

Regulations regarding the Philosophiae Doctor (PhD) degree at Nord University

Statutory authority: Adopted by the Board of Nord University under the legal authority of the Regulations of 16 December 2005 No 1574 relating to Degrees and Vocational Training, Protected Titles and Nominal Length of Study at Universities and University Colleges Section 9 and the Act of 8 March 2024 No 9 relating to Universities and University Colleges Sections 3-4, 11-1, 11-6, 11-7, 13-1 and 13-2.

Part I. Introductory provisions

Section 1. *The scope of the regulations*

These regulations apply to all programmes that lead to a Philosophiae Doctor (PhD) degree at Nord University. They govern admission to and completion of the PhD programme, including joint degrees and cotutelle (joint supervision) agreements.

For other provisions governing matters related to the PhD degree, reference is made to the current Act relating to Universities and University Colleges, the National Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning, the Regulations to the Act relating to Universities and University Colleges, the Regulations relating to Degrees and Protected Titles, the Ministry of Education and Research's regulations concerning quality assurance and quality development in higher education and tertiary vocational education, the Norwegian Agency of Quality Assurance and Education's (NOKUT) regulations concerning supervision of the educational quality in higher education, the Act concerning the Organisation of Work on Ethics and Integrity in Research and the European Charter for Researchers & Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, and the regulations relating to studies and examinations at Nord University to the extent that they also apply to examinations in the training component of PhD programmes.

Section 2. *Terminology*

For the purpose of these regulations, the following definitions shall apply:

Doctoral degree: The degree of Philosophiae Doctor (PhD).

Candidate: A person who is enrolled in a doctoral programme at Nord University regardless of employment relationship, and is covered by the provisions of the regulations. Also referred to as PhD candidate.

Research fellow: A PhD candidate who holds a position at Nord University with the goal of completing a doctoral degree. The regulations refer to candidates and research fellows as PhD candidates or candidates, unless special regulations apply to research fellows.

Doctoral candidate: A person defending their doctoral thesis in a public defence.

Funding start date: Start date of position as research fellow or start date of an externally funded doctoral project.

Admission date: Approval date of final project description and formal admission to the PhD programme.

Agreement period: Corresponds to the funding period.

Study period: The period a candidate is registered at the university and includes the period beyond the agreement period.

Section 3. *The objective of doctoral education and conferral of a degree*

Section 3-1. *Objective, scope and content*

The objective of a doctoral education is to qualify candidates to conduct research of an international standard and perform other types of work requiring a high level of scientific insight and analytical thinking in accordance with good academic practice and ethical standards.

A doctoral education shall provide the candidate with knowledge, skills and competence in keeping with the Norwegian Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning.

A doctoral education has a nominal length of three (3) years of full-time study and includes a training component comprising a minimum scope of 30 ECTS credits. The faculties may decide that the training component shall comprise more than 30 ECTS credits.

The main component of a doctoral education is an independent research work carried out under active academic supervision.

Section 3-2. *Conferral of an academic PhD*

A PhD degree is conferred on the basis of:

- An approved academic thesis, cf. Section 11-1.
- Approved completion of the training component, cf. Section 9-1.
- An approved trial lecture on an assigned topic, cf. Section 18-1.
- Approved public defence of the academic thesis (disputation), cf. Section 18-2.

Section 4. *Responsibility for doctoral education*

The Board of Nord University has overall responsibility for doctoral education.

The faculties have been delegated responsibility for the implementation of doctoral education within their respective disciplines. Faculties that manage PhD programmes are responsible for approving programme descriptions and course descriptions.

Candidates with inter-faculty doctoral projects shall be primarily affiliated with one PhD programme. The faculties involved decide which PhD programme.

The rector may establish supplementary guidelines for the respective PhD programmes, provided they are not in conflict with these regulations.

PhD programme coordinators must possess a PhD in a relevant subject area.

Section 5. *Quality assurance*

Doctoral education is covered by Nord University's quality assurance system. The faculties are required to quality assure their doctoral education in line with this system.

Part II. Admission

Section 6. Admission

Section 6-1. Admission criteria

For admission to a PhD programme, applicants must normally have an academic master's degree of 120/300 ECTS credits, cf. Sections 3 and 4 of the Regulations concerning requirements for master's degrees and the descriptions in the second cycle of the qualifications framework. Applicants must normally have an average weighted grade of B or higher in their master's degree.

After special assessment, Nord University may approve other equivalent education, cf. first paragraph, as a basis for admission, cf. Section 9-4 of the Act relating to Universities and University Colleges.

Private funding, such as own or family funds etc. is normally not accepted as funding for admission to organised research education, cf. Section 6-2.

Applicants from countries outside the Nordic region must be able to document English language skills in accordance with one of the following requirements:

- TOEFL: Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), with a score of at least 580 points in the paper-based test, 213 points in the computer-based test (TOEFL CBT) or 85 points in the Internet-based test (TOEFL IBT)
- IELTS: International English Language Testing Service (IELTS) with a score of at least 6.5 points
- University of Cambridge Exams: Certificate in Advanced English or Certificate of Proficiency in English
- APIEL: Advanced Placement International English Language Examination (APIEL) with a minimum of 3 points
- MELAB: Michigan English Language Assessment Battery (MELAB) with a minimum of 85 points.

Applicants with the following documentation are exempt from the English language skills requirement:

- citizens from Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States
- one year of university studies in one of the above-mentioned countries where the language of instruction was English
- completed university education where the subject English forms the main part of the programme
- bachelor's and/or master's degree where the language of instruction was English throughout the programme
- A-level in English with a minimum grade of C or higher.

