

# Guidelines for the PhD degree programme at the Graduate School of Health at Aarhus University. 2015

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## Preamble

The following text is an English version of the guidelines originally drawn up in Danish. In the event of any inconsistency between the original Danish version and the English translation, the Danish version shall take precedence.

The guidelines governing the PhD degree programme at the Graduate School of Health at Aarhus University (hereinafter referred to as the Graduate School) have been laid down on the basis of the Danish Consolidation Act on Universities of 18 December 2012 (hereinafter referred to as the University Act), Ministerial Order no. 1039 of 27 August 2013 on the PhD Degree Programme at Danish Universities (hereinafter referred to as the PhD Order), the rules and regulations on PhD education at Aarhus University, general academic regulations and former rulesets governing the PhD degree programme at the Graduate School of Health at Aarhus University.

The guidelines lay down the rules and regulations for the PhD degree programme in health science at Aarhus University and provide answers to most questions in relation hereto. The administrative team of the Graduate School (hereinafter referred to as the HE PhD Administration) will be available for answering questions, but information can also be found at the home page of the Graduate School.

The foundation for the PhD degree programme is formed by the five departments at the Faculty of Health: Department of Clinical Medicine, Department of Biomedicine, Department of Public Health, Department of Forensic Medicine and Department of Dentistry. The PhD degree

programme is organised in three general PhD (graduate) programmes:

- biomedicine
- public health
- clinical medicine, forensic medicine and dentistry (ClinFO).

## 1. Objective

The PhD education is a 3-year full-time degree programme, and the PhD student is usually employed under the agreements in force on the Danish labour market during the enrolment (see, however, section 4.4). The PhD degree is the highest attainable academic degree within health science. The PhD education aims at providing the PhD student with both broad and profound knowledge of the scientific theories, methods and tools that form the basis of health research and at developing the student's ability to critically learn and evaluate new knowledge and independently identify and treat scientific problems. The PhD student must, therefore, contribute to the field with independent research in a limited area and a scientific PhD dissertation at a level corresponding to international standards.

Furthermore, the PhD education in health science aims at providing the students with the necessary qualifications for holding positions in which research competence is required, in Denmark as well as abroad, within research and education, treatment of patients as well as development, innovation and management in all parts of the health-care sector in the broadest sense, including industrial businesses and international organisations.

## 2. Structure and management

### 2.1 Organisational structure

*The Head of the Graduate School:* The head of the Graduate School, who is appointed by the dean, undertakes responsibility for the political and operational management of the Graduate School. The head of the Graduate School must be a recognised researcher and must, to a relevant extent, have experience with education. The operational (day-to-day) management is carried out through the HE PhD Administration. The head of the Graduate School must collaborate with the dean and the heads of department through the appointed bodies and represents the PhD degree programme externally. The head of the Graduate School must also set the framework for the PhD education, e.g. on the basis of proposals submitted by the PhD Committee. Furthermore, the head of the Graduate School is in charge of the following main tasks:

- approval of PhD courses,
- appointment of principal supervisors
- final approval of evaluations and changes in PhD study programmes
- determination of responsibilities of the individual Graduate Programmes
- disposition of budgetary resources allocated to the Graduate School
- final decision on employment and (termination of) enrolment of PhD students.

*The PhD committee:* The committee assists the Head of the Graduate School in connection with all committee meetings. The committee members are elected by and among the academic staff and PhD students in accordance with the rules and regulations established by Aarhus University in line with

the University Act. The duties of the committee are stipulated in the University Act and include the following:

- nomination and composition of assessment committees,
- preparation of proposals for the Head of the Graduate School (and others) on guidelines for the PhD education.
- international evaluation of the Graduate School.

*The Heads of (Graduate) Programme:* The Heads of (Graduate) Programme are in charge of the management of each of the individual Graduate Programmes. Their duties are described further in section 2.2.

*The Recruitment Committee (RC):* The committee consists of senior researchers (at the level of associate or full professor) employed at Aarhus University and appointed upon the recommendation of the faculty management team. The committee is appointed by the Head of the Graduate School and provides advice to the Head of the Graduate School on allocation of fellowships in connection with calls for applications. Such advice should be based on scientific evaluations of the applicants' qualifications, the project and the research environment as these are described in the submitted applications, cf. section 3.3.

