PhD in Science of Professions

See study programme

Autumn 2024 (1. semester)

Science of Professions, Focusing on Language, Relationships and Actions	PRO9014 7.5 sp
Philosophy of Science and Research Ethics	PRO9015 5 sp

Elective courses

Practical Knowledge and Professional Praxis	PRO9002 5 sp

Spring 2025 (2. semester)

Design and Methods	PRO9013 7.5 sp

Elective courses

Video Observation and Analysis	PRO9016 5 sp

Programme description

Approved by the deans at the Faculty of Education and Arts (FLU) and the Faculty of Nursing and Health Sciences (FSH) on 26 January 2022

About the PhD in Science of Professions

The PhD in Science of Professions is a three-year full-time programme consisting of a training component and research work of a high academic standard. The programme highlights topical, socially relevant issues in which the field of professional practice is the focus, and contributes to innovative processes in professions. The programme is regionally based, aims to be nationally preferred and internationally recognised. It will generate new knowledge with relevance to national policy in health, social care and education. The interdisciplinary study programme is organised jointly by the Faculty of Nursing and Health Sciences (FSH) and the Faculty of Education and Arts (FLU) at Nord University.

Description of programme

The PhD programme's academic discipline is *the science of professions*. *Professions* are assumed to have their own scientific knowledge base, an ethical code, an organisation that safeguards the interests of the profession, and legitimacy for a social mission. *Science* involves research where empirical data is systematically, critically and methodically collected and analysed in light of hypotheses and/or research questions. The science is built from a knowledge base generated through research, aims to challenge existing knowledge, as well as developing new

understandings and explanations.

The PhD in Science of Professions is a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary programme aimed at developing knowledge in, about, and for the field of professional practice. The programme facilitates empirical research within professions in health, social care and education, where the core focus is on practical research through systematic, academic rigour and transparency. The programme meets society's need for research-based knowledge about professions and professional practice in relation to national policy development in the welfare state.

The PhD programme's profile focuses on the areas of the science of professions that deal with *language*, *relationships* and *actions* within professional practice. These areas constitute the academic discipline on which individual projects are to be based, and candidates' research questions must address one or more of these areas. Research projects can take the form of a descriptive, normative explanatory or critically analytical design, where the purpose is to understand, explain, develop and/or challenge practice.

Language, relationships and actions in the science of professions

The three thematic areas of *language*, *relationships* and *actions* in professional practice are understood as human activity, where the participants share a common understanding of practice. This includes a shared understanding of activities (actions), the characteristic discourse, conversation and thoughts about the activity (language), and the relations between people and objects involved in the practice (relationships). Language, relationships and actions thereby form part of a holistic understanding of practice. Professionals not only reproduce previous actions and understandings, but also develop new knowledge through the interaction with structures and actions. The science of professions is thus an overarching framework for applied practical research on professions, with an explicit emphasis on the thematic areas of language, relationships and actions, which form a basis for the study of practice from different interdisciplinary perspectives.

Practice is shaped by external, interwoven structures that hold it together. These include *cultural discours*e *aspects* that are conveyed through the semantic dimension of language (e.g. language and discourse that enable and limit characteristic expressions in practice), *material aspects* that are conveyed through actions in a physical dimension (e.g. buildings and objects such as books and digital aids that enable and limit actions that characterise practice), and *socio-political aspects* that are conveyed through relationships in a social dimension (e.g. hierarchies, solidarity and power that enable and limit practice). This approach to the science of professions makes it possible to study practice from different interdisciplinary perspectives.

Target group

The target group for the PhD programme includes national and international candidates who wish to conduct practical, empirical research in the science of professions and learn the craft of science as a foundation for a future career.

Admission criteria

For admission to the PhD programme, applicants must hold a Master degree of 120 ECTS credits or equivalent, as well as basic professional training at Bachelor or Master level in health, social or educational studies.

Candidates with a Master degree of 120 ECTS credits but who do not have basic professional training at Bachelor or Master level in the aforementioned studies may be considered for admission following an individual assessment of whether their proposed project is relevant to professional practice and can be linked to practice.

