

# PhD Programme at the Faculty of Psychology, University of Bergen

*Adopted by the Board of the University of Bergen on April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2019. Revised March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022.*

## Objectives, scope and qualification

- The PhD programme at the Faculty of Psychology leads to the *Philosophiae Doctor* (PhD) degree.
- The scope of the PhD programme is standardised to 3 years of full-time work (4 years with potential required duties) and consists of a training component of at least 30 credits and an academic thesis.
- The PhD programme is intended to qualify for research and research management of an international standard and for other work in society where great demands are made for academic insight and analytical thinking, in accordance with good academic practice and standards on research ethics.

## Description of learning outcome

- The PhD programme will provide the candidate with *knowledge, skills and competence* (learning outcomes) in accordance with *the National Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning*.

### **Knowledge – the candidate will:**

- gain knowledge on the international forefront of research within the subject area and master the subject area's academic theories and methods;
- be able to assess the appropriateness and applicability of different perspectives, methods and processes in research within the field of study;
- understand the development of new knowledge, new theories, methods, interpretations and forms of documentation within the field of study;

### **Skills – the candidate will:**

- be able to formulate relevant research issues within the field;
- be able to plan and conduct research at a high international level, e.g. in terms of generating new knowledge, new theories, methods, interpretations and forms of documentation within the subject area;
- be able to analyse and manage complex, academic issues and challenge established knowledge and practices within the subject area;

### **General competencies – the candidate will:**

- be able to identify, analyse and critically reflect on research and academic issues connected to research projects and the research area;
- be able to carry out research and dissemination with academic integrity, and in accordance with the basic values of academic activities;

- be able to account for and critically reflect on conflicts of values and interests within the research area and in the relationship between the research area and other social actors;
- be able to disseminate research and development work through reputable national and international channels;
- be able to participate in debates within the subject area in national and international forums;
- be able to assess the need for renewal and innovation within the field of study.

## Admission

### Admission requirements

- In order to be admitted to the Faculty's PhD programme, the applicant must have a *cand.psychol.* degree, a five-year Norwegian master's degree or equivalent education, or other qualifications approved by the Faculty. The grade norm for admission is B or better for the main/master's dissertation, or the average grade of the qualifying degree. Applicants with weaker grades may be admitted if it is documented that the applicant is particularly suited for the PhD education.
- The following documents should be attached to the completed application form:
  - Project description
  - Confirmation from the research group and PhD supervisor
  - CV
  - Transcripts and references (all higher education)
  - Applicants with a foreign education must enclose certified translations to English or a Scandinavian language if the original Diploma and grade transcripts are not already in one of these languages. The applicants must also enclose a confirmation from the [Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills \(HK-dir\)](#) that the education is recognised to be in accordance with the Norwegian master's degree. Some educational qualifications from the Nordic countries may be automatically approved, see [Recognition of foreign education | HK-dir](#).
  - Relevant certificates and references
  - Plan for any stays abroad
  - If relevant: Declaration from the basic unit on the financing of special operating costs
  - A list of any (scientific) publications
  - External applicants (PhD candidates not funded by UiB) must provide proof of sufficient funding/R & D time for the entire period of the research programme.
- The project description (max. 10 pages incl. reference list) should, in addition to accounting for topics, issues and choice of theories and methods (design, data base and analysis), also account for planned academic works and the format of the thesis (article-based or monograph). The project should appear to be feasible within the time frame and from the resources available. The project description should include a literature review showing that the applicant understands the subject area and can draw sensible conclusions from previous research. The project description should explicitly discuss relevant ethical research issues related to (for example) privacy, obligation to notify, etc. If it is relevant to apply to the Regional Committees for Medical and Health Research Ethics (REC) or apply for advice from UiB's Data Protection Officer/Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education (Sikt) and Research, it must be stated that you have applied or intend to apply.

Regarding applications related to specifically defined research projects, the applicant should contact the project manager in order to obtain the project description. Based on this, the applicant should draw up a separate, short project draft, maximum 3 pages (including references). The draft is prepared and submitted by agreement with the professional community, no later than one month after the potential employment.

- The main supervisor and the academic community the applicant will be connected to, should actively participate in the design of the project description.

