

EURODOC survey on the Doctorate¹ structure across Europe (version May 2018)
prepared by the EURODOC Doctoral Training Working Group

Norway

I. General information and application procedure

Which institutions award doctoral degrees?

Doctoral degree can be awarded by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) that have accredited doctoral degree programme.

What forms of doctorate attendance are available?

Doctorate attendance is commonly full-time. In clinical settings, industry or state institutions the doctorate is part-time. Doctoral candidates can fulfil a part of their doctorate outside of their home institute as well.

What is the formal length of time foreseen for completing a doctorate?

If the doctoral candidate has a teaching obligation, then the length of the doctorate is 4 years. Otherwise it is three years. The previous lengths are for a full-time doctorate. However, in a part-time setting, the doctorate can be up to 6 years long. The doctoral candidates are allowed to go to short-term vacancies in teaching and research positions, foreign fellowships and the like when this can happen without reducing the progress in postdoctoral project, doctoral degree or fellow program for more than half a year for artistic development or specialist education. In such cases, the term of employment may be extended accordingly.

What is the status of the doctoral candidates²?

Employee.

What are the social benefits for doctoral candidates with student status?

Doctoral candidates have employee status in Norway which means they have full right to sick- and maternity leave etc. However, they don't get any discounts on transportation and similar student benefits.

How are doctoral candidates financially supported?

Doctoral candidates receive salaries. Minimum wage is 436 900 NOK (45 304 €) brutto per year. After the tax of 35 %, doctoral candidates would receive minimum 25 000 NOK (2 610 €) per month neto. Foreign citizens get 10 % tax standard deduction of their gross income in first two years of their stay in Norway. Their own research, travels and conferences are supported through different kind of scholarships and grants which they or their supervisors apply to.

¹ **Doctorate** is understood as the institutional frameworks and processes geared towards the completion of a doctoral degree.

² **Doctoral candidate** is a person enrolled in a doctorate.

What are the admission requirements for a doctorate?

In order to be admitted to a doctoral programme, the applicant must usually have completed a five year master's programme or its equivalent with an average grade B or higher, which the institution has approved as a sufficient basis for admission to the doctoral programme in question.

Doctoral candidates have to satisfy English language requirements at an academic level: IELTS scores above 6.5 and TOEFL scores above 600 (paper based) or 92 (internet based). Some doctoral programmes require Norwegian language proficiency as well which is usually tested through an interview.

Interviews can be held in one round or more, depending on the number and excellence of the doctoral candidates. The knowledge, professional independence and personal traits will be examined at this point.

There is not a definite time when the doctorate has to start.

II. Progression

How is a doctorate organized in your country?

The doctoral programme shall be designed such that doctoral candidates are able to complete their doctorate within the stipulated time frame. The contract period may be extended in the event that a doctoral candidate is granted leave from the programme on the basis of his/her legal rights as an employee. The institution shall provide all doctoral candidates with the obligatory training (courses and instruction) at a high academic level. In the event that the institution or unit responsible for the programme does not provide all required courses, that institution must facilitate the doctoral candidate's participation in comparable courses at other institutions or units that provide accredited doctoral instruction. In subjects where there is no course instruction, doctoral candidates may submit individual reading lists for approval in lieu of course participation.

The instruction component of the doctoral programme shall include courses amounting to 30 ECTS credits, and shall include the compulsory course(s) in the philosophy of science and ethics. Completion of the instruction component shall be approved before submission of the thesis. Applications for amendment of previously approved plans for the instruction component shall be prepared in collaboration with the principal academic supervisor and be approved by the institution.

The institution may grant exemption from part of the instruction component in the event that the doctoral candidate has completed equivalent and approved instruction or courses at another unit or organisation.

Teaching may or may not be mandatory. Depending on the type of contract the doctoral candidate was given.

In order to complete their doctorate, the doctoral candidates have to defend their thesis publicly.

How is doctoral supervision provided?