### 2.2 The PhD programmes

The duties and responsibilities of the Graduate Programmes are determined by the Head of the Graduate School. The daily management of each of the programmes is undertaken by a Head of (Graduate) Programme, who is appointed jointly by the Head of the Graduate School and the

responsible Head of Department. The duties and responsibilities of the Head of (Graduate) Programme are determined by the Head of the Graduate School, and the Head of (Graduate) Programme may delegate tasks to other persons, including decisions on establishment of academic specialisations under the programme. The Heads of (Graduate) Programme are generally responsible for the following:

- dialogue with the Heads of Department and the academic environments
- handling of applications for admission/fellowships, including distribution of applications among members for pre-assessment and subsequent recommendation
- participation in allocation of fellowships
- follow-up of regular progress reports on enrolled PhD students
- recommendations regarding appointment of assessment committees
- course proposals of relevance to the individual Graduate Programmes (submitted to the Head of the Graduate School).

In addition, the Head of (Graduate) Programme may be required, by the Head of the Graduate School, to undertake duties related to PhD education.

Furthermore, for each Graduate Programme, the Head of (Graduate) Programme and the

Head of Department must establish an Academic Advisory Group (AAG) consisting of researchers from the Faculty of Health at Aarhus University, the hospitals and (if needed) other members with relevant academic qualifications. The composition of the AAG must, as far as possible, reflect the diversity of the academic expertise within the programme in question and the involved departments. Additionally, PhD students must be presented in the AAG. Group members must provide the Head of (Graduate) Programme with advice and consulting and may also, in the event of an ethical disqualification, be authorised to act on behalf of the Head of (Graduate) Programme.

The Heads of Department must make available the staff-related resources (supervisors in particular) required for the programme.

Dialogue and coordination among the Head of the Graduate School, Heads of (Graduate) Programme, Heads of Department and AAG members must be ensured through biannual (mid-year) meetings in the PhD Forum; staff and management from the HE PhD Administration will also participate in these regular meetings.

### 3. Enrolment

#### 3.1 Call, application and assessment

As a general rule, the Graduate School issues calls for applications for fellowships 4 (four) times a year. In connection with these four rounds, potential candidates may also apply for admission.

Hence, candidates may apply for

1. Enrolment in the PhD degree programme
2. Enrolment in the PhD degree programme + fellowship from Aarhus University

#### 3.2 Assessment of application

The application guide, which is available at the home page of the Graduate School of Health, lists required documents for application, including attachments to be uploaded with the application.

All applications will be assessed according to the same criteria. The following entities will be involved in the processing of applications:

- Head of the Graduate School
- Heads of (Graduate) Programme
- Pre-assessors (a panel of experts for each graduate programme; members are appointed jointly by the Head of (Graduate) Programme, the Head of Department and the Head of the Graduate School)
- The Recruitment Committee (8 (eight) members at present)
- In case of calls for full fellowships, applicants will be called for an interview.

*Each application* will initially be pre-assessed by a pre-assessment committee set up by the relevant Head of (Graduate) Programme. The committee consists of the Head of (Graduate)

Programme, a pre-assessor and a member of the Recruitment Committee. Assessment will be processed electronically.

The committee will assess the proposed project (pre-assessor) and the applicant's qualifications (RC member), and the Head of (Graduate) Programme will assess the research environment and the connection between the outlined project and the applicant's qualifications. On this basis, the Head of (Graduate) Programme will draw up a recommendation for the Head of the Graduate School. Such recommendation must consider the following issues (including the weight of each component):

- Quality of the project (40%),
- Applicant's qualifications (40%) and
- Research environment/PhD plan (20%).

Allocation of fellowships and enrolment in the PhD degree programme will be determined at an *allocation meeting*. The Recruitment Committee, the Heads of (Graduate) Programme and the Head of the Graduate School will participate in this meeting.

On the basis of the discussion at the allocation meeting, the Head of the Graduate School must decide whether fellowship can be awarded. Applicants will then be notified of such decision, which may be one of the following:

- Applicant is offered enrolment conditional on external funding.
- Applicant is offered enrolment and is awarded 1/3 Part A fellowship conditional on external funding.
- Applicant is offered enrolment including full fellowship.

- Applicant is rejected, but is offered enrolment conditional on external funding.
- Applicant is rejected and receives a substantiated reply to both the application for enrolment and the application for fellowship.
- Applicant is rejected and receives a substantiated reply to the application for enrolment.

If an applicant is offered conditional enrolment, such enrolment must be activated within 6 months after receipt of the offer of conditional enrolment, unless otherwise stated in the relevant call for applications. This requirement can be met by forwarding a signed funding approval letter to the HE PhD Administration.

### 3.3 Types of enrolment

The Graduate School offers the following types of enrolment (see also section 3.5 on admission criteria):

*Regular 3-year programme.* Part-time enrolment may be accepted upon application.

*Integrated PhD programme,* i.e. enrolment in the PhD degree programme before completion of the Master's degree.

The above-mentioned types of enrolment may be permitted under different circumstances (e.g. industrial PhD programme in collaboration with a company and with public financial support), but the type of enrolment will generally be one of the above.

