

## REGULATIONS

### **on doctoral studies and doctoral degrees at the University of Akureyri no. 701/2018 with amendments No. 793/2021.**

Should there be a discrepancy between the Icelandic and the English version, the Icelandic version is valid.

#### Article 1

##### *Objective*

The objective of doctoral studies at the University of Akureyri is for doctoral students to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to carry out independent scientific work and acquire new knowledge. Doctoral studies also have the purpose of strengthening the research activities of the University of Akureyri.

The learning outcomes of the studies are in accordance with requirements set for doctoral studies in the Icelandic National Qualification Framework for Higher Education (no. 530/2011).

Doctoral studies may be pursued in Schools where the necessary facilities and expertise are available and authorisation to conduct doctoral studies is in place.

#### Article 2

##### *Academic title*

After receiving a doctoral degree, the respective person is allowed to use the academic title Philosophiae Doctor, as well as the abbreviation PhD.

#### Article 3

##### *[Centre for Doctoral Studies and Research Administration and Doctoral Council]*

The Centre for Doctoral Studies and Research Administration at the University of Akureyri reports to the Rector's Office and deals with matters concerning doctoral programmes and research administration at the University. The Board of the Centre for Doctoral Studies and Research Administration, hereinafter referred to as the Doctoral Council, supervises the implementation of doctoral studies, follows up on established criteria and quality standards for the studies and is a forum for discussion and consultation. The Council is composed of six representatives appointed by the Rector. One is appointed by the Rector to serve as Chair; three representatives are nominated by Deans of School, one from each School; and two representatives of doctoral students are nominated by and from their group. Each member of the Council shall have a deputy representative. An equal gender ratio shall be ensured when appointing the representatives. Representatives of Schools shall be faculty members who have undergone a qualifications assessment and who are qualified to supervise doctoral students, as well as possessing extensive knowledge of doctoral studies. The Chair of the Doctoral Council

shall have completed a doctorate and have been assessed as entitled to the status of professor, be qualified to supervise doctoral students, in addition to possessing extensive knowledge of doctoral studies.

The Rector appoints the Director of the Centre for Doctoral Studies and Research Administration at the University of Akureyri and prepares the Director's formal statement of duties. The Director shall have completed a doctorate and possess extensive knowledge of doctoral studies and research. The Director compiles information on the doctoral studies and issues an electronic handbook with all necessary information for doctoral students and supervisors. The Director works closely with Schools, Faculties, the Quality Council and University Administration. The University Office, Schools and other parties providing research services provide administrative services for the Centre for Doctoral Studies and Research Administration.

The Doctoral Council discusses applications and their handling, approves or rejects applications to doctoral studies and closely monitors the implementation and quality of studies and teaching. In the Doctoral Council, a majority of votes decides matters and the vote of the Chair determines the outcome in case of a tie. The Doctoral Council prepares recommendations for admission of doctoral students and the appointment of supervisors, doctoral committees, review committees and opponents. The Doctoral Council provides the University Council with reports on the qualifications of Schools and their disciplines to offer doctoral studies.]<sup>1</sup>

1) Amended with regulation No. 793/2021.

#### Article 4

##### *Fellows of the Centre for Doctoral Studies [and Research Administration]*<sup>1</sup>

Academic employees and specialists qualified to supervise doctoral students can apply to become fellows of the Centre for Doctoral Studies [and Research Administration]<sup>1</sup>. The Doctoral Council approves the fellowship of academic employees and specialists in the Centre for Doctoral Studies [and Research Administration]<sup>2</sup>. Further provisions on their role can be found in Article 2 in Regulations for the Centre for Doctoral Studies [and Research Administration]<sup>3</sup>.

1) Amended with regulation No. 793/2021.

2) Amended with regulation No. 793/2021.

3) Amended with regulation No. 793/2021.

#### Article 5

##### *Period of study*

Doctoral studies commenced at the conclusion of a Master's or Candidatus degree consist of 180–240 ECTS. The research project shall constitute a minimum of 180 ECTS. Courses may constitute between 0 and 60 ECTS in total. Full-time studies over the course of one year amount to 60 ECTS. Generally, the maximum permitted period of study in full-time studies amounts to four years. Doctoral students may enrol in part-time studies (50%), in which case their progress of study is proportionately based and the maximum permitted period of study is eight years. If doctoral students do not manage to complete their studies within the required time period, they can apply for an exemption to the Doctoral Council. Students are allowed to apply for a leave of absence but the maximum allowable period of the leave is one year.

Article 6  
*Admission requirements*

The admission requirements are a Master's or Candidatus degree with at least a first-class grade or an equivalent qualification from the second cycle of higher education in the discipline that is the basis of the doctoral studies or in a related discipline. Applicants to doctoral programmes must submit certification of their command of the English language in the form of TOEFL or an equivalent test which the Doctoral Council will assess. The certification may be no more than two-years-old at the time when the application is submitted. Regulations on the Centre for Doctoral Studies contain further provisions on admission requirements and qualifications of doctoral students [and Research Administration]<sup>1</sup>.