Applicants must show in their project application that their project focuses on professions and entails research into practice. Projects must also address one or more of the areas of language, relationships and actions in light of professional practice.

Applicants whose weighted average in their Master's degree is lower than a 'B', may qualify for admission by virtue of, for example, their contribution to a peer-reviewed article as a first author or participation in a research project relevant to the subject area. Applications must document the applicant's basic scientific understanding and insight, reflection, independence and analytical thinking.

Applications for admission to the PhD in Science of Professions must include a project description and documentation of full funding for the entire study period. The Dean is responsible for approving admissions, following a recommendation from the Working Committee. Project descriptions, developed in collaboration with the supervisor, must include a plan for the candidate's work in the PhD programme (training component and independent research).

Confer the PhD regulations and supplementary guidelines for the PhD in Science of Professions for further information.

Learning outcomes:

On completion of the PhD in Science of Professions, the candidate should have achieved the following learning outcomes, defined as knowledge, skills and general competence, within the science of professions, limited to one or more of the focus areas of language, relationships and actions:

Knowledge:

The candidate:

is at the forefront of knowledge in the science of professions at a high international level, within one or more of the focus areas of language, relationships and actions
is able to make independent and innovative contributions to the development of new knowledge and theory within the science of professions
has extensive knowledge of relevant dissemination channels for the science of professions
has mastered critical and independent reflection on relevant theory, issues, the philosophy of science and methods
has in-depth knowledge of research ethics, including legislation and regulations

Skills:

The candidate:

is able to critically and independently address complex questions relating to the science of professions and challenge established knowledge and practices in this field
is able to critically and independently assess and explain the appropriateness and application of various methods and processes in research projects, as well as explain the limitations of methodologies used
is able to conduct research at a high international level through own research project
is able to formulate research questions, and plan and execute research projects and innovation processes of a high academic standard, using relevant technology
is able to critically and independently initiate, conduct, evaluate and disseminate research, and discuss the implications of the research for professions and society

General competence:

The candidate:

is able to identify, critically assess and discuss relevant academic and ethical issues in their own and others' research, and conduct their own research with academic integrity
is able to lead complex interdisciplinary work and projects in an independent manner and in collaboration with others
is able to disseminate research through recognised, and preferably open access, national and international channels
is able to critically assess the need for innovation and research with societal relevance and initiate this
is able to actively participate in discussions in national and international forums, and contribute expert input to the public discourse

Structure and content of the PhD programme

The PhD in Science of Professions consists of two parts: a training component (30 ECTS credits) and an independent research project of a high international standard, which is concluded with a PhD thesis, trial lecture

and public defence of the thesis. Together with the work on the thesis, the training component shall provide the necessary professional specialisation and breadth.

Through the mandatory course in 'Science of Professions, with a focus on language, relationships and actions', candidates will acquire knowledge, skills and general competence within the discipline of the science of professions. In addition, complex and relevant methodologies and methodological approaches must be used in the research project.

The courses, seminars and other activities in the programme will develop students' competence to critically analyse, synthesise, systematise and plan research, and support placing their research in a national and international context.

Training component

The training component builds on the academic competence that the PhD candidate has acquired through previous studies and provides candidates with knowledge, skills and general competence to support their thesis work and further research. The PhD programme's training component consists of mandatory and elective courses, as well as mandatory activities.

This part of the programme should include minimum 30 ECTS, made up of courses at PhD level: 20 ECTS of courses with mandatory content and 10 ECTS elective courses:

Mandatory courses – 20 ECTS:
PRO9014 Science of Professions, with a focus on language, relationships and actions (7.5 ECTS).
PRO9015 Philosophy of science and research ethics (5 ECTS)
PRO9013 Design and methods – methodological approaches (7.5 ECTS)

The course PRO9014 Science of Professions, with a focus on language, relationships and actions (7.5 ECTS) must be taken at Nord University. Candidates can complete other mandatory and elective courses at another faculty or institution, including international research courses.