The faculties may set additional requirements for qualifications based on criteria that are publicly available and in line with their current recruitment policy and academic profile.

Section 6-2. Admission application requirements

The application shall include:

- documentation of the education and the qualifications on which admission is to be based
- a data management plan (DMP) for the project where this is relevant
- explanation of any legal or ethical issues that the project raises and how these can be resolved
- a project description
- documentation of funding for living expenses and completion of the project.

The application should include:

- a plan for the training component, including training aimed at general competencies in accordance with the qualifications framework

- a proposal for at least one academic supervisor, and indication of any affiliation with an active research environment
- overview of relevant publications
- which language the thesis is to be written in, cf. Section 11-1.

The project description shall include:

- an academic outline of the project
- description of which permissions from research ethics committees or other authorities or from private individuals (informants, patients, parents etc.) are required to carry out the project. Such authorisations should, if possible, be attached to the application
- a progress schedule
- description of any special needs for academic resources and materials
- any plans for periods to be spent at another institution
- plan for dissemination of results
- information about any intellectual property restrictions to protect the rights of other parties.

Nord University may set additional documentation requirements.

Section 6-3. Infrastructure

The candidate shall be given access to the infrastructure needed to carry out their PhD project.

The faculty decides what infrastructure is necessary for the execution of the project. For candidates with external funding or an external workplace, an agreement is entered into between Nord University and the external party in connection with the specific research project.

Generally, this kind of agreement must have been entered into before the candidate's admission, or immediately afterwards.

After the end of the funding period, the candidate must enter into an agreement with Nord University to be able to use its infrastructure.

Section 6-4. Admission decision

Applicants must normally apply for admission to the PhD programme within three (3) months of the start of the funding.

If less than one (1) year of full-time work remains on the project at the time of application, the application will be rejected.

Admission decisions are based on an overall assessment of the application, including the project description, and are contingent on the faculty's capacity to provide academic supervision. If the number of applicants exceeds the admission capacity, the faculty may set criteria for the ranking of qualified applicants.

In the decision, the main supervisor shall be appointed and the agreement period determined with a start date and an end date. The start date is normally set equal to the funding start date, cf. Section 7-2.

Admission should be denied if:

- the criteria in Section 6-1 are not met
- agreements with external third parties will prevent the doctoral thesis from being made available to the public and its public defence cf. Section 6-2
- the project cannot be completed within the funding period
- agreements concerning intellectual property rights that have been entered into are so unreasonable that Nord University should not be involved in the project

- the funding is not sufficient to cover the project.

Section 7. *The doctoral agreement*

Section 7-1. *The parties to the agreement*

Admission to doctoral education at Nord University is formalised through the standard agreement for admissions adopted by Nord University and signed by the parties to the agreement. The agreement governs the parties' rights and obligations during the admission period and shall ensure that the candidate participates regularly in an active, relevant research environment.

The agreement shall also help ensure that the candidate completes their doctoral education within the agreed time frame.

For candidates with funding from, employment at or other financial assistance from an external party, a separate agreement must be entered into between the candidate, Nord University and the external party in accordance with stipulated guidelines.

In cases where the candidate is going to be affiliated with institutions outside Norway, Nord University's guidelines for this kind of collaboration must be complied with. The agreement must normally be appended to the admissions agreement.

Section 7-2. *Agreement period*

The agreement period corresponds to the funding period, and is three (3) years for full-time study or four (4) years if the candidate has required duties that correspond to 25% of the total hours.

In the event of legally warranted interruptions, the agreement period will be extended by the corresponding length of time.

The faculty may extend the agreement period based on a valid application. If an extension is granted, the faculty may set additional terms and conditions. Any extension of the agreement period must be related to the candidate's right as an employee or be clarified specifically in relation to the candidate's funding basis.

The parties' rights and obligations pursuant to the standard admission agreement cease upon expiry of the agreement period, such that the PhD candidate may lose their right to academic supervision, to attend courses, and to access all or parts of Nord University's infrastructure. The candidate may apply to have their thesis assessed for a PhD degree after the end of the agreement period and/or study period.

The maximum permitted length of study is six (6) years. Statutory leave of absence, sickness absence and required duties are not included in the six years.

Section 7-3. *Voluntary termination before end of agreement*

The candidate and the faculty can agree to discontinue the candidate's participation in the PhD programme before the agreed date. In such an event, a written explanation must be given of how issues related to employment, funding and rights to the results and data etc. are to be resolved.

If the candidate voluntarily terminates the agreement because the candidate wishes to change project, the candidate shall submit a new application for admission based on the new project in accordance with the requirements stipulated in Sections 6-1, 6-2 and 6-4.

Section 7-4. *Enforced termination in the event of delays, lack of progress or termination of funding*

If one or more of the following apply, the responsible faculty may decide to terminate a candidate's participation in the PhD programme:

- significant delay in the completion of the training component

- repeated or serious violations of the candidate's obligations to provide information, follow-up or reports, including failure to submit a progress report, cf. Section 10-1
- delay in the progress of the research project to the extent that there is reasonable doubt as to whether the candidate will be able to complete the project within the agreed time
- discontinuation of the funding during the agreement period.

Enforced termination under these rules can only be approved if the lack of progress or delay is due to factors within the PhD candidate's control.

If the PhD candidate is employed as a research fellow at Nord University, the agreement can only be terminated subject to the conditions for termination of contract or dismissal laid down in the Civil Servants Act.