Work on a doctoral thesis shall be conducted under individual supervision. The doctoral candidate and the supervisors shall maintain regular contact. As a general rule, a doctoral candidate shall have two supervisors.

Supervisors must actively work to:

- follow up the doctoral candidate
- secure resources for the project
- ensure that the doctoral candidate participates in an active research community
- make sure that the doctoral candidate publishes in high-quality channels
- remain up-to-date on the progress of the doctoral candidate's work and assess it in relation to the project description progress plan. The progress plan is written by the doctoral candidate in collaboration with his/her supervisors in the first two months of the doctoral training. The progress plan is a part of necessary documentation for approval of doctoral programme by the HEI. The plan contains detailed description of the doctoral project, courses and training that the doctoral candidate plan to take and teaching obligations, as well as the time frame estimated for completion of every component.
- follow up academic issues that may lead to a delay in execution of the organized research training, so that it can be completed within the nominal period of time
- provide advice on the wording and delimitation of the topic and issues
- discuss and assess hypotheses and methods, discuss results and their interpretation, discuss plans and execution of the presentation, linguistic form and documentation
- offer advice on the survey of academic literature and data in relation to the library, archives, etc.
- guide the doctoral candidate on issues of research ethics associated with the thesis
- ensure that the necessary permits are procured for use of the research data and that the obligations associated with use of data are met

The supervisors are appointed by the faculty itself, and at least one of the supervisors must be appointed at the time of admission. All supervisors must possess a doctoral degree or equivalent competence in the relevant field. The supervisors appointed cannot have close personal relations with the doctoral candidate or other persons in the supervisory team.

The principal supervisor has the main academic responsibility for the doctoral candidate. The principal supervisor shall normally be employed at the faculty to which the doctoral candidate has been admitted, or at another unit at the university approved by the faculty.

The faculty itself may appoint an external principal supervisor. In such cases, a co-supervisor employed at the home institute shall be appointed.

Co-supervisors are experts who supervise, and share academic responsibility for, the doctoral candidate.

What are the main obligations of doctoral candidates?

Doctoral candidates have to:

- work 37.5 hours a week,
- conduct scientific research and publish in peer-reviewed journals,

- every third semester report the progress of their doctorate to the faculty/institute they are employees of,
- present their work at conferences,
- teach (if requested by the home institute),
- attend courses and pass the exams planned in the doctoral programme.

Is any mobility compulsory?

Mobility is not compulsory, however it is highly advisable.

How are courses in transferable skills provided?

The courses are organised by HEIs or different organizations for researchers, doctoral holders, doctoral candidates and postdocs. The courses are in-person and voluntary.

How is the progress of the doctoral candidate evaluated?

Oral presentation in front of a committee appointed by the HEI and doctoral candidate's supervisors every third semester. This report includes research results, conferences attended, papers published, courses taken and hours spent on teaching. The committee is evaluating whether doctoral candidate is holding to a schedule proposed by the doctoral candidate him-/herself in the project progress plan.

After the presentation the supervisors leave the room and the doctoral candidate has a private conversation with the committee where he/she can express his/hers feeling and thought about the research group he/she is in and about their supervisors. The supervisors have the same kind of talk with the committee where they discuss their satisfaction with the doctoral candidate.

Is it possible for doctoral candidates to change supervisor(s)?

Although it is not usual, it is possible to change supervisors. If that is the case, the doctoral candidate should talk to the person who is next in line after his supervisors. If the doctoral candidate wants to change supervisor, the change of supervisor form³ must be completed. Both the former supervisor and the new supervisor must sign the form. The form will be sent to the unit the doctoral candidate has been admitted to, which will make a recommendation and send the case to the faculty for a final decision.

Are supervisors required to have training in order to supervise doctoral candidates?

All supervisors must possess a doctoral degree or equivalent competence in the relevant field. No other training is necessary.

III. Defence procedure

What requirements should be met to receive acceptance to enter the defence procedure?

The doctoral candidates must have 30 ECTS collected from the courses in their programme plan and their thesis submitted.