Elective courses – 10 ECTS:
PRO9002 Practical knowledge and professional practice, 5 ECTS
PRO9011 Mixed methods, 5 ECTS
PRO9016 Video observation and analysis, 5 ECTS
PRO9017 Secondary analysis; systematic/scoping literature review, 5 ECTS
PRO9019 Professional development and innovation, 5 ECTS

Mandatory activities/elements in the training component consist of:

Completed start-up, midway and final seminars (see separate section)
Internationalisation (see separate section)
Annual reporting

All PhD courses offered as part of the study programme are evaluated by the Doctoral Committee, approved by the deans and quality assured by the Central Education Committee.

Candidates must complete a minimum of 10 ECTS in research methodology courses and 5 ECTS in philosophy of science courses.

Elective courses can amount to a maximum of 10 ECTS, and candidates are free to choose between substantive courses of relevance to the research project and additional courses in research methodology or philosophy of science.

The courses in the training component are tailored to the PhD programme, and candidates are therefore encouraged to take the courses on offer. An overview of the courses can be found on the programme's home page. Where a course has participants who do not speak a Scandinavian language, the language of instruction will be English.

In consultation with the supervisor, the candidate prepares a plan for the training component, indicating which courses will be taken and in which semesters. The individual training plan will be approved upon admission to the PhD in Science of Professions, but can be changed upon application. The candidates must pass all the courses in the training component in order to have their thesis assessed.

Independent research work

The research component consists of work on an academic thesis. The thesis must be an independent scientific work that meets international academic standards, methods and ethical requirements, with the inclusion of technology and innovative approaches where relevant. The research must generate new academic knowledge and be of a standard that merits publication as part of the body of specialist literature in the field, see the Regulations relating to the Degree of Philosophiae Doctor (PhD) at Nord University.

The thesis can either take the form of a extended abstract including a minimum of three scientific articles (article-based thesis) or a monograph. The thesis must be written in English or a Scandinavian language. See the supplementary guidelines for the PhD in Science of Professions.

Upon admission to the PhD programme, candidates will join a research group that gives them access to a research community. The research groups associated with the PhD programme organise interdisciplinary and monodisciplinary seminars that provide opportunities for networking. Participation in a research group and at seminars will help candidates develop the ability to critically reflect on their own and others' research, and will provide a platform for presenting and discussing their own research work, and for the dissemination of their own research.

Examinations and assessment methods

The PhD degree is assessed on the basis of:

the academic thesis
completion of the training component
a trial lecture on an assigned topic
public defence of the thesis

For courses in the training component, the assessment methods are stated in the individual course plans.

Assessment is regulated under Section 19 of the Regulations relating to the Degree of Philosophiae Doctor (PhD) at Nord University, as well as supplementary guidelines for the PhD in Science of Professions. Examination regulations for PhD courses are regulated in the Regulations relating to Studies and Examinations at Nord University, as well as the supplementary guidelines for the PhD in Science of Professions. (The regulations and associated guidelines apply to the extent that they are also relevant to exams in the training component of PhD programmes.)

Internationalisation

The faculties provide administrative support and the opportunity to apply for funding for international mobility. The mobility period must be spent at a recognised education or research institution, or some another relevant organisation, where it is possible to work with the subject areas in the research work/thesis. If international mobility is not possible, candidates can stay at another educational institution in Norway. The Working Committee can also consider other arrangements that enable candidates to gain insight into alternative academic and research traditions related to the topic of the thesis. In addition to the candidates' international mobility, the faculties also invite guest researchers and facilitate the candidate's inclusion into international networks.

Other mandatory activities

Candidates must complete the following mandatory activities before submitting their thesis for assessment:

Annual report (online form)
Start-up seminar

Midway seminar
Final seminar
Internationalisation

Relevant regulations etc.

· Regulations relating to the Degree of Philosophiae Doctor (PhD) at Nord University

· Supplementary guidelines for the PhD in Science of Professions

· Regulations relating to Studies and Examinations at Nord University

· PhD Handbook – Nord University

Programme evaluation

The courses are evaluated by the candidates through course surveys. The evaluation forms part of the university's quality assurance system. The entire programme is evaluated every four years as part of the quality assurance of the PhD programmes at Nord University.

Assessment methods

Fulfilment of the PhD degree is assessed on the basis of:

the academic thesis
completion of the academic training component
a trial lecture on a given topic
public defence of the PhD thesis (disputation).