### **Assessment of application for admission**

- Assessment of the complete application for admission to the faculty's PhD programme will be made by the appointed academic committee. Collectively, the committee will assess: The applicant's basic qualifications, the quality of the PhD project, financing, community support and supervision.
- Feedback is provided to applicants for admission or rejection, graded in the following categories:
  1. Admission
  2. Revision. The applicant must revise the application according to the comments from the committee. Revisions must be made within 3 months.
  3. Rejection. The applicant cannot be admitted on the basis of the present application.

The applicant receives a copy of the committee's assessment. Upon revision and refusal, the applicant has the right to appeal according to the PhD regulations, section 17-1. The rationalised appeal must be sent to the faculty.

### **Agreement period**

- It is not acceptable to plan to complete the PhD programme at a rate of progress that leads to a course of study that is longer than 6 years. The exception is *The Program for Integrated Clinical Specialist and PhD training for Psychologists* which lasts 7 years.
- An agreement cannot be entered into for a PhD programme with a scope less than 50%.
- The maximum period for the PhD programme, including periods without funding, is 2 calendar years beyond the agreement period. Statutory leave is not included.
- The agreement period is extended for leaves of absence according to the employee rights of the candidate. External candidates (PhD candidates with an employer other than UiB) must send documentation of such leave to the faculty.
- On application, the agreement period may also be extended on other grounds. The application must include an explanation of what has been accomplished and/or published and what remains of the work towards the PhD degree. The application for an extension may be granted if the Faculty, after an overall assessment, finds that the project can be completed during the extension period. Confirmation from the supervisor and the basic academic unit about academic supervision during the period of extension must be included.
- After the agreement period expires, the parties' rights and duties, cease, meaning that the candidate may lose the right to supervision, course participation and access to the university's infrastructure. The candidate may still apply to submit the thesis for assessment for the PhD degree. The training component must be approved before submitting the thesis.

## **Agreement on cooperation between several academic communities**

- When work on a PhD thesis involves several academic environments, faculties or departments, or when various academic environments are the workplace for the work on a thesis, academic credit and financial reward for the individual academic environment shall be incorporated in a separate agreement.

## **Structure and content of the programme**

### **Supervision**

#### **Responsibilities of the supervisor within the supervisory relationship**

- The supervisor is responsible for following up on the candidate's academic development.
- The main supervisor has overall academic responsibility for the candidate's PhD education and will be their primary contact on a daily basis.
- The supervisors are obliged to keep up to date with the progress of the candidate's work and follow up on academic conditions that may incur delayed completion of the PhD programme, so that it can be completed within the planned timeframe.
- The supervisors will collaboratively give advice on formulating and delimiting the research topic and research questions, discuss and assess hypotheses and methods, discuss results and their interpretation, discuss the structure and completion of the presentation, such as outline, linguistic form, and documentation. The supervisors must also provide the candidate guidance in matters of research ethics relating to the thesis.
- The supervisors should also actively participate in the planning of relevant courses and activities in the training component.
- The supervisors shall also introduce the candidate to the relevant academic community and networks – also internationally.
- The main supervisor must submit an annual progress report to the faculty regarding the candidate's PhD studies, and the supervisors shall also contribute to the candidate's midway evaluation.

#### **Responsibilities of the candidate within the supervisory relationship**

- The candidate should plan the PhD education in cooperation with the supervisors, and complete the agreed activities in compliance with the agreement period.
- The candidate will keep track of the activities carried out within the training component of the research programme, and keep the advisers up to date regarding this.
- The candidate should inform the supervisors of significant circumstances that may possibly affect the supervisory relationship, and regularly update them of the progress of their PhD studies.
- The candidate should regularly submit written work and/or give presentations by agreement or at the request of the supervisors.
- The candidate should make the supervisors aware of and discuss any relevant matters related to research ethics.
- Each year, the candidate will submit a progress report to the Faculty regarding their PhD studies.

### **Procedures for changes within the supervisory relationship**

- All changes to the supervisor team should be reported to the Faculty.
- The candidate and supervisor may ask the Faculty to appoint a new supervisor for the candidate. In cases where the candidate has only two supervisors, a supervisor cannot step down until a new supervisor is appointed.