Decisions pursuant to this paragraph are made by the faculty. Appeals are dealt with by the Committee for Student Affairs at Nord University.

Section 7-5. *Enforced termination upon cheating in an examination or tests*

Cheating in tests or exams in the training component can be grounds for annulment of the test or exam and for the candidate to be banned from the PhD programme for up to one year. A decision on general exclusion from Nord University cannot be made for candidates who are employed as research fellows at the institution.

Serious cases of cheating in tests or exams may provide grounds for enforced termination.

Appeals are considered by the Committee for Student Affairs at Nord University, cf. the Act relating to Universities and University Colleges and its regulations, and the committee makes a decision.

Section 7-6. *Enforced termination in the event of academic misconduct*

Academic misconduct in the thesis work may provide grounds for enforced termination of the agreement period, cf. the Act relating to Universities and University Colleges and the Act on Ethics and Integrity in Research.

Cases of academic misconduct must be dealt with by the Research Ethics Committee at Nord University. A decision on enforced termination based on a statement from the Research Ethics Committee is made by the rector in accordance with Section 13-2 of the Act relating to Universities and University Colleges.

Such enforced termination can be appealed in accordance with the provisions of Section 28 ff. of the Public Administration Act and the Act relating to Universities and University Colleges. Appeals against enforced termination are dealt with by the Committee for Student Affairs at Nord University, cf. Section 14-1 of the Act relating to Universities and University Colleges and its regulations, and the committee makes a decision.

Part III. Execution

Section 8. *Supervision*

Section 8-1. *Appointment of academic supervisors*

Candidates shall receive individual supervision for their doctoral project. The faculty and supervisors shall work together to ensure that the PhD candidate participates in an active research environment.

As a rule, the candidate shall have at least two academic supervisors, one of whom must be designated as the main supervisor. The main supervisor should be appointed upon admission. The candidate should also have an external co-supervisor.

All supervisors must be active researchers and hold doctoral degrees or equivalent academic qualifications in the subject area.

Main supervisors should be professors or associate professors or have an academic qualification equivalent to a doctoral degree, and be active researchers in the field.

The main supervisor has the primary responsibility for the candidate's academic development and execution of the doctoral project in accordance with the progress schedule. If the main supervisor appointed by the faculty is external, a co-supervisor from Nord University shall also be appointed.

Co-supervisors are experts in the field and share academic responsibility for the candidate with the main supervisor.

The rules on impartiality in Chapter II of the Public Administration Act Section 6 'Concerning disqualification' apply to the supervisors.

At least one of the appointed supervisors shall have previous experience of supervision or be trained as a supervisor of PhD candidates. A supervisor without such experience or training should have considerable experience as a supervisor at master's level.

Both the PhD candidate and the supervisor can ask the faculty to appoint a new supervisor. The supervisor must continue with their duties until a new supervisor has been appointed. Disputes regarding the academic rights and obligations of the supervisor and candidate can be brought before the faculty for deliberation and settlement.

Section 8-2. *Content of the supervision*

PhD candidates and supervisors should have regular contact. The frequency of contact should be stated in the annual progress report, cf. Section 10-1.

The PhD candidate and the main supervisor should, as soon as possible after the start-up of funding and within three (3) months of admission, review the project description together and consider whether any adjustments are needed. Significant amendments to the project description after admission must be approved by the faculty.

Supervisors shall give advice on the delimitation of topics and research questions, and assess methods and results, including forms of documentation and presentation, and help to orientate the candidate in relation to relevant academic discourse.

The candidate will receive guidance in ethical issues related to the doctoral work.

Supervisors have a duty to keep informed about the progress of the candidate's work and to assess it in relation to the progress schedule in the project description, cf. Section 6-2.

Supervisors have a duty to follow up on academic issues that may result in a delay in the organised research training, in order to ensure that it can be completed within the nominal length of study.

Section 9. *The training component*

Section 9-1. *Objective, scope and content*

The training component, together with the doctoral work, shall contribute to the achievement of the expected learning outcomes in accordance with the Norwegian Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning.

The doctoral education must be designed so that it can be completed within the nominal length of study.

The training component must correspond to at least 30 ECTS credits. A more extensive training component may be stipulated in the supplementary guidelines for PhD programmes, cf. the programme description.

On application and after academic assessment, courses completed before admission to the PhD programme may be incorporated into the training component. The courses should not normally be older than five (5) years

on the date of admission.

The faculty is responsible for ensuring that the training component and the work on the project combined provide education at a high academic level in accordance with international standards. The training component includes an introduction to ethics, theory and methodology.

If Nord University does not organise and provide the entire training component, arrangements should be made for the candidate to receive equivalent training at another institution.

Doctoral level courses at another institution must be approved in accordance with the provisions of the Act relating to Universities and University Colleges.

In order for a master's course or parts of a master's course to be included in the training component, the candidate must have achieved a grade B as a minimum. Courses that have formed part of a candidate's bachelor's or master's degree cannot also count towards a doctoral degree.

The PhD candidate shall be offered guidance on future career opportunities, including raising awareness of the competence that the candidate has acquired through the doctoral work. Training in the dissemination of results and other non-credit-bearing courses in transferable skills should also be included in the PhD programme.

Section 9-2. *Affiliation with an academic community*

As part of the doctoral education, the candidate is expected to contribute to the university's academic community, for example through academic activities such as seminars, workshops, research and dissemination tasks and participation in research groups. The faculty and supervisor must systematically follow up the activities so that contact with the academic community is planned and maintained.