For courses in the academic training component, the forms of assessment are found in the individual course plan.

Assessment is regulated by §19 of the Regulations relating to the degree of philosophiae doctor (PhD) at Nord University, as well as supplementary guidelines for the PhD in professional studies. Exam provisions for PhD courses are available in the Regulations on studies and examinations for Nord University as well as the Supplementary provisions for examination candidates at Nord University (The regulations and associated guidelines apply to the extent that they are also suitable for exams in the training component of doctoral programmes.)

Graduation requirements

The final assessment consists of the actual dissertation and public defence, as well as a trial lecture on an assigned topic.

Programme evaluation

The courses are evaluated annually by the students through course surveys. These evaluations are part of the University’s quality assurance system. The entire programme is evaluated every four years as part of the quality assurance of the PhD programmes at Nord University.

Qualifications requirements and regulations

Regulations for the degree of Philosophiae doctor (PhD) at Nord University
Regulation on studies and examination at Nord University
Local rules and guidelines

Subject description for 2024/25

Science of Professions, Focusing on Language, Relationships and Actions

PRO9014

Subject description

The course emphasises professional studies as a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary field, with the aim of developing knowledge in, about and for professional practice. The course introduces the special characteristics and knowledge platform associated with professions in order to understand, explain, predict, sometimes control and develop theory about phenomena of relevance to professions and society.

Various different understandings of the term profession prevail and it is not always clear what makes something a profession. Nevertheless, the common denominator between professions is that they are specific types of occupations in which expertise is used to perform socially beneficial services. One of the key aspects of professions is that they require authorisation through specific higher education, while professionals also acquire knowledge and skills through supervised professional training.

The complexity of the tasks implies that autonomy and judgement are essential aspects of professional practice. The characteristic aspect of professions is that they are based on a mixture of theoretical insight from various sciences, practical skills, familiarity with specific situations and the fact that practice is shaped by language, relationships and actions. Societal, political and organisational changes constantly result in new requirements and expectations for professional practitioners.

The development of the candidates' reflection on the relationship between contextual conditions and professional practice is a key aspect of the course. The focus is on the parts of professional studies related to language, relationships and actions when knowledge is developed in, about and for professions. Professions have their own professional languages that distinguish them from other professions, human relationships are key to all professions and actions are part of all professional practice. Language, relationships and actions linked to professions can be understood and studied at many different levels and venues, theoretically and empirically, as well as from different perspectives and approaches.

Dialogue is facilitated between the candidate's own professional practice and understanding and theoretical approaches so that participants can acquire the tools for their own PhD work through the course.

Prerequisites

A master's degree of 120 credits is normally required. Students on the PhD programme Science of Professions are prioritised. The course can also be taken by students in other PhD programmes. Apply for admission for PRO9014 autumn 2023 here

Learning outcomes

Learning outcome descriptor

Knowledge

Have advanced knowledge of theories and terms in professional studies.
Have in-depth insight into how professional practice influences and is influenced by societal, political and organisational circumstances, expectations and changes.
Be able to contribute to the development of new knowledge and new theories within professional studies

Skills

Be able to conceptually describe and analyse the interaction between contextual conditions and language, relationships and actions in professional practice.
Be able to develop researchable issues linked to the correlations between contextual conditions and language, relationships and actions in professional practice.
Be able to manage complex academic questions and challenge established knowledge and practice in the subject area

General competence

Be able to reflect critically on the development of knowledge, theories and methods, as well as identifying relevant ethical issues associated with contextual conditions and language, relationships and actions in professional practice.
Be able to participate in debates that deal with contextual conditions and language, relationships and actions in professional practice in international and national forums.
Be able to contribute to the development of the subject area

Costs

In addition to course literature, students are expected to provide their own laptop computer. There will be no semester fee or course fee.

Subject type

Theory course: compulsory for students admitted to study for a PhD in Science of Professions. Elective course for other PhD students.

Learning activities

Teaching takes place in person on campus or digitally.

Working methods will alternate between lectures, presentations at seminars, opposition, group work and self-study.