### **Procedures for conflicts within the supervisory relationship**

- Any conflicts should be resolved at the lowest possible organisational level. Reference is also made to *Ethical guidelines for relations between supervisors and students or candidates at the University of Bergen*, established by the University Board 31.5.2012.
- If a candidate or supervisor finds that the other party does not comply with their obligations, it is the responsibility of the party who claims that there is a breach of the obligations to address this with the other party, or with the Department/Faculty.
- If the parties, after discussion, have not reached agreement on resolving the situation, the doctoral candidate or supervisor may request to be released from the supervision agreement. A request to be released from the supervision agreement must be sent to the Faculty, which may decide to release the candidate and supervisor from the agreement. The Faculty should then ensure that the candidate, when required, signs the supervisor agreement with the new supervisor.
- Disputes concerning the supervisor's and doctoral candidate's academic rights and obligations within the supervisory relationship may be submitted by the parties for consideration and resolution by the Faculty. The decision of the Faculty may be appealed to the Central Appeals Committee. In the event of a dispute regarding work results that have the potential for commercial exploitation, it is referred to the University's IPR regulation (cf. PhD regulations, section 10-5.).

### **Midway evaluation**

- The midway evaluation is compulsory at UiB, and should help the candidate identify issues that entail a risk for project delays, as well as providing input that may increase the quality of the work.
- Candidates admitted after January 1<sup>st</sup> 2015 receive an approved midway evaluation worth 1 ECTS credit within the training component.
- The departments are responsible for the coordination, implementation and follow-up of the scheme. The implementation may be delegated to local research schools at the faculty.

#### **Timing**

- The midway evaluation is normally recommended to occur in the candidate's 4<sup>th</sup> semester.

#### **Participants**

- The candidate and supervisors
- Representative from the department/research school
- Midway Evaluation Committee consisting of at least one academic from the candidate's own subject area/research group, and at least one academic from a different subject area/research group

### **Preparation**

- The department/research school/supervisors assign a committee.
- The candidate submits relevant documents, in line with guidelines from the department/research school. Relevant documents may include the project description from the time of admission, articles/article drafts, and an overview of completed courses/seminars and dissemination activities as reported by the candidate.
- The department/research school forwards the relevant documents and information to the committee well in advance of the evaluation.

### **Implementation**

- The candidate provides an oral summary of his/her own project, progress and completed organized research training. The candidate provides his/her own assessment of risk factors and discusses the future work on the research project.
- The committee gives the candidate a professional evaluation of the project and recommendations for the candidate's ongoing work. Within the evaluation, a particular emphasis should be placed on discussing relationships that may help to strengthen academic quality, reduce uncertainty and expose risks, which may result in delayed or incompleteness of the PhD education, so that the education may then be conducted within the prescribed timeframe.
- The assessment should take the form of a constructive academic dialogue, the purpose of which is to provide clear advice on the future work on the PhD project.
- Plenty of time should be set aside for the assessment. At least 30 minutes must be reserved for the candidate's presentation, and there must also be sufficient time for comments, follow-up questions and discussions.

### **Follow-up**

- The evaluation will result in a conclusion of APPROVED - UNAPPROVED, based on the committee's assessment.
- Approved midway evaluations are registered in FS (*Felles Studentsystem*).
- Unapproved midway evaluations will result in a follow-up plan designed by the candidate, supervisors and the department for a new midway evaluation in the following semester.

### **Progress report**

- The departments are responsible for the first follow-up of the annual progress reporting. The departments will keep track of, and follow up, any requests for conversations, lack of reporting, delays and challenges which are reported.
- At the Faculty, the Research and Researcher Training Committee (FFU) has been delegated the overall responsibility for the annual progress reports. Therefore, the departments report further to FFU.
- FFU decides on any further follow-ups of candidates and supervisors.