For the integrated PhD programme, other terminal dates than completion of the Bachelor's degree and one year of studies at Master's level may be allowed. However, the total course load for the Bachelor's degree programme and the Master's degree programme in combination must always be equivalent to the requirements of a qualifying Master's degree (cf. s. 5(1) of the PhD Order).

Regardless of enrolment type, enrolment duration of more than 6 years will not be accepted.

### 3.4 Credit transfer

When applying for enrolment applicants can apply for and may be granted credit for parts of the PhD programme e.g. completed research year or – in exceptional cases – for articles submitted/pub-lished prior to enrolment. Specific rules for credit application and criteria for grant of credit appear from the website's instruction for application for fellowship/enrolment.

### 3.5 Admission criteria

To qualify for admission to the 3-year programme (5+3), the applicant must have completed a relevant Master's programme based on at least 5 (five) years of full-time studies (or have equivalent qualifications).

To qualify for admission to the integrated PhD programme, the applicant must be able to document completion of the Bachelor's and Master's degree programme elements (course work) which have been finished so far.



## 4. Employment conditions

Enrolled PhD students may be employed at Aarhus University or other places (e.g. one of the Danish regions or a private company). Transfer of awarded fellowships from the Graduate School of Health requires that the project is based at the place where the PhD student is employed. The terms and conditions stated below on employment apply exclusively to PhD students employed at Aarhus University.

### 4.1 Employed PhD fellow

Employment must be for a fixed three-year period of time with a view to obtain the PhD degree as part of the PhD education. The employment must comply with the terms and conditions stipulated in the Collective Agreement entered between the Danish Ministry of Finance and the Danish Confederation of Professional Associations (*Akademikernes Centralorganisation*, hereinafter referred to as AC) in force at the time in question, i.e. the Circular on the collective agreement for academic staff employed by the Danish state and the Protocol on PhD Fellows (*protokollat om ph.d.-stipendier*).

### 4.2 Integrated PhD

The PhD education is divided into two main parts.

**Part A** (before obtaining the Master's degree):

During Part A, the PhD student is concurrently enrolled in the Master's degree programme and will receive, in addition to the Danish State Educational Grant and Loan scheme (hereinafter referred to as SU), an SU PhD scholarship (*SU-ph.d.-stipendium*)

corresponding to no more than 2 (two) SU PhD scholarship 'vouchers' per month.

During Part A, no more than 48 PhD scholarship 'vouchers' can be paid.

As the student is not employed, s/he will not earn pension entitlement nor accrue holiday pay based on PhD scholarship 'vouchers'.

**Part B** (after obtaining the Master's degree):

During Part B, the PhD student is employed as a salaried PhD fellow for a period of 2 (two) years on the same terms and conditions as described in section 4.1 above.

### 4.3 Marie Curie PhD fellow

A Marie Curie fellowship is based on EU funding.

The PhD education and the terms and conditions of employment correspond to the ones for ordinarily employed PhD fellows, but the components of the salary are determined by the EU grant in question.

### 4.4 External grant PhD fellow

A grant from other, including international, funding sources may provide the basis for enrolment in the PhD degree programme. The Graduate School must ensure that sufficient resources will be available for such PhD fellow.

### 4.5 Part-time employment

The PhD education may be organised as a part-time study in which employment will also be on a part-time basis. In such case, the period of education must not exceed 6 (six) years in total.

During the employment, the PhD student may also apply for periods of time with part-time employment if agreement can be made on a revised PhD plan.

## 4.6 Extension

### 4.6.1 Parental leave due to childbirth or adoption

The period of enrolment and employment may generally be extended in case of childbirth or adoption.

Enrolment and employment may be prolonged by a period corresponding to the held leave of absence and no more than a period corresponding to the remaining employment period.

### 4.6.2 Illness

Enrolment and employment may, upon application, be extended in case of long-term illness (more than 30 days) provided that such can be proven to have delayed the studies and that notification has been given in due time.

Enrolment and employment may be prolonged by a period of no longer duration than the illness period and no more than a period corresponding to the remaining employment period.

### 4.6.3 Leave of absence

The PhD student may, during the education, apply for unpaid leave of absence and, thereby, postpone the deadline set for submission of the dissertation.

All applications for leave of absence will be assessed individually. In the assessment, it will be considered whether there is an academic motivation for such application, whether the project can be completed within the original time frame despite the leave of absence, whether leave of absence is desirable for the project, and whether the project has otherwise made reasonable progress.

The enrolment may also be extended in case of absence taken to complete (parts of) a clinical basic education or a medical specialty training programme. This type of absence should, as far as possible, be arranged/planned already at the start of the employment.

