycles, the evaluation of the first year of activity of the PhD students, for the purposes of admission to the second year of the course, was made based on:

- A three-year research project in English.
- The annual report on the activities carried out in English.
- An individual training plan containing the teaching and research activities with the respective credits acquired.

The Director of the Department points out that, based on what has been communicated by the Coordinator and based on the experience deriving from previous cycles, the research project should be prepared only in the first year, while the annual report and the training plan are annual documents that must also be prepared in the second and third years, as they are essential for the admission of doctoral students to the third year of the course and to the final exam. He highlights that this evaluation model has given good results in previous years. For the evaluation of the three-year research project, similarly to what happened in previous years, it is proposed an internal/external commission composed of three members, at least two of whom are external to the Academic Board. The commission must be approved by the Academic Board. This commission will evaluate the project and its presentation by the PhD students. The judgments of the commission together

with the annual report and the individual training plan will be used by the Board to evaluate the doctoral students and, in case of positive evaluation, for admission to the second year.

As regards the timing for sending the documentation to the coordinator, the following schedule is proposed:

- Three-year research project in English: 6 July 2025.
- Annual report and individual training plan: 12 October 2025.

After a brief discussion, the Board unanimously approves and gives a mandate to the coordinator to inform the PhD students.

This point is read and approved immediately

4. Appointment of the PhD Advisory Board

The Director of the Department recalls that the "Appointment of the PhD Advisory Board " has already been brought to the attention of the Board in meeting no. 15 of 18.03.2025. On that occasion, the Board, having received only three proposals, had decided to postpone the discussion to a subsequent meeting to acquire other willingness to be part of the Advisory Committee.

On 14 May 2025, the coordinator again sent all members of the Board a previous e-mail communication dated 22 February 2025 in order to reiterate the invitation to send proposals for possible members of the Committee to be formed. The communication highlighted the need for each PhD to have an Advisory Board in line with the requirements of the University "AQ" and "AVA3" and attached the following documents:

- A note from the Coordinator of the University "PQA", Prof. Giovanni Leonardi "*Communication on AQ System fulfillment*";
- The "*Guidelines for the composition of the steering committees and the consultation of interested parties*" prepared by the University PQA.

The Director of the Department reports that to date the following proposals have been received overall, all accompanied by a *Curriculum vitae*:

- Dr. Antonio Fazari: Former PhD at the Mediterranean University of Reggio Calabria, he is currently an adjunct professor at the same University, as well as an entrepreneur and administrator of an agricultural company
- Prof. Riccardo Fichera: Full Professor of Rural Construction and Agroforestry at the Mediterranean University of Reggio Calabria (SSD AGRI-04/C) he is currently retired
- Dr. Nicolò Bruno Francesco: Former PhD student at the Mediterranean University of Reggio Calabria is currently a Professional Agronomist
- Prof. Gaetano Magnano di San Lio: Full Professor of Plant Pathology at the Mediterranean University of Reggio Calabria (SSD AGRI-05/B) he is currently retired
- Prof. Mauro Moresi: Professor of Food Science and Technology at the University of Tuscia (SSD AGRI-07/A) he is currently retired
- Dr. Maurizio Pollino: Former PhD student at the Mediterranean University of Reggio Calabria he is currently senior researcher at the Italian National Agency for New Technologies, Energy and Sustainable Economic Development (ENEA)

Considering the above-mentioned document "*Guidelines for the composition of steering committees and consultation of interested parties*" which assigns the role of President to the Coordinator of the Doctorate, the Director proposes that the committee be made up of Prof. Leonardo Schena (president), Prof. Riccardo Fichera, Prof. Gaetano Magnano di San Lio, Prof. Mauro Moresi, Dr. Antonio Fazari, Dr. Nicolò Bruno Francesco, and Dr. Maurizio Pollino.

A brief discussion followed, at the end of which the Board decided to unanimously approve the composition of the Advisory Board.

5. Proposal of PhD renewal (cycle XLI)

The Director of the Department announces that on 22.05.2025 the coordinator received from the Head of the Higher Education Research Sector of the Mediterranean University of Reggio Calabria, Dr. Angela Crucitti, a communication with which he was informed that he had been delegated to filling the proposal for the renewal of the accreditation of the PhD (XLI cycle). A MUR note was attached to the message communicating the opening of the IT platform for the submission of proposals for the renewal of doctoral courses (XLI cycle a.a. 2025/2026) starting from 30 April and until 12 June 2025 (Note Prot. N. 00133353 of 30.04.2025). On 28.05.2025, the coordinator received additional documentation needed for preparing the accreditation/renewal application, including an operational guide. On 23.05.2025, the Coordinator of the Doctoral School, Prof. Paolo Fuschi, communicated by e-mail to all the Coordinators that, contrary to what has happened in recent years, no ministerial co-financing has been received and the scholarships necessary for the activation of the XLI cycle (at least 4 for each doctorate of the campus) will be funded by the Mediterranean University, with integrations from funds of the project "Patti Territoriali dell'alta formazione per le imprese" (MUR DECREE no. 2329 of 21.12.2023). The Director of the Department recalls the considerations of the Coordinator, Prof. Leonardo Schena, regarding the very tight deadlines in which he was forced to operate, often in conditions of uncertainty.