The teaching language is English, but Scandinavian languages may be used if mastered by all participants.

Subject evaluation

The course will be evaluated orally on the final course day also through an anonymous questionnaire on Canvas

Exam description

Coursework requirements (AK) - individual presentation at seminars with opposition; represents 0/100 of the grade. Approved/not approved. Coursework must be completed and approved before presenting oneself for examinations.

Compulsory attendance (OD), 80% attendance, represents 0/100 of the grade. Approved/not approved. Compulsory attendance must be approved before presenting oneself for examinations.

Assignment (OP), individual written assignment of 4500 words; represents 100/100 of the grade. Pass/fail.

Recommended prerequisites

A master's degree of 120 credits is normally required. Students on the PhD programme Science of Professions are prioritised. The course can also be taken by students in other PhD programmes.

Subject description for 2024/25

Philosophy of Science and Research Ethics

PRO9015

Subject description

The Philosophy of Science involves a systematic investigation of scientific activity and scientific understanding. The course focuses on the basic epistemology and ontological dimensions of science in a way that enables participants to develop a view on the relationship between research questions, subject areas, ontology, epistemology and methodological approaches. The relationship between Natural, Social and Human Science approaches is critically debated in light of central philosophical theories of science. The fundamental concepts of science are discussed, such as induction, deduction and abduction, explanation and understanding, causality and intentionality, objectivity and subjectivity, paradigms and pluralism. Different forms of science and justifications are discussed in light of the different backgrounds and contexts of scientific practice. Students gain in-depth knowledge of relevant research ethics, legislation, and guidelines and these are discussed and analysed.

Prerequisites

A scientific master's degree of 120 credits is normally required. Students on the PhD programme in Science of Professions are prioritised. The course can also be taken by students in other PhD programmes. Apply for admission for PRO9015 autumn 2023 here

Learning outcomes

Knowledge

Candidates

Will master key beliefs and fundamental concepts of Philosophy of Science and will be able to apply these analytically to their own PhD project
Will be able to assess the appropriateness and application of various understandings of knowledge, ontology and epistemology and relate such knowledge to different research traditions and methods
Will have extensive knowledge of research ethics principles and guidelines, including laws and regulations relevant to PhD studies

Skills

Candidates

Will be able to identify and critically and constructively analyse central issues in the Philosophy of Science linked to their own research project
Will be able to manage complex academic questions through analytical application of concepts from the Philosophy of Science and challenge established knowledge and practice within their own subject area
Will be able to identify and critically assess research ethics obligations and issues linked to the research process as a whole

General competence

Candidates

Will be able to identify central issues from the Philosophy of Science linked to a broad spectrum of research projects and scientific publications, as well as discussing these with peers
Will be able to assess the need for innovation within their own subject area, as well as identifying and communicating how the Philosophy of Science can contribute to developments within their own subject area

Will be able to identify relevant new ethical issues and exercise and disseminate their research in accordance with applicable research ethics standards and guidelines

Costs

In addition to course literature, students are expected to provide their own laptop computer. There will be no semester fee or course fee

Subject type

Compulsory for PhD-candidates admitted to the PhD program in Science of Professions. Others, who meet the prerequisites, can take it as an elective course.

Learning activities

The teaching language will be English, but Scandinavian languages may be used if mastered by all participants

The teaching in the course is organised through two sessions, the first lasting four days and the second lasting two days. Lectures and student-led seminars, some of which may be digital, will be used together with presentations and discussion of candidate’s own projects (in connection with coursework requirements).

Subject evaluation

The course will be evaluated orally on the final course day, and also through an anonymous questionnaire on Canvas

Exam description

Coursework requirements:

The course has one individual coursework requiremen (Assesment task (AK)) in which candidate’s are required to thematize the Philosophy of Science and research ethics in relation to their own research project. The coursework requirement consists of one written assignment before the second session and an oral presentation of the assignment during the session.

Coursework must be approved before presenting oneself for examinations. Guidelines for coursework requirements have been drawn up.

Compulsory participation (OD) in the oral aspect of the coursework requirements.