## 4.7 Other employment

Paid work undertaken during full-time employment as a PhD student is, as a general rule, considered undesirable and will not be accepted without prior arrangement with the Graduate School, and only after submission of a motivated application in writing.

## 5. The education

### 5.1 Supervision

#### 5.1.1 Approval of supervisors and their qualifications

The research environment of the student's supervisors must embrace academic breadth and must be at international level.

The Graduate School must, for each PhD student, appoint 1 (one) supervisor based on suggestions from the student. The principal supervisor must, as a general rule, be employed at the Faculty of Health and must hold academic qualifications at the level of at least associate professor/senior researcher. Affiliated and honorary professors cannot be appointed as principal supervisors.

Furthermore, on the basis of the application, the student may be allocated up to 3 (three) co-supervisors. Co-supervisors must, as a minimum, hold relevant academic qualifications at PhD level.

In addition, the Head of the Graduate School may stipulate other requirements to the supervisors, including mandatory education of supervisors.

#### 5.1.2 Role and responsibilities of principal supervisor

Pursuant to s. 8(1) of the PhD Order, the principal supervisor is responsible for the overall education of the PhD student. The principal supervisor must plan, together with the PhD student, the course of the education process with a view to ensuring that the PhD degree programme will be completed in due time.

The responsibilities of the principal supervisor are directed towards both the Graduate School and the PhD student. The principal supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the PhD education proceeds in accordance with the rules and regulations stipulated in the PhD Order, the guidelines of the Graduate School and the PhD plan. These responsibilities include:

- Close cooperation is established between the supervisors and the student (regularly scheduled rotating meetings and determination of responsibilities) in a trusting atmosphere, where all important questions can be discussed.
- The principal supervisor must, together with the co-supervisors, be regularly available for the student, must provide constructive follow-up and feedback and must give guidance on the project, relevant international networks, publication and career.
- Progress of project and education (including participation in courses and journal clubs), and thereby also PhD plan, is continuously updated in accordance with the current conditions.
- The student is offered opportunity to fulfil the obligation of knowledge dissemination (cf. section 5.5).
- Change of research environment/ stay abroad must form part of the education (cf. section 5.4).
- The student is allowed, as much as possible, to present the project in connection with relevant academic activities, internally as well as externally – internationally, nationally and locally.
- The progress of the education must be assessed in accordance with the guidelines of the Graduate School.
- The prevailing ethical guidelines and codes of conduct of responsible research are followed (cf. section 6.3).
- The student must be provided with knowledge of the necessary security instructions in laboratories and

departments and of the rules in force on data management and IT security.

- The principal supervisor must suggest committee members for assessment of the PhD dissertation.
- The principal supervisor must inform the Head of (Graduate) Programme, the HE PhD Administration and the Head of the Graduate School in case of any arising problems during the PhD education.

### 5.1.3 Change of supervisor(s)

Regular updates of a PhD project are considered a natural part of a PhD education, including (substantiated) change of supervisors.

Change of principal supervisor may be allowed upon application.

Change of co-supervisor(s) may be allowed by prior arrangement between the PhD student and the present co-supervisor(s), acceptance from the new supervisor(s) and (if necessary) appropriate adjustment of the PhD plan.

Such agreements must be approved by the Head of the Graduate School, who will also make a decision in case of disagreement between the parties.

## 5.2 Courses

### 5.2.1 Approval of courses

The PhD Order stipulates that a PhD student must complete courses (or other educational components) corresponding to approx. 30 ECTS, i.e. half a year of full-time equivalents. The Graduate School offers a number of PhD courses. Furthermore, Master's degree courses of no more than a total of 10 ECTS outside the student's own Master's degree may be endorsed.

The individual student may select, after consulting the principal supervisor, the

courses that are found most relevant for the project/educational programme in question.

Bachelor's degree courses and participation in meetings, conferences, seminars and similar will *not* be accepted as course work.

The above mentioned 'other educational components' may be approved upon application in connection with vocational trainee schemes and stays abroad. Such application to the Graduate School must include a report on the stay in question. The report must be drawn up on the report template which is available at the home page of the Graduate School. The report must be approved by the Head of the Graduate School and must be submitted no later than 3 (three) months after completion of the stay.

The course work completed by the PhD student must be approved by the principal supervisor in connection with the regular evaluations.

### 5.2.2 Mandatory courses

The head of the Graduate School may stipulate that certain courses must constitute a mandatory part of the PhD education and may decide to extend or change the supply of mandatory courses. This may also imply that certain courses, upon the recommendation by the relevant Head of (Graduate) Programme, are made mandatory for students in the programme in question.