## Training component

- The training component will provide the candidate with basic knowledge and training that, together with the thesis, provides the necessary academic breadth and specialisation that is embodied in the description of the objectives and learning outcomes for the PhD programme.
- The training plan should be set up in consultation with the main supervisor.
- The training component includes a total of 30 ECTS credits and includes a mandatory part and elective part. The *mandatory* part is worth 15 ECTS credits and the elective part is also worth 15 ECTS credits.
  - The mandatory part consists of: Basic course in research design, methodology, ethics and philosophy of science; dissemination and the midway evaluation.
  - The elective part consists of: Methodology and subject-specific courses.
- The Faculty has a supplementary detailed description of the training component.
- Courses older than 5 years at the time of admission cannot be included in the training component.
- At least 20 ECTS credits must be completed after admission. Completed credits beyond the 30 ECTS credits will not count towards the training component.
- External topics/activities are approved following application for approval to the individual candidate's local research school. Candidates without research school affiliation submit their application to the department.
- The Faculty has developed application forms for approval of PhD topics and activities within the training component, and for the final approval of the entire training component.
- The authority behind the final approval for the entire training component is the FFU. The training component must be completed and approved as a whole before the application for the delivery of doctoral work can be submitted. The training component should be approved no later than six months prior to the scheduled submittal.

### Calculation of ECTS credits and alternative activities

- Normally, 25-30 work hours will count for 1 ECTS credit.
- Research courses and alternative activities may be approved in the elective part. This applies to participation in courses without calculated ECTS credits (e.g. from abroad), individual curriculum (special curriculum), courses at the master's degree level and research visits to other institutions.
- For candidates with a research project that includes the use of laboratory animals, training in the use of laboratory animals in medical research is mandatory.
- Approved specialty in Norway may be approved with 5 ECTS credits.

## Thesis

- The thesis may consist of several minor works that together constitute a whole (*article-based thesis*) or one cohesive work (*monograph*). The scope of the thesis should be such that the degree can be achieved by research work corresponding to 2.5 years of work.
- The thesis must be an independent, academic work that meets international standards, and must be at an advanced academic level in respect of the formulation of the research topic,

conceptual clarification and methodical, theoretical and empirical rationale, as well as in respect of the documentation of sources and formal presentation.

- For all theses at the Faculty of Psychology, the following *quality requirements*, *formal requirements* and *genre requirements* apply:

#### **Quality Requirements:**

- Formulation of problems (thesis statements , hypotheses and/or research questions) are clearly and precisely formulated
- The purpose of the study is clearly presented and the investigation is actualised/contextualised
- The thesis relates to the status of knowledge within the relevant field of study
- Theories and concepts are justified and used precisely and in an academically relevant manner
- Methodological design and analysis are described and justified
- Assessments of research ethics are discussed where necessary and relevant
- Results are clearly presented, embedded, documented and discussed
- Conclusions are consistent with the premises found in the formulation of problems, theoretical perspectives and empirical material
- The thesis' contribution to knowledge is clearly demonstrated

#### **Formal Requirements:**

- The thesis has a transparent structure and is carried out in a precise, consistent and satisfactory academic language
- References, citations and sources are used in a correct, consistent and transparent manner
- The thesis must be introduced with an abstract in Norwegian and an abstract in English (1-2 pages each), presenting concisely the main research questions of the thesis, methods and main findings

#### **Genre Requirements:**

##### Article-based thesis:

- An article-based doctoral thesis normally consists of 3 academic articles and a connective text, hereinafter called the *summary (kappen)*.
- The articles should be of a quality that makes them publishable within a peer-reviewed, preferably international, academic journal. If the candidate wishes to include more than 3 articles in the thesis, an application regarding this must be submitted to FFU well in advance of submittal.
- The summary should compile and compare the research questions, findings and conclusions of the individual articles such that the thesis forms a coherent whole. The summary should show how overall issues are answered in and across the articles included in the thesis. The summary should thus represent a holistic perspective which documents the context of the thesis. A summary should not normally exceed 90 pages, excl. the reference list and appendix.
- Whereas the articles included in the thesis may have co-authors, the candidate shall be the sole author of the summary. Nevertheless, the summary shall be written under supervision. The doctoral candidate should, as a general rule, be the primary author of the articles in the thesis. If the candidate is not the primary author, his/her independent contribution must be



clearly defined. According to these prerequisites, the same article may be included in several doctoral theses. The thesis must contain a statement describing the candidate's contribution in each individual piece of work, signed by the candidate and the main supervisor, cf. the Vancouver Recommendations.