Assignment: Individual written assignment (OP) based on the coursework requirements. The assignment must thematise either the Philosophy of Science or research ethics associated with the student’s own PhD project. Length: approximately 3000-4000 words.

Current active subject description (last updated 2023/24)

Design and Methods

PRO9013

Subject description

The course will provide knowledge about and expertise in:

Research questions and question hierarchies
The relationship between research questions, epistemology, design, methodology and research ethics implications
Research design - quantitative and qualitative designs
Selection of informants, qualitative and quantitative representativeness, the unique and generalisable
Key methodological concepts - such as operationalisation, validity and reliability, induction and deduction, etc.
Qualitative and quantitative research methods - opportunities and limitations

Before the course starts, participants must submit a written overview of their own project that will play a key role in the course. This should include: 'What is the main idea behind my project? Key research questions, methodological challenges and choice of methods'.

The participants give a brief presentation of the overview and actively participate in joint discussions.

Prerequisites

A master's degree of 120 credits is normally required. Students on the PhD programme Science of Professions are prioritised. The course can also be taken by students in other PhD programmes.

Learning outcomes

Knowledge

Candidates

Have in-depth knowledge about different research designs, research ethics implications, data collection methods and analytical methods relevant to their own field of study.
Have in-depth knowledge and understanding about methodological choices and challenges related to different types of research questions, data and empirical data.
Have in-depth knowledge about reliability and validity requirements in quantitative and qualitative research.
Have knowledge about basic concepts and practical use of statistical methods of calculation.

Skills

Candidates

Can formulate and further develop an adequate relationship between research questions, research design, research ethics implications and research methodology in their own project.
Can explain and communicate the choice of research design, data collection and analysis method for their own project.
Can critically analyse, discuss and challenge research methodology related to their own and others' research.
Can analyse data using statistical software.

General competence

Candidates

Can critically discuss and relate to the use of different research and professional development methods in their own field.
Can convey research designs, research ethics implications, data collection methods and analytical methods relevant to their own field of study.
Can assess the potential for innovation within their own research area.

Costs

No costs apart from relevant books and semester fees

Learning activities

The course combines several teaching and learning methods. The teaching alternates between lectures, student presentations and seminar activities with feedback and discussion. In addition, compulsory coursework is carried out that is related to one’s own research project.

Active course participation is compulsory.

The teaching language will be English, but Scandinavian languages may be used if mastered by all participants

Subject evaluation

These evaluations are part of the University’s quality assurance system.

Exam description

Compulsory attendance (OD)

All teaching is compulsory. If the student is present less than 80%, but more than 60%, then she/he must complete a compensatory task (form and scope to be agreed with the course supervisor).

Compulsory work requirement (AK)

AK1 - Written and oral presentation of own PhD project:

By 8 April, the student must submit a note with the title: "What is the core of my project?", in which she/he describes central research questions, methodological challenges and method choices in her own PhD project. Format: max. 3 pages, 12 pt, 1.5 line spacing. During the course assembly, the student must make an oral presentation of his own project based on the submitted note.

AK2 - Written answers to tasks in statistics: The student must solve and answer in writing statistical tasks that are distributed during the course.

Oral presentation of self-selected PhD thesis: The student must give an oral presentation (10 min) of design and method in a self-selected Ph.D. thesis. The presentation must be based on a separate review form that is distributed during the course.

AK3 - Written note as a starting point for the oral hearing:

After the course assemblies, the student revises and further develops his/her note "What is the core of my project?" which was delivered as work requirement 1 (AK1). Format: approx. 1000 words including references, 12 pt, 1.5 line spacing. The note explains and discusses research questions in the own project as well as derived methodological challenges related to design and research method.
AK is assessed as Approved/Not approved

Oral examination of the project - (MU)

An oral hearing of the submitted memorandum is carried out on the specified date. The time will be given in good time. The exam is individual. The submitted note forms the basis for an oral hearing with an external and an internal examiner, which lasts 30 minutes. The first 20 minutes are set aside for the candidate to present the note. If the candidate wishes, the presentation can be supported by a short note/powerpoint. The remaining time is set aside for questions where the examiners ask questions.
Assessment of oral examination: Pass/Fail.