### 5.2.3 Other courses offered by the Graduate School

The individual Graduate Programmes offer special (field-specific) courses under the Graduate School. In addition, the Graduate School offers academic and general courses

aimed at all students enrolled at the Graduate School.

#### 5.2.4 External courses

The student may, on the recommendation by the principal supervisor, apply to the Graduate School for permission to include courses offered by other suppliers, including international suppliers, in the individual training programme. *PhD courses* offered by other health science graduate schools in Denmark will be approved without further notice, as will project-relevant *PhD courses* offered by one of the other graduate schools at Aarhus University. More detailed rules are available at the home page of the Graduate School together with the rules and conditions for approval of courses completed during stays abroad and application form.

Expenses for participating in external courses, including costs related to e.g. travel/accommodation, do not form part of the tuition fee and must, therefore, be funded in alternative ways. Approval of an external course by the Graduate School should, consequently, not be understood as promise of funding.

### 5.3 Evaluations

A student's progress must be evaluated at regular intervals. The Graduate School has determined that such evaluation must take place 3 (three) times during the education; after 6 (six) months, after 18 (eighteen) months (also referred to as midterm evaluation) and, finally, 6 (six) months before planned completion. It is the responsibility of the principal supervisor to ensure that the evaluations are completed by the set deadlines.

#### 5.3.1 The 6-month evaluation

*Purpose:* This evaluation must provide a preliminary overview of the PhD education, including the progression of the project, and must also focus on the student's research competence. Furthermore, the update of the PhD Plan must include details of the planning of the student's change of research environment/stay abroad and activities relating to knowledge dissemination and teaching.

*Form:* The evaluation must be made only in writing/electronically; the student must update the mandatory PhD (action) Plan in PhD Planner, answer the questions and forward the file to the principal supervisor for approval before the deadline. The evaluation must be finally approved by a Head of (Graduate) Programme and the Head of the Graduate school.

#### 5.3.2 Midterm evaluation

*Purpose:* This evaluation must estimate the progress of the student's education, including the project, to ensure that the student's academic benefit from studying so far meets the objective and that the education will be completed in due time by award of the PhD degree. Furthermore, the evaluation must ensure that the student will get a 'second opinion' on the project.

*Form:* This evaluation will be conducted in the way described below and will be announced by the HE PhD Administration 2 (two) months before the deadline of 18 (eighteen) months:

- The PhD student must draw up a brief midterm report (a state-of-the-art description of the research area, a status for the project, including a discussion of the preliminary results (if any), a list of publications (if any) and a plan for the remaining part of the project period.

- The PhD student must update the individual PhD Plan regarding completed and planned activities relating to change of research environment, teaching, courses, conference participation and career plans. In the PhD Plan, it must be stated whether the PhD education is expected to be completed by the deadline.
- The midterm report and the updated PhD Plan must be forwarded, through PhD Planner, to the principal supervisor, who must forward the midterm report and the updated PhD Plan to the other supervisors and the assessor appointed by the principal supervisor.
- Oral presentation will be made on the basis of the midterm report (cf. details below).

*The midterm report* of no more than 5 (five) pages must be uploaded in PhD Planner, and the principal supervisor must forward the report to an *assessor* appointed by the principal supervisor. The assessor must hold a PhD degree or a degree above PhD level.

The midterm evaluation is an oral presentation. The PhD student must present the project within approx. 20 (twenty) minutes, on the basis of the midterm report, to the assessor and the supervisor(s) and must also discuss presentation and report with this group. The discussion must also include the student's plans for completion of the educational components and for future career. Presentation and discussion in combination are expected to last for 60 (sixty) minutes and must also include an evaluation of the supervision provided and good scientific practice as well as the student's career planning.

*Approval of the midterm evaluation:* After the oral evaluation, the principal supervisor must

decide whether the progress has been found satisfactory. The evaluation must be finally approved by the Head of (Graduate) Programme and the Head of the Graduate School.

### 5.3.3 Third evaluation

*Purpose:* In addition to evaluating (once more) the progression of the PhD programme, the evaluation must contribute to ensuring that the programme is completed in due time and that it contains the planned components (change of research environment/stay abroad of appropriate duration, suitable choice of courses and planning of knowledge dissemination activities). In addition, the student's career after graduation must also be addressed.

*Form:* This evaluation must, like the 6-month evaluation, be made exclusively as a written/electronic evaluation and must be approved by the Head of (Graduate) Programme and the Head of the Graduate School.

### 5.3.4 Negative evaluation and restitution plan

A negative evaluation may be the result if the PhD student does not follow the PhD plan. In such case, the Graduate School will offer the PhD student 3 (three) months to get back on course in accordance with s. 10(2) of the PhD Order. Such evaluation must be initiated by the principal supervisor, or by the HE PhD Administration, and may occur outside the above mentioned evaluation deadlines.