Research fellows employed at Nord University must be affiliated with the PhD programme's academic community.

The faculty and supervisor must systematically follow up the activities to ensure contact with the academic community is planned and maintained, and that the candidate participates in an active research environment.

Section 9-3. *The candidate's leave of absence rights*

Candidates who take statutory leaves of absence during the PhD programme may still follow teaching and sit exams in subjects that form part of the training component, in accordance with the Act relating to Universities and University Colleges
Section 10-6.

Candidates with an external employer have a duty to ensure that the faculty is informed of any leave of absence, the scope of any required duties and anything else that is relevant to the progress of the doctoral work.

Section 9-4. *Course assessment*

Examinations in the training component are governed by the provisions on examinations in the Act relating to Universities and University Colleges and the regulations on studies and examinations at Nord University.

Examiners of courses in the training component of the PhD programme are required to have a doctoral degree or equivalent. Two examiners, of whom at least one is external, shall be used in the following cases:

- a. assessment of courses in the training component
- b. re-assessments following an appeal due to procedural errors in connection with an examination, cf. Section 11-9 of the Act relating to Universities and University Colleges
- c. appeals against a grade, cf. Section 11-10 of the Act relating to Universities and University Colleges.

Section 10. *Reporting and midway evaluation*

Section 10-1. *Reporting*

Nord University's quality assurance system for its educational provision must include measures that can identify insufficient progress in the project work and the training component and shortcomings in the supervision. It must also have procedures for addressing any such shortcomings. The quality assurance system will normally include submission of individual annual reports from the PhD candidate and the supervisor, and shall be designed to prevent double reporting.

The candidate and the supervisor have shared responsibility for reporting. Failure to submit a progress report or incomplete reporting by the candidate may result in enforced termination before the end of the agreement period, cf. Section 7-4. Supervisors who fail to follow up on the reporting requirements may be relieved of their supervision duties for the candidate.

The faculty may, if necessary, require further reporting.

Section 10-2. *Midway evaluation*

A midway evaluation of the doctoral work should normally be carried out in the third or fourth semester. The candidate must present their work and will be evaluated by a group consisting of at least two persons appointed by the faculty.

The evaluation should consider the academic status, progress, research ethics issues and whether the thesis is still within the subject area of the PhD programme. The evaluation group will give feedback to the candidate, the supervisor and the faculty.

If the evaluation group reports significant shortcomings in the doctoral work, corrective measures must be initiated to rectify the situation.

Enforced termination due to poor academic development and progress shall normally be assessed during the midway evaluation, cf. Section 7-4, third indent.

Section 11. *Requirements for the academic thesis*

Section 11-1. *Thesis requirements*

The thesis must be an independent piece of research that meets international standards in terms of ethical and research ethics requirements, academic level and methodologies within the subject area.

The thesis must generate new academic knowledge and be of a standard that merits publication or presentation to the public in an appropriate format as part of the research-based development of knowledge in the subject area.

The thesis may consist of a monograph or a compilation of several smaller works. If the thesis consists of several smaller works, an account must be provided of how they are related in an introductory summary section (*kappe* in Norwegian).

An article-based thesis must normally consist of a minimum of three articles. Requirements for the number of articles, the introductory summary section and first author, and, if applicable, for listing authors in alphabetical order will be set in the supplementary guidelines for the relevant PhD programme.

The application shall be written in Norwegian, Swedish, Danish or English. If the candidate wishes to submit their thesis in another language, they must apply for special permission to do so in the admission application and the application for approval of the project description, cf. Section 6-2. The faculty responsible for the assessment will make the final decision on this. Regardless of which language the

thesis is written in, it must include a summary in both Norwegian and English.

Section 11-2. *Co-authorship*

Work that has been authored together with others can be accepted for assessment provided that the PhD candidate's contribution represents an independent effort that can be identified to the extent necessary for the assessment.

If the thesis or a part thereof has been created together with other authors or collaboration partners, the PhD candidate must follow the norms for accreditation and co-authorship that are generally accepted in the academic community, in accordance with international standards.

A thesis that includes contributions from co-authors must be accompanied by a signed declaration describing the candidate's input in each piece of work. The declaration, signed by all the contributors, is sent to the assessment committee along with the thesis.

Section 11-3. *Work that is not accepted*

Works or parts of a work that have been approved as the basis for previously completed examinations or degrees may not be accepted for assessment unless they only constitute a minor part of the thesis. However, data, analyses or methodologies from previous degrees may be used as a basis for the work on the project.

Upon application, academic works published prior to admission to the PhD programme may be included in the thesis following an academic assessment. Works that were published more than five (5) years before the date of admission will not be approved for use. Upon application, the faculty may grant an exemption from this rule in special cases.

A thesis can only be submitted to one educational institution for assessment.

Section 12. *Rights to use of results*

Section 12-1. *Use of the thesis in teaching and research*

Nord University is entitled, without payment, to use the parts of the doctoral thesis to which the PhD candidate has sole copyright and other academic works that are the result of the work on the thesis and to which the candidate has sole copyright, when making copies for use in connection with teaching and research activities at Nord University. A separate agreement on such use will be entered into with candidates who are not employed at Nord University. In the event of such use, the PhD candidate shall be credited in accordance with relevant legislation and standard academic practice, cf. the regulations concerning IPR at Nord University

Section 12-2. *Duty to report results with potential for commercial exploitation*

Candidates employed at Nord University have a duty to report work results that are covered by the university's regulations on the handling of employees' rights to research and work results at Nord University and Section 5 of the Employees' Inventions Act.