The Director of the Department recalls that the PhD Course in Agricultural, Food and Forestry Sciences (SAAF) was accredited in the current composition of the Academic Board in 2022 (XXXVIII cycle) and that, therefore, based on Ministerial Decree no. 226 of 14/12/2021 and the "*University Regulations on PhDs*" it has a residual accreditation period of two years. He reads Art. 4, paragraph 4 of Ministerial Decree 226: *The accreditation of locations and courses has a five-year duration. Without prejudice to the periodic monitoring and evaluation referred to in paragraph 5, accreditation shall be assessed, for the purposes of confirmation or revocation of the same, in the event of a change in the name of the courses or in the composition of the teaching staff, to an extent greater than twenty-five per cent with respect to the initial amount of the reference cycle, or of the course coordinator, without prejudice to the possession of the requirements provided for in Article 4 for each member of the board*". It is highlighted that the current composition of the board provides for 36 units, of which 32 are Italian professors and 4 colleagues from foreign universities or research centers. That said, the twenty-five percent of maximum changes granted by current legislation determines that the SAAF Doctorate can take advantage of the remaining two years of accreditation provided that the current Board does not undergo changes of more than 9 units, understood both as the entry of new professors and the exit of current members of the Board.

On 06.05.2025 the coordinator, after hearing the Director of the Department, Prof. Marco Poiana, sent an e-mail communication to all the Professors of the Department of Agriculture to ask interested parties to express their availability to be part of the PhD Board starting from the XLI cycle. At the same time, interested parties were asked to send their "SIMULATION ASN 2023-2025" to enable the preliminary verification of the scientific qualification, in line with the provisions of Art. 4, paragraph 1, of the aforementioned Ministerial Decree no. 226. The Director of the Department informs the assembly that he has received a positive expression of interest from all the current Members of the Board, as well as from 14 other colleagues who are not part of the current Course. He also points out that all the Colleagues who have expressed interest in being part of the Board meet the quality requirements provided for by Ministerial Decree no. 226.

In this regard, however, the Director of the Department points out that, in the face of the positive expression of interest by all the current Members of the Board, as well as by 14 other colleagues who are not part of the current Course, there is not as much active participation in the work, as evidenced even today by the high number of absences. This condition will have to be duly considered on the occasion of the next renewal of the composition of the Academic Board.

Having said all this, the Director of the Department points out that following a three-year period (cycles XXXVIII, XXXIX, XL) in which no changes have been made, it seems appropriate to integrate the Board, allowing other colleagues to give their own contribution of skills and ideas to the SAAF Doctorate. In particular, he

emphasizes the opportunity for all the scientific disciplinary sectors (SSD) present in the Department to be represented as much as possible also in the Doctoral Teaching Board. This change, however, should fall within the maximum limit of twenty-five percent, corresponding to 9 units, to avoid losing the remaining two years of accreditation and immediately being subjected to a new evaluation process. To this end, the Director of the Department informs the Board of a previous meeting between the Coordinator Prof. Leonardo Schena and the Director of the Department, held to identify objective criteria with the aim of reducing the additions of staff units from 14 to 9, in the interest of the Doctorate and, more generally, of departmental training. The criteria identified in descending order of importance are the following:

- New requests from colleagues who currently hold the position of Full or Associate Professor are privileged over researchers, whether they are permanent researchers or RTDBs.
- For the scientific-disciplinary sectors (SSD) for which more than one request for participation in the PhD programme has been received from researchers, a comparative evaluation is carried out based on the ASN indicators for Associate Professor (number of articles in the last 5 years, number of citations in the last 10 years, H index in the last 10 years) in order to identify the most qualified researcher.
- Researchers who, downstream of the previous comparison or, independently of it, are in the condition of being the only representatives of their SSD, are privileged over researchers in SSD sectors represented by at least two components.
- Among the remaining researchers, researchers from fewer SSDs are privileged over those from more numerous SSDs.

The Director of the Department asks the assembly to express its opinion on these criteria. This is followed by a discussion with the intervention of Profs. Palmeri and Campolo, who underline the importance of the actions aimed at giving a more balanced and qualifying composition to the Doctoral Board, at the end of which the criteria are unanimously approved.

The application of the above criteria leads to the integration of the SAAF Doctoral Board with Prof. Santo Marcello Zimbone (SSD AGRI-04/A), Antonio Gelsomino (SSD AGRI-06/B) and Manuel Scerra (SSD AGRI-09/B) and with Drs. Giuseppe Badagliacca (SSD AGRI-02/A), Souraya Benalia (SSD AGRI-04/B), Gregorio Antonio Maria Gullo (SSD AGRI-03/A), Carmelo Maria Musarella (SSD BIOS-01/C), Salvatore Praticò (SSD AGRI-04/C), and Rossana Sidari (SSD AGRI-08/A).

This point is read and approved immediately

6. Authorization for a foreign period

No requests were received

7. Authorization of external assignment Dr. Giada Zucco

The Director of the Department announces that Dr. Giada Zucco, a first-year PhD student (XL cycle), has submitted a request to the Doctoral Board for authorization to carry out an external assignment, in the form of an occasional service with the company Sparrow HLC, for a gross amount of € 900.00. The assignment involves the characterization of 18 stations located in the provinces of Reggio Calabria and Messina, as part of the pre-construction monitoring (Bridge over the Strait) of lepidopterans. This is premised by an exchange of emails between the PhD student herself, the Coordinator and the administrative offices of the University, which have highlighted how the PhD student can carry out paid work only if this, it is reported verbatim, *"allows the acquisition of skills concerning the educational field of the doctorate and at the same time guarantees the profitable performance of the training activities, teaching and research of the doctoral course"*.

Since this condition is not evident from the request for authorization made by Dr. Giada Zucco, it is confirmed by the tutor of the doctoral student Giada Zucco, Prof. Orlando Campolo with email prot. no. 0014781 of

12.05.2025, which underlines how the assignment in question is fully in line with the purposes mentioned above.

After a brief discussion, the Board decided to unanimously approve Dr. Giada Zucco's request.

Since there are no other topics for discussion and having dealt with all the items on the agenda, the meeting is closed at 10:40 a.m.

The Director of the Department
Prof. Marco Poiana

The Secretary
Prof. Bruno Bernardi