³ <http://www.med.uio.no/english/research/phd/forms/candidate/contract-change-supervisor.docx>

What documents are required to start the defence procedure?

The following must be included with your application:

- three copies of the thesis,
- co-author declarations for articles with more than one author,
- documentation that the necessary permits and declarations of impartiality have been obtained,
- confirmation that the educational component has been completed and passed,
- the main supervisor's recommendation to members of the adjudication committee,
- the doctoral candidate's remarks on the composition of the adjudication committee, where applicable.

The application for evaluation of the thesis must be submitted to the faculty. The application can only be submitted after the educational component has been approved. When the faculty itself has approved the application for thesis evaluation, the faculty itself shall appoint an expert evaluation committee of at least three members which shall evaluate the thesis, the trial lecture and the public defence. The evaluation committee may require access to the doctoral candidate's source material and additional information for the purposes of elaboration or clarification.

The academic supervisors may be summoned to meetings with the evaluation committee to give an account of their supervision and the thesis work.

Once the thesis has been found worthy of defence, the doctoral candidate shall submit the thesis to the faculty in the standardised format and in accordance with the provisions stipulated by the faculty.

The thesis must be printed in accordance with the faculty's templates and other provisions on the publication of doctoral theses.

The faculty itself may stipulate requirements concerning the delivery of abstracts of the thesis.

The thesis must be made publicly available no later than two weeks before the date set for the public defence. The thesis must be made available in the form in which it was submitted for evaluation, subject to any revisions made on the basis of the committee's interim comments.

What is the defence procedure?

When the faculty has found the thesis to be worthy of defence the doctoral candidate shall deliver a trial lecture. The trial lecture is an independent part of the doctoral examination. The purpose is to test the doctoral candidate's ability to acquire knowledge of matters beyond the thesis topic, and to impart this knowledge in a lecture setting.

The title of the trial lecture will be decided by the evaluation committee and announced to the candidate 10 working days before the trial lecture.

The trial lecture must be evaluated by the evaluation committee. The committee shall report to the faculty whether the trial lecture merits a pass. The committee's recommendation must be substantiated if the committee recommends a fail.

The trial lecture must be passed before the public defence may take place.

The public defence of the thesis shall normally take place within two months of the faculty's decision to find the thesis worthy of defence.

The time and place of the public defence shall be announced at least 10 working days in advance.

The committee that originally evaluated the thesis shall also evaluate the public defence.

The public defence must be held in the language of the thesis unless the faculty itself, on the recommendation of the evaluation committee, approves the use of another language.

There shall normally be two ordinary opponents. The two ordinary opponents shall be members of the evaluation committee and are appointed by the faculty itself.

The doctoral candidate shall be given the opportunity to defend the thesis. Members of the audience shall be given the opportunity to comment ex auditorio.

The evaluation committee delivers its recommendation to the faculty as to whether the defence should be approved. The committee's recommendation must be substantiated if the committee does not recommend approval of the defence.

The defence must be approved before the degree can be conferred.

The faculty itself decides whether the doctoral examination shall be approved, on the basis of the evaluation committee's recommendations. If the faculty itself does not approve the trial lecture, a new trial lecture must be delivered.

A new trial lecture must address a new topic. A new trial lecture must be delivered within six months and should be evaluated, if possible, by the original committee, unless the faculty decides otherwise.

If the faculty itself does not approve the public defence, the doctoral candidate may defend the thesis once more. A second defence may only be held six months after the date of the original defence and should be evaluated, if possible, by the original committee, unless the faculty decides otherwise.

Author/s: Tatjana Bosnjak

University affiliation: University of Oslo

National Association affiliation: SiN - stipendiatorganisasjonene i Norge

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 Stipendiatorganisasjonene
i Norge

EURODOC survey on the Doctorate structures across Europe was prepared for the EURODOC Doctoral Training Working Group by the following members (in alphabetical order): Melania Borit⁴ (NO), Gergely Buday (HU), Eva Hnatkova (CZ), Filomena Parada (PO) and Olga Shtyka (PL).

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