For candidates with an employer other than Nord University, the corresponding reporting obligation must be laid down in the doctoral agreement between Nord University, the candidate and the external employer, cf. Section 7.

Regulations of rights between collaborating institutions is determined in a written agreement.

For PhD candidates without an employer, the corresponding reporting obligation must be stipulated in the doctoral agreement between Nord University and the candidate.

Section 12-3. *Copyright, patent rights and intellectual property rights (IPRs)*

The provisions in this section must not be interpreted in any way that conflicts with the Copyright Act

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of 15 June 2018 No 40 or its regulations.

If the candidate is the sole author of the doctoral thesis, he or she alone holds the copyright to the work.

In cases where an article or other contribution is written by more than one author and it is not possible to identify the individual contributions, the article will be regraded as a joint work. The authors of such articles will hold a joint copyright.

If the PhD candidate in the context of the doctoral project makes a patentable invention, the university must be notified about the invention in writing without undue delay in accordance with Section 5 of the Employees' Inventions Act. Pursuant to Section 4, cf. Section 6 first and second paragraphs of the same Act, the university has the right to demand that the rights to the invention be transferred to the university. If the invention has come about in collaboration with a supervisor, the PhD candidate and the supervisor together shall together determine their respective shares in the patentable invention.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the candidate has the right to publish the invention on the terms set out in Section 6, third paragraph of the Employees' Inventions Act. The right to publish also applies to the candidate's supervisor where an invention is produced jointly, and the rights of the candidate or any third party do not prevent such publication.

No restrictions can be imposed on publication of or public access to a PhD thesis, with the exception of a pre-agreed postponement. Such a postponement may take place so that Nord University or any external party that has fully or partially funded the doctoral education can take a position on possible commercialisation, including patenting.

In connection with the publication of or public access to a PhD thesis, Nord University shall normally be credited if the institution has made a necessary and substantial contribution to or has provided the basis for work being published or made publicly available. This also applies to external parties that have also made a necessary and substantial contribution. If the candidate is employed at Nord University or with the external party during the research work, this is considered to constitute a necessary and substantial contribution. Other institutions/undertakings may also be deemed to have made such a contribution.

Part IV. Completion

Section 13. *Submission and application for assessment of thesis*

Section 13-1. *Basis for assessment of the thesis*

The requirements for awarding an academic doctoral degree are set out in Section 3-2.

Applications for assessment are submitted along with the submission of the academic thesis, cf. Section 13-2.

Before assessment of the thesis, all prerequisites must be met and the training component approved.

Section 13-2. *Application for assessment of the thesis*

Applications for assessment of a thesis can only be submitted after the training component has been approved.

A submitted thesis cannot be withdrawn until a final decision has been made as to whether it is worthy of defence for the doctoral degree. The version of the thesis that is submitted will be the version that is assessed.

The application must include the following attachments:

- the thesis in Nord University's approved format
- documentation of any necessary permission, cf. Section 6-2
- declarations from co-authors where required in accordance with Section 11-2

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- a statement specifying whether the thesis is being submitted for assessment for the first or second time
- a declaration that the thesis, or a part thereof, has not been submitted for assessment at another institution
- a revised data management plan (DMP).

The thesis shall be submitted electronically.

It is the responsibility of the main supervisor to notify the responsible faculty department that submission or application for assessment is imminent so that the necessary preparations can be initiated.

The faculty must ensure that the public defence of the thesis is held as soon as possible after submission: normally no longer than five (5) months after approval of the submission.

Section 13-3. *Processing of the application*

The faculty processes applications for the assessment of an academic thesis. Applications that do not meet the requirement defined in Section 13-2 will be rejected.

The faculty can, on an independent basis, reject an application for assessment of a thesis if it is obvious that the thesis is not of a high enough academic standard and will be rejected by an assessment committee. Rejection decisions can be appealed, cf. Section 22-3.

A plagiarism check is carried out on the submitted thesis before the application is approved. Potential serious violations of recognised research ethics norms must be reported to the Commission for the Investigation of Research Misconduct, cf. Section 6 of the Act on Ethics and Integrity in Research.

Section 14. *Appointment of assessment committee*

Once the faculty has approved an application for assessment of an academic thesis, an expert committee consisting of at least three members is appointed to assess the thesis, the trial lecture and the public defence, provided that the thesis is deemed worthy of defence. The impartiality rules in Section 6, second paragraph of the Public Administration Act apply to the committee members.

The assessment committee must normally be composed in such a way that:

- both genders are represented
- at least one of its members does not have their main position at a Norwegian institution
- all members have a PhD or equivalent qualification in the relevant subject area
- the majority of the assessment committee are external members.

If these criteria are deviated from, the reasons for this must be specified.

The faculty determines the procedure for appointment. An explanation of the reasoning behind the composition of the committee must be provided, indicating how the committee as a whole covers the field of the doctoral work. The faculty normally appoints the internal member as the committee's coordinator.

Appointed academic supervisors and others who have contributed to the thesis cannot be members of the assessment committee or involved in its coordination.

If necessary, the faculty may appoint an alternate member to sit on the assessment committee.

The candidate must be informed of the proposed composition of the committee and be given the opportunity to submit written comments within one week of receiving the proposal.

The assessment committee must be sent the university's PhD regulations with supplementary guidelines for the relevant doctoral degree, and any guidelines for the assessment of the degree.