The evaluation must cover the period starting from the most recent evaluation until the present date. The evaluation must prove that the PhD student does not follow the PhD plan, including any adjustments made.

The HE PhD Administration must present the negative evaluation to the PhD student who will be allowed 14 (fourteen) days to comment on the evaluation. The HE PhD Administration may summon the principal supervisor and the PhD student for a clarifying meeting.

If it is decided to recommend to the Head of the Graduate School that the PhD student be offered opportunity to remedy any deficiencies, the principal supervisor must prepare a suggestion for an action plan. Such suggestion must state exactly which steps the PhD student must take to get back on track, and the situation can be regarded as restored.

The HE PhD Administration must send evaluation, action plan and any comments from the PhD student to the Head of the Graduate School together with a recommendation stating that the PhD student be offered 3 (three) months to remedy deficiencies.

The Head of the Graduate School may determine that additional time to remedy deficiencies cannot be offered. In such case, the PhD student must continue the PhD degree programme without any changes, except perhaps minor adjustments, until the next ordinary evaluation deadline.

If the Head of the Graduate School decides to offer the PhD student the opportunity to remedy deficiencies, the student will be offered a period of 1 (one) week to consider such offer, including the action plan.

If the PhD student does not wish to accept the offer to remedy deficiencies, both the enrolment and the employment will terminate immediately.

If the PhD student accepts the offer to remedy deficiencies, the time limit of 3 (three) months will come into force, and the remedy process will take place in close collaboration between the PhD student and the principal supervisor. Acceptance of the offer implies that the student is obliged to follow the action plan.

At the expiry of the deadline, the principal supervisor must perform a new evaluation as to whether the deficiencies have been properly addressed. In case of positive outcome, the PhD education will continue according to the most recently approved plan. In case of negative outcome, the enrolment of the PhD student will terminate immediately as will employment (if any) at Aarhus University. Any external employer (if any) must be notified right away that enrolment has been terminated.

An offer to remedy deficiencies may be given only once, and the 3 (three) months offered to remedy the situation will not cause extension of enrolment period nor of employment.

#### 5.4 Change of environment/ stay abroad

Pursuant to s. 7(2)3 of the PhD Order, the PhD degree programme must include a stay in 'other, mainly foreign, research institutions'. Such stay must be of a certain duration, i.e. generally 3-6 months, and at least 1 (one) month.

A student may apply to the Graduate School for financial support for a stay abroad for a longer period of time, i.e. of a duration of more than 1 (one) month. The current standard amount is stated at the home page of the Graduate School together with other relevant information on stays abroad.

Application including relevant enclosures must be submitted to the HE PhD Administration.

A grant may be used to cover expenses which are directly related to the stay abroad (e.g. plane tickets and transportation to/from airport, accommodation and tuition fee) or related to courses during the stay, which have been pre-approved in accordance with the guidelines of the Graduate School.

A grant provided by the Graduate School cannot be used to cover expenses which are generally covered by an employee's own salary: food, laundering and daily transportation (e.g. to/from the work place), nor to cover expenses for accompanying family and similar. Likewise, no per diem allowances will be granted.

### 5.5 Teaching/dissemination

Pursuant to s. 7(2)4 of the PhD Order, PhD students must, as part of their education, gain experience with teaching or other type of knowledge dissemination activities. Therefore, a PhD student must undertake teaching and dissemination tasks corresponding to 150 (onehundredandfifty)

hours, including preparation; these activities should, as far as possible, be related to the PhD project. Such activities are performed without pay as these activities constitute part of the teaching elements that all PhD students are required to complete, regardless of place of employment.

The home page of the Graduate School lists examples of tasks that the PhD student may perform.

### 5.6 Other elements

A journal club must provide the affiliated PhD students with the opportunity to create an active research environment and a forum for discussion of scientific papers and issues within a specific field. All PhD students are expected to join a journal club with an associated senior researcher from the start of the enrolment. Such efforts are considered part of the general activities in a scientific environment and, consequently, do not release any ECTS credits.



## 6. PhD dissertation

The PhD dissertation must document that the PhD student, in a satisfactory manner, has completed the main component of the PhD degree programme, i.e. a research project at international level under independent application of the scientific methods in the field, and that the PhD student has made an independent contribution to the research field.

### 6.1 Submission of the PhD dissertation

The dissertation must be submitted no later than at the end of the of enrolment period. Payment of assessment costs will be required if the dissertation is submitted more than 1 (one) year after expiry of the enrolment period. The dissertation will only be accepted for assessment if the total education is considered to have been completed in a satisfactory manner; such decision must be made on the basis of the PhD Plan and a statement made by the principalsupervisor.