- The Faculty of Psychology recommends that the *summary* be designed so that it contains the following elements:
  - Overview of articles: Following the abstract, the articles included in the thesis should be listed on a separate page. The list should state the publishing status of each article (submitted, accepted etc.).
  - Introduction: The purpose of the study should be clearly presented here. Themes and issues are specified and actualised from a social and/or research context. *The theoretical framework* may be presented here.
  - Theoretical framework: The candidate presents the overarching theoretical approaches that ties the theoretical suppositions and issues discussed in the individual articles together. The candidate can expand further on theories and the research literature presented in the articles.
  - Methodology: The candidate will account for, and justify, the methodological choices and research strategies utilised in the articles. The data collection process is described, and the quality of the data and analysis work is discussed. Philosophy of science is discussed where relevant. Such a discussion may also be placed in the introduction or discussion sections.
  - Results: The main findings of the thesis are accounted for briefly and systematically. The theme of the thesis and the correlation between the content of the articles should be clearly presented. No empirical data can be brought into the results which are not presented in the articles.
  - Discussion and conclusion: The candidate discusses how the findings contribute to existing research in the field, as well as any theoretical implications or contributions. The discussion should demonstrate a critical distance to, and an ability to reflect on, strengths and weaknesses of the candidate's own research, as well as the ability to provide relevant ethical considerations. The conclusions are related clearly to the thesis' formulation of problems. Practical implications of the findings and needs for future research are discussed.
  - Appendix: Documents not included in the articles and that are significant to understand the results, as well as research ethics recommendations, etc., are included in the appendix.
- How the summary is organised can vary according to the traditions of the different disciplines and the individual character of the study. This means that elements may be situated in different places within the summary.
- *Collaborative work*: An article-based thesis may, in exceptional circumstances, and upon application to the faculty, be a collaborative work of two doctoral candidates. In that case, the thesis should have a scope equal to two common doctoral theses. This applies to the scope of both the articles and the summary. In addition, each candidate's independent contribution must be clearly defined and constitute approximately half of the academic work. This also applies to the summary.

### Monograph:

- A monograph is a longer, cohesive, and chapter-based academic work with the candidate as the sole author.
- A monograph should be a unified presentation of new research and rely on an independent application of relevant theories and methods, where issues, theories, key concepts, methodologies and data materials are well integrated into the analysis and discussion.
- A monograph, as a general rule, should have a scope of 250-300 pages, excl. the reference list and appendix.

## **Completion**

### **Submission**

- Application for submission of the thesis for assessment can be first directed to the Faculty once the training component is approved.
- When applying for the submission, the Faculty's form for the submission of doctoral work should be used.
- The following documents should be attached to the application for submission:
  - The thesis, in one PDF file (submitted by email to [post@psyfa.uib.no](mailto:post@psyfa.uib.no)). The thesis should have a format in accordance with the approved template from UiB.
  - Co-authorship declaration(s), if the thesis includes collaborative work (separate form).
  - Applicant's declaration of impartiality – opponents (separate form).
  - Documentation of any necessary licences, permits, etc., such as ethical clarifications, if these are not included in the thesis.
- The department is responsible for ensuring the quality of the application for submission before this is sent to the Faculty.

### **Assessment**

- The Faculty appoints an assessment committee, in accordance with section 11-2. of the PhD regulations. The members of the committee will, as a general rule, be employees in permanent positions in order to ensure the stability and continuity of committee work. Acceptance of participation in the assessment committee carries a strong commitment to the university for committee members, and members may only withdraw from the committee under extraordinary circumstances.
- The assessment committee will normally provide its written evaluation at the latest 3 months after the committee has received the thesis. The chairman of the committee should, in consultation with the other committee members, the Department, doctoral candidate, supervisor and the Faculty, agree on a date for a potential defence no later than 1 month after the thesis has been received. Any notification that the thesis is rejected should be received by the faculty at least 1 month before the time of the scheduled disputation. In the case of rejection, the chairman of the committee will promptly contact the faculty for further processing, and the Faculty will notify the candidate immediately.
- The assessment committee may recommend that the faculty itself permit the candidate to make minor revisions to the thesis before the committee submits its final report (with reference to PhD regulations at UiB, § 11-4). The committee must provide a written list of the specific items that the candidate must rework. If the faculty itself allows minor revisions to the thesis, a deadline up to but not exceeding three (3) months will be set for completing

such revisions. The candidate must include a written overview of the changes made when resubmitting the revised thesis. The committee should normally finish their final report within 6 weeks of receiving the revised thesis. A new deadline for submission of the committee's final report will be set.