Section 15. *The work of the assessment committee*

Section 15-1. *Collection of supplementary information*

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The assessment committee can request access to the candidate's underlying source material and additional information to supplement or clarify the work.

On request, the main supervisor must provide an account of the academic supervision and work on the thesis.

Section 15-2. *Correction of formal errors in the thesis*

After approval of the thesis, the candidate can apply to the faculty once for permission to correct formal errors in the version of the thesis that will be published.

A list (errata) must be attached to the application showing the corrections that the candidate wishes to make to the thesis.

The deadline for applications to correct formal errors is one week after the candidate has received the recommendation. The list of errata is added as an insert to the thesis, which is publicly available before the public defence, cf. Section 17-2.

The assessment committee must be informed about the approval and content of the errata before the public defence.

Section 15-3. *The assessment committee's recommendation*

The assessment committee submits a recommendation on whether the thesis is worthy of defence for the doctoral degree and explaining the grounds for its assessment. All parts of the submitted thesis or presented documentation must be discussed in relation to the criteria defined in Section 11-1. The recommendation should be discursive and end with a clear conclusion regarding whether the work should be approved or not. Any dissenting opinions or individual statements by committee members must be included and explained in the recommendation.

The assessment committee's recommendation must be ready within three (3) months of the committee receiving all the parts of the doctoral work for assessment. If the committee permits minor revisions to an academic thesis, cf. Section 15-4, a new deadline is set from the date on which the thesis is resubmitted. Permission to make minor revisions may only be granted once.

If the committee finds that extensive changes are needed to the theory, research question, hypothesis, material or methods in order for the work to be deemed worthy of public defence, the committee must reject the thesis, cf. Section 15-5.

The assessment committee's recommendation is submitted to the faculty, which then presents it to the candidate. The candidate will be given a deadline of ten (10) working days to submit written comments on the recommendation. If the candidate's comments may have a bearing on the question of whether the thesis can be approved, the comments should be presented to the assessment committee before the faculty makes a decision in the case. If the candidate does not wish to make any comments, the faculty should be informed of this in writing as soon as possible.

The faculty makes the final decision on the matter, cf. Sections 16-1 and 16-2.

Section 15-4. *Minor revisions to a submitted thesis*

Based on the submitted thesis and any additional material, the assessment committee may recommend that the faculty permit the candidate to make minor revisions to the thesis before the committee submits its final recommendation. The committee must provide a written list of what the candidate specifically needs to revise.

The committee must not recommend that the candidate should make minor revisions if this only concerns minor ambiguities in the thesis that can be clarified within the scope of the public defence.

If the faculty permits minor revisions to the thesis, a deadline not exceeding three (3) months shall be set. A new deadline must also be set for submitting the committee's final recommendation, which must not

exceed two (2) months after the committee has received a revised version of the thesis.

The candidate cannot appeal the faculty's decision pursuant to this provision.

If the candidate does not submit a revised thesis by the deadline set by the faculty, the committee shall recommend that the faculty reject the thesis.

Section 15-5. Rejection of the thesis and submission for a new assessment

An academic thesis that has been found not worthy of defence can be resubmitted for assessment in a revised form no earlier than six (6) months after the faculty has made its decision.

The faculty then appoints a new assessment committee, preferably including at least one member of the original committee. The new assessment committee must make its assessment on an independent basis, but must still have the opportunity to see the recommendation from the previous assessment. A thesis can only be re-evaluated once.

A candidate who submits a new application for assessment must state that the work has previously been assessed and found not worthy of defence, cf. Section 13-2.

Section 16. The faculty's processing of the assessment committee's recommendation

Section 16-1. The faculty's processing of a unanimous recommendation

If the committee submits a unanimous recommendation and the faculty adopts this as the basis for its assessment, the faculty shall make a decision in accordance with the unanimous recommendation.

If the faculty finds that there are valid grounds to doubt whether the committee's unanimous recommendation should be used as the basis for its decision, the faculty must request further clarification from the assessment committee and/or appoint two new experts to make individual statements on the thesis. Such additional statements or individual statements must be presented to the candidate, who will be given ten (10) days to submit comments.

The faculty makes the final decision in the case on the basis of the assessment committee's recommendation and the statements obtained.

Section 16-2. The faculty's processing of a non-unanimous recommendation

If the committee's recommendation is not unanimous and the faculty chooses to adopt the majority's opinion as the basis for its decision, the faculty shall make a decision in accordance with the majority's recommendation.

If the committee's recommendation is not unanimous and the faculty is considering adopting the minority's opinion as the basis for its assessment, the faculty may request further clarification from the assessment committee and, if necessary, appoint two new experts to make individual statements on the thesis. Such additional statements or individual statements must be presented to the candidate, who will be given the opportunity to submit comments. If both of the new experts agree with the majority's original recommendation, then the recommendation shall be followed.

In the event of disagreement or if both support the minority, the new experts shall resign. The faculty will then appoint a new committee that can approve or reject the thesis with a simple majority.

The competence and impartiality requirements for experts and the new committees are the same as for the appointment of an assessment committee, cf. Section 14.

The candidate shall be informed of the outcome after the statements from the new experts have been considered.

Section 17. Publication of the thesis

Section 17-1. *Requirements regarding the printed thesis*

When a thesis is found worthy of public defence, the faculty will have the thesis printed in an approved format in accordance with Nord University's regulations. The thesis must be printed exactly as submitted, with the exception of permitted revisions, cf. Section 15-4, and any approved corrections of formal errors, cf. Section 15-2.