Revised dissertations, cf. section 7.3, must be submitted by the set deadline and must be assessed in accordance with the rules and regulations stated in the above-mentioned section.

All submitted dissertations will be screened for signs that might indicate plagiarism or malpractice.

#### 6.1.1 Submission of PhD dissertation without prior enrolment

In accordance with s. 15(2) of the PhD Order, the Graduate School *may* accept a PhD dissertation for assessment without prior enrolment of the author at the Graduate School, provided that the other requirements stated in the PhD Order have been fulfilled in

other ways. Such assessment is contingent upon payment of a fee (determined by the Graduate School) to cover the expenses related to assessment and public defence.

### 6.2 Formal requirements to the dissertation

The dissertation must be submitted to the Graduate School in PDF file format to the email address [graduateschoolhealth@au.dk](mailto:graduateschoolhealth@au.dk); the file must be named in the following way: 'PhD dissertation\_(name of author)'. The submitted file must contain:

- The dissertation, which must be written in English and generally will consist of a number of scientific papers/manuscripts + a (summarising) review article, which in combination correspond to 3 (three) years of research work.
- A summary of the dissertation in Danish and English; each of approximately 1 (one) A4 page.
- Co-author statements (if anyco-authors)
- Front page and page 1 drawn up according to the provided templates.

A submitted dissertation will be assessed in the form as delivered. More detailed information on requirements to the dissertation, additional material and similar is available at the home page of the Graduate School, including information on submission of a monograph.

### 6.3 Responsible research practice and research ethics

The dissertation must follow the Danish and international rules in force on responsible research practice, as these are framed in

- Aarhus University's Code of Practice to Ensure Scientific Integrity and Responsible Conduct of Research at Aarhus University
- Danish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity.

The codes of conduct are an integral part of the courses offered by the Graduate School, but guidance on these ethical issues also form part of the responsibilities of the supervisor(s), cf. subsection 5.1.2.

## 7. Assessment and defence

### 7.1 Appointment of assessment committee

The assessment committee is appointed by the Head of the Graduate School on the recommendation of the PhD student's principal supervisor. The principal supervisor must also suggest a date for the defence. The author of the PhD dissertation must, before the appointment, have accepted the composition of the committee in accordance with the rules and regulations stated in s. 17 of the PhD Order.

The assessment committee must consist of 3 (three) members, who must be at the rank of associate or full professor and must be recognised researchers in the field. One member (the chairman) must be employed at the Faculty of Health, and the other 2 (two) members must be employed outside Aarhus University; one of these must be from abroad. Both sexes must, as far as possible, be represented in the committee.

The composition of the committee is subject to the rules on disqualification laid down in the Danish Public Administration Act, and committee members must, therefore, not have any close involvement or association (personal, professional, collegial or academic partnership) with the PhD student or the principal supervisor. For instance, committee members must not be employed in the same department/unit, may not formerly have provided supervision to the student (e.g. for the Master's thesis) and may not be listed as a co-author in any parts of the PhD dissertation, or have published scientific articles with the student or the principal supervisor within the

recent 3 (three) years. In addition, the general rules and regulations governing the Danish public sector on disqualification issues shall apply.

The principal supervisor serves as a delegate to the committee, but s/he does not have the right to vote.

### 7.2 Chairman of the assessment committee

The chairman must direct the work of the committee and must also provide guidance to the other members to ensure that the provisions laid down in the PhD Order are followed, that the wording of the preliminary assessment indicates that the Graduate School's requirements of international standard are met, and that a high academic level is maintained to provide the best possible basis for award of the PhD degree.

The chairman must, therefore,

- contact the other members immediately after receipt of the dissertation to distribute the responsibilities in the committee,
- ensure that the preliminary assessment drawn up by the committee appears as a cohesive and harmonic whole in terms of linguistic, stylistic and graphical consistency, and that the wording is accepted by all members of the committee (cf. section 7.3),
- ensure that the committee will hold a meeting in case of disagreements,
- contact the HE PhD Administration if practical or formal problems emerge in relation to the assessment,
- ensure that the other members of the assessment committee are provided with

- the necessary knowledge of how the defence will be conducted,
- supervise the other members of the assessment committee regarding the required academic level and the practical issues concerning the defence, including providing guidance to non-Danish members on travel, stay, hotel, etc.
  - ensure that the documents required for assessment and defence are signed and returned to the HE PhD Administration.

### 7.3 Preliminary recommendation

In accordance with the PhD Order, the assessment committee must hand in a preliminary assessment of the dissertation no later than 2 (two) months after submission of the dissertation.