- The committee will assess whether the thesis satisfies the requirements set out in the PhD regulations and the Faculty's programme description. A collaborative written evaluation is provided. In case of any disagreements within the committee regarding approval, both the minority and the majority must justify their position, and separate recommendations may be provided. The committee's evaluation, along with any remarks, will be considered by the Faculty Board or the body authorised by the Faculty Board.
- The evaluation should provide a description of the nature and scope of the work with a separate mention of each individual piece of work, and of the overall discussion (summary). Typically, the scope of the evaluation should be 4-6 pages. Particularly articles that are not yet published in international peer-reviewed journals should be thoroughly assessed by the committee.
- The evaluation should primarily provide a clear and unequivocal conclusion on whether the academic requirements are met, so that the thesis can be defended for the PhD degree. The evaluation must provide an extensive justification for this conclusion.
- The candidate may, after submission, request permission from the faculty to correct formal errors in the thesis (*errata*) once before the disputation. Errata associated with the publication of journals are not covered by this.

### **Trial lecture and public defence (disputation)**

- The title of the trial lecture should be reported in writing to the Faculty, and should be treated confidentially until it is communicated to the doctoral candidate by the Faculty 10 working days (2 weeks) before the trial lecture is held. The topic of the lecture is proposed by the assessment committee and should be based on relevant subject areas.
- The trial lecture and defence normally occur on the same day, and the trial lecture must be approved before the defence can be carried out.
- The trial lecture and disputation are held as a general rule at the University of Bergen, and occur in the language of the thesis unless the assessment committee approves another language.
- In connection with the disputation's announcement, the candidate must write a press release which is sent to the Faculty no later than 14 days prior to the disputation. The press release should follow the guidelines and template provided by the UiB's Communication Division.
- The Faculty has detailed practical procedures for the implementation of the trial lecture and defence.

### **Rejection of thesis, trial lecture or disputation**

- Rejection of the thesis, trial lecture or disputation may be appealed by the candidate, and a justified complaint sent to the faculty.
- If the Faculty finds reason to do so, a committee or a number of individuals may be appointed to evaluate the assessment that has been made and the criteria the assessment was based on, or to perform a new or supplementary expert assessment (see also the PhD regulations' *section 12.*).

- Following a rejection, a reworked thesis may be submitted within 2 years after the candidate is informed about the decision of the Faculty Board. Upon the rejection of a thesis, the candidate should, if needed, apply to the Faculty for an extension of the agreement period, attaching a plan for a new conclusion from the candidate and supervisor(s).
- Upon submission of a reworked thesis, the candidate should also attach an audit that shows which changes have been made to the originally submitted thesis.

## Quality assurance

### Evaluation system for the PhD programme

- Programme evaluation of *the PhD programme at the Faculty of Psychology, University of Bergen* will be conducted at least once every 6 years.
- The FFU constitutes the programme board of *the PhD programme at the Faculty of Psychology, University of Bergen*, and the Deputy -Dean is the programme supervisor. The programme supervisor/programme board plans and implements the evaluation, in cooperation with the research administration.
- Programme evaluations should normally be a self-evaluation. The programme/Faculty may also utilise external evaluations by an academic joint committee or so that a programme examiner during the examination period is tasked with evaluating different aspects of the study programme. An academic joint evaluation or programme examiner evaluation may be in addition to, or in place of, a self-evaluation.
- Evaluation of the PhD programme should include assessments of:
  - the programme's profile and structure
  - joint teaching and topics specifically designed for the programme
  - the opportunity to study abroad, and for academic and social activities
  - the choice of teaching and assessment forms being in line with the established learning outcomes for the programme
  - practical implementation
  - applicant numbers, admission, implementation, rejections and dropouts
  - access to resources
  - course evaluations
  - course information and documentation
  - access to digital resources/tools
  - the programme board's/programme supervisor's assessment and suggestions for improvements
- See UiB's requirements for the Faculty's PhD programme reports.
- The Faculty itself may create further guidelines for evaluating the PhD programme.
- A plan will be made for the implementation of the evaluation, which should be made available online.