A list of errata, if applicable, is added as an insert.

The PhD candidate must prepare a brief summary (abstract) of the thesis in English and Norwegian, the purpose of which is to inform the Norwegian and international research environment of the thesis and its results.

The abstracts shall be included in the printed thesis.

If the thesis is written in a language other than English or Norwegian, an abstract must also be provided in the language of the thesis. The abstract must accompany the thesis and will, like the thesis itself, be made publicly available.

Section 17-2. *Public availability before the defence*

The printed thesis, cf. Section 17-1, shall be publicly available no later than two (2) weeks prior to the date of the public defence.

Section 17-3. *Publication of the thesis*

No restrictions can be imposed on the publication of the academic thesis, except in the event of a previously agreed postponement of the publication date.

Any pre-arranged postponement (embargo) of publication must be limited to a maximum period of two (2) years after the public defence. The purpose of such postponements is to enable Nord University and any external party that has fully or partially funded the candidate's doctoral education to consider patenting etc., cf. Section 12-3.

Neither Nord University nor an external party can demand that all or parts of a doctoral thesis cannot be made universally accessible, cf. Section 6-4.

Published parts of article-based theses must be universally accessible either in open access journals or in Nord Open Research Archive (in the Norwegian Research Information Repository when this solution is implemented).

Unpublished parts of article-based theses must be made universally accessible no later than two (2) years after the defence and unpublished monographs no later than four (4) years after the defence.

In connection with publication, candidates must follow the applicable guidelines regarding the crediting of institutions. The main rule is that an institution must be credited if it has made a necessary and substantial contribution to or laid a foundation for the work. Other institutions must also be credited if they meet the requirement regarding participation in each case.

Section 18. *The doctoral examination*

Section 18-1. *Trial lecture*

After the thesis has been approved for public defence (disputation), the PhD candidate must hold a trial lecture. The trial lecture is an independent part of the doctoral examination and shall be on an assigned topic. The objective is to test the candidate's ability to acquire knowledge outside the topic of their thesis and their ability to convey this knowledge in a lecture situation.

The assessment committee decides the title of the trial lecture.

The PhD candidate is notified of the title of the trial lecture ten (10) working days before it is due to take place.

Any corrections are listed at the bottom of the electronic version: <https://lovdata.no/LTI/forskrift/2025->

The topic of the lecture must not be directly related to the topic of the doctoral work and shall challenge the candidate to discuss aspects that go beyond the thesis.

The trial lecture shall be held in Norwegian, Swedish, Danish or English.

The assessment committee determines whether the trial lecture is approved or not approved. If the committee does not approve the trial lecture, it must explain the grounds for its decision. The PhD candidate must be informed of the right to appeal if the trial lecture is not approved, cf. Section 22-3.

The trial lecture must be approved before the public defence can be held.

Section 18-2. *Public defence of the thesis (disputation)*

The public defence of the thesis must take place after the trial lecture has been held and approved and within two (2) months of the faculty finding the work worthy of defence.

The time and location of the public defence must be announced at least ten (10) working days before it is due to take place. The public defence must normally take place physically at Nord University.

The committee that assessed the thesis shall also assesses the public defence. The public defence takes place in the language of the thesis unless the faculty, at the suggestion of the assessment committee, approves another language.

As a general rule, there must be two opponents. The two opponents must be members of the assessment committee and are appointed by the faculty.

The defence is chaired by the dean or a person authorised by the dean. The chair of the defence gives a presentation of the submission and assessment of the thesis and the result of the trial lecture. The doctoral candidate then explains the purpose and results of the doctoral work. The faculty itself can decide that the first opponent shall explain this instead of the candidate.

The first opponent normally starts questioning the candidate and the second opponent concludes the questioning. The supplementary guidelines for the PhD programme may stipulate a different distribution of tasks between the opponents and between the doctoral candidate and the first opponent. Once both opponents have concluded their questioning, members of the audience will have the opportunity to comment *ex auditorio*. One of the opponents sums up the opposition, and the chair concludes the public defence.

The assessment committee submits a recommendation to the faculty, in which it details its assessment of the defence of the thesis. The recommendation culminates in a conclusion stating whether the defence should be approved or not. If the defence is not approved, the assessment committee must explain the grounds for its recommendation. The PhD candidate must be informed of the right to appeal if the public defence is not approved, cf. Section 22-3.

Section 19. *Approval of the doctoral examination*

The faculty makes the final decision on the approval of the doctoral examination on the basis of the assessment committee's recommendation.

If the assessment committee does not approve the trial lecture, cf. Section 18-1, a new trial lecture must be held. The new trial lecture must be on a new topic, and must be held within six (6) months of the first attempt. Only one new trial lecture on an assigned topic can be held. As far as possible, the new examination should be assessed by the same committee that assessed the original examination, unless the faculty decides otherwise.

If the faculty decides not to approve the public defence, in accordance with the assessment committee's recommendation, the PhD candidate may defend the thesis once more.

A new defence should be held as soon as possible and within six (6) months at the latest, and must, as far as possible, be assessed by the original committee.

Section 20. *Conferral of the degree and diploma*

Section 20-1. *Conferral of the degree*

Based on the faculty's approval of the training component and all parts of the doctoral examination, the degree of Philosophiae Doctor (PhD) will be conferred on the candidate by the rector.

Section 20-2. *Degree certificate and diploma*

Degree certificates are issued by Nord University. The certificate shall provide information on the content of the training component, the date and title of the trial lecture, the title of the thesis and the date of its public defence.