Such assessment generally consists of 6-8 pages drawn up in accordance with a specific template. The assessment must have the following contents:

- Outline of contents (number of pages, tables, figures, etc.)
- Brief overview of purpose and objectives of the dissertation, academic scope of study/studies.
- Assessment of co-author statements.
- Critical academic assessment of the (summarising) review article.
- Critical academic assessment of the individual scientific articles/manuscripts.
- A conclusion which is consistent with the academic assessment.

*The conclusion* must be 1 (one) of the following 3 (three) alternatives:

1. The dissertation is recommended for defence.
2. The dissertation is not recommended for defence, but is returned for improvements regarding contents ('revision') within a time limit of 3 (three) months (with the possibility of an earlier resubmission to maintain the original

date for public defence).

3. The dissertation is not recommended for defence.

## 7.4 Public defence and final recommendation

The defence must take place no later than 3 (three) months after submission of the PhD dissertation. The defence is a public ceremony, which may be attended by anyone, and the defence must, therefore, be publicly announced, just as the dissertation must be made available to the public in reasonable time before the defence.

### 7.4.1 Chairing of defence

The defence is chaired by the chairman of the assessment committee, who, in this function, represents the dean. Through his/her guidance, the chairman must ensure that the defence is conducted according to plan so that the author of the dissertation and the assessment committee can carry out their tasks without interruption. The chairman's duties and obligations during the defence are further described in special instructions.

### 7.4.2 Conduction of public defence

The defence must be conducted in accordance with the provisions stipulated in the PhD Order and must follow the guidelines for assessment of PhD dissertation and public defence (for assessment committees) made available at the home page of the Graduate School.

The course of events at the defence must be as follows:

After a brief welcome by the chairman of the assessment committee, the author of the dissertation must give a lecture of 35-45 minutes on the topic of the dissertation.

The other members of the assessment

committee must then perform an examination of the author. This must be based on a critical analysis of selected parts of the dissertation and the lecture and thorough discussions with the author. This part of the defence usually lasts approximately 1 (one) hour.

The audience is then invited to participate in the discussion of the dissertation and may also ask questions to the author.

When no more questions arise, the assessment committee must be allowed to deliberate in private, whereupon they announce their recommendation on the dissertation and the defence. The final recommendation is then signed and forwarded to the Academic Council. The chairmen must promptly send the signed documents to the HE PhD Administration.

#### 7.4.3 Final recommendation

Immediately after the defence, the assessment committee must make a recommendation to the Academic Council as to whether the PhD degree be awarded. The PhD degree is awarded if the assessment committee finds that the PhD education and the defence have been completed in a satisfactory manner, cf. s. 3 of the PhD Order. The recommendation must include an overall assessment of both the dissertation and the defence.

On the basis of the recommendation, one of the following decisions must be made:

- *All three members agree on a positive recommendation.* The recommendation must be forwarded by the chairman to the HE PhD Administration, which will then request the Academic Council to make the final decision on award of the PhD degree.
- *Two of three members agree on a positive recommendation.* The recommendation must be forwarded by the chairman to the HE PhD Administration, which will then request the Academic Council to make the final decision on award of the PhD degree.
- *Two or three members agree on negative assessment.* The recommendation must be submitted to the HE PhD Administration, which will inform the author in writing. Before then, the Head of the Graduate School must determine whether the dissertation may qualify for assessment by a new committee.

#### 7.5 Award of the PhD degree

The Academic Council must determine if the PhD degree can be awarded on the basis of the final recommendation by the assessment committee.

The HE PhD Administration will then forward the final decision to the author together with the PhD diplomas (certificates), etc.

After the defence, the author must forward 5 (five) copies of the dissertation to the HE PhD Administration.

## 8. Other provisions

### 8.1 Complaints procedure and application for dispensation

Complaints concerning circumstances relating to these guidelines must be directed to the HE PhD Administration and must be addressed to the Head of the Graduate School. Under special circumstances, the Head of the Graduate School may grant exemptions from the rules adopted solely by the Graduate School.

Complaints about topics governed by the PhD Order must be treated in line with the rules and regulations in s. 29 of the PhD Order, which stipulates that complaints may concern only legal issues. Complaints must be presented no later than 2 (two) weeks after the date at which the complainant has been informed of the decision.

The complaint must be submitted to Aarhus University, which must then make a statement; the complainant must then be allowed 1 (one) week to comment on such statement. After this deadline, Aarhus University must forward, to the relevant governing body, complaint, statement and complainant's comments (if any).

Authors who submit a dissertation under s. 15(2) of the PhD Order (see subsection 6.1.1) are entitled to complain only if an assessment committee has been appointed for the dissertation.

### 8.2 Effective date

The present guidelines shall come into force on 1 May 2015 and shall apply to all PhD students enrolled after 1 August 2015.