Nord University shall also issue a diploma supplement in accordance with the applicable guidelines on diploma supplements.

In addition to the degree certificate issued by Nord University, a doctoral diploma signed by the rector and faculty dean is also issued.

Part V. Joint degrees and cotutelle agreements

Section 21. *Joint degrees and cotutelle agreements*

Section 21-1. *Joint degrees and cotutelle agreements*

The institution may enter into partnerships with one or more foreign institutions regarding a joint degree or cotutelle collaboration.

In agreements on joint degree or cotutelle collaborations, exceptions may be made to other provisions in these recommended guidelines if this is necessary under the regulations of the partner institutions. Such exceptions, both individually and as a whole, must be deemed fully justifiable, both individually and as a whole, must be justifiable and not violate national provisions, cf. Section 21-4.

Section 21-2. *Joint degrees*

The term 'joint degree' is defined as a collaboration between two or more institutions, in which the partner institutions are jointly responsible for admission, academic supervision, the conferral of the degree and other elements described in these regulations. The collaboration is normally organised in a consortium and is governed by an agreement between the members of the consortium.

For a completed joint degree, a joint degree certificate is issued in the form of:

- a. a degree certificate issued by the consortium members as a group,
- b. a degree certificate issued by each of the consortium members,
- c. or a combination of a) and b).

Joint degree collaborations are normally only entered into if there is already an established, stable academic collaboration between Nord University and at least one of the other consortium members. The Board is responsible for establishing detailed guidelines for collaboration on joint degrees, including templates for collaboration agreements.

Section 21-3. *Cotutelle agreements*

The term 'cotutelle' is defined as the joint academic supervision of PhD candidates and collaboration on the training of PhD candidates. A cotutelle agreement must be entered into for each individual candidate and shall normally be based on a stable academic collaboration between the institutions.

Section 21-4. *Joint degree and cotutelle requirements*

The qualification requirements for admission, the requirement that the thesis must be publicly available, and the requirement for a public defence assessed by an impartial assessment committee cannot be waived.

Part VI. Appeals, entry into force and transitional provisions

Section 22. Appeals

Section 22-1. Appeal against rejection of an application for admission, enforced termination of the agreement period, or a rejection of an application for approval of elements in the training component

Decisions to reject an application for admission, enforced termination of the agreement period or reject an application for approval of elements of the training component may be appealed under the provisions of the Public Administration Act concerning the appeal of individual decisions.

Appeals against rejection of admission and approval of the training component are submitted to the faculty. The grounds for the appeal should be stated. If the rejection is upheld, it must be submitted, without undue delay, to the Committee for Student Affairs at Nord University.

Appeals against the rector's decision on academic misconduct, cf. Section 7-6, can be appealed in accordance with the rules in Section 28 ff. of the Public Administration Act and Section 13-2 of the Act relating to Universities and University Colleges. The appeal, including the grounds, is submitted to the university. If the rejection is upheld, the appeal must be submitted without undue delay for decision by the Ministry or a special appeal body appointed by it.

Section 22-2. Appeal against examinations in the training component

Examinations taken during the training component can be appealed in accordance with the Act relating to Universities and University Colleges Section 11-10 'Appeals regarding grades - right to explanation' and Section 11-9 'Appeals regarding procedural errors in connection with examinations'.

Annulment of the exam and exclusion from the PhD programme for up to one year on the basis of cheating in the exam or tests in the training component can be appealed in accordance with the rules in Section 28 ff. of the Public Administration Act and Section 13-1 of the Act relating to Universities and University Colleges. The appeal, including the grounds, is submitted to the Committee for Student Affairs. If the rejection is upheld, the appeal must be submitted without undue delay to the Joint Appeals Board for decision.

Section 22-3. Appeals against rejections of an application for assessment, a thesis, trial lecture or public defence

A decision to reject an application for assessment of a thesis, or to reject a thesis, a trial lecture or a public defence may be appealed under the provisions of the Public Administration Act concerning the appeal of individual decisions. The appeal, including the grounds for the appeal, must be submitted to the faculty.

In connection with an appeal against a decision not to approve a thesis, trial lecture or public defence, the faculty may, once the appeal has been presented to the assessment committee that submitted the original recommendation, cf. Section 18-2, set aside or amend the decision if it finds sufficient grounds. If the faculty dismisses the appeal, the appeal is submitted to the Committee for Student Affairs at Nord University. The committee can try all aspects of the appealed decision.

If the faculty or the Committee for Student Affairs finds it necessary, individuals or a committee may be appointed to appraise the assessment and the criteria on which it was based, or to carry out a new or supplementary expert assessment.

Potential serious violations of recognised research ethics norms shall be processed by the Research

Ethics Committee and reported to the National Commission for the Investigation of Research Misconduct cf. Section 6 of the Act on Ethics and Integrity in Research. A researcher can lodge a complaint against a statement that concludes that a researcher has acted in a manner that constitutes academic misconduct to the National Commission for the Investigation of Research Misconduct, cf. Section 7, second paragraph.

Section 23. *Entry into force*

The regulations enter into force immediately, and, at the same time as the regulations of 7 December 2023 No 2030 for the degree Philosophiae Doctor (PhD) at Nord University are repealed.

Section 24. *Transitional rules*

Candidates who, when these regulations enter into force, have been granted admission to the doctoral programme according to the Regulations of 7 December 2023 No 2030 for the degree Philosophiae Doctor (PhD) at Nord University, retain those rights if it is to the benefit of the person concerned.