The Doctoral Council determines whether an application falls under the authorisation of the University to offer doctoral studies and the Council is allowed to set more detailed requirements for applicants in certain Schools/disciplines.

Employees of the University of Akureyri are not eligible to pursue doctoral studies at the University, but this provision does not apply to the hiring of doctoral students for temporary positions at the University of Akureyri during their doctoral studies.

1) Amended with regulation No. 793/2021.

Article 7  
*Submission and handling of applications*

Applications to doctoral programmes shall be submitted using online forms which are available on the University website. An application shall generally be processed and receive an answer within six weeks of receipt. The application may be submitted in English or Icelandic.

The process for applying to doctoral programmes is the following:

- a) Applications for admission to doctoral studies are submitted using online forms and applications shall be accompanied by a plan of study, description of the planned research project and how it will be funded, planned courses, certified copies of diplomas, CVs of the applicant and the prospective supervisor, as well as letters of recommendation from two unrelated referees. If funding applications have been submitted to third parties, then abstracts of these shall also accompany the application.
- b) The Director of the Centre for Doctoral Studies [and Research Administration]<sup>1</sup> assesses the source documents of the application according to current regulations, confirms their origin, evaluates the validity of diplomas and academic degrees, and confirms that information submitted by the applicant meets formal requirements. The Director then submits to the Doctoral Council the conclusion of his/her preliminary evaluation of the source documents and a copy of the application, as well as accompanying documents.
- c) The Doctoral Council reviews all application documents, the applicant's academic record and processes his/her request for a primary supervisor. The Council accepts or rejects applications.
- d) The decision of the Doctoral Council is principally based on the following criteria:
  - The application must be correctly filled out.

- The applicant must meet the admission requirements stated in these regulations.
  - The University of Akureyri must have the necessary facilities and available specialists in the field of study on which the doctoral thesis focuses.
  - The intended primary supervisor must have academic qualifications in the respective field of study.
  - There must be sufficient financial resources to complete the doctoral thesis and acceptable facilities must be in place.
- e) The Centre for Doctoral Studies [and Research Administration]<sup>2</sup> notifies the applicant in writing of the decision.
- f) Within a month from when an application is approved, the doctoral student shall register at the Centre for Doctoral Studies [and Research Administration]<sup>3</sup> and Student Registry, complete payment of the registration fee for the coming academic year, and conclude a doctoral contract. The doctoral student must then enrol annually and pay the annual registration fee. Enrolment and payment of the registration fee are prerequisites for the doctoral student being able to pursue or continue the doctoral studies.

1) Amended with regulation No. 793/2021.

2) Amended with regulation No. 793/2021.

3) Amended with regulation No. 793/2021.

#### Article 8

##### *Contract between the Centre for Doctoral Studies [and Research Administration]<sup>1</sup> and the doctoral student*

A contract between the doctoral student and the Centre for Doctoral Studies [and Research Administration]<sup>1</sup> shall be concluded with participation by the respective School and Faculty on the study plan, facilities, rights and obligations of the student and supervisor and, if applicable, the involvement of other parties in the doctoral studies. It shall be specified in particular with what facilities and services the doctoral student will be provided during his/her studies. The contract shall be reviewed on an annual basis.

1) Amended with regulation No. 793/2021.

#### Article 9

##### *Supervisors and doctoral committees*

A doctoral student normally has four supervisors; one primary supervisor and three cosupervisors; at least one of the co-supervisors shall be an external party. Together, the supervisors form the doctoral committee of the doctoral student. The primary supervisor shall have formal qualifications for academic work and shall usually be a permanent academic employee of the University of Akureyri. With the approval of the Doctoral Council, the doctoral student is permitted to have an external primary supervisor, but in this case, one of the co-supervisors shall be a permanent employee of the University of Akureyri; this person will then serve as a point of contact with the School and Faculty, cf. Regulations on the Centre for Doctoral Studies [and Research Administration]<sup>1</sup>. The Doctoral Council assesses the qualifications of supervisors and appoints them. Supervisors shall have completed a doctorate in the respective field of study or a related field. They shall also possess experience in supervising graduate students, for example, through serving on doctoral committees, or

considerable experience supervising Master's students. Supervisors shall also be active specialists in their respective disciplines, active participants in research collaboration with the domestic and international research community, possess experience in acquiring research grants and have published peerreviewed works related to the thesis and discipline of the doctoral student.

The doctoral committee is responsible for ensuring that the respective doctoral studies are in accordance with appropriate learning outcomes and the requirements of the University of Akureyri and the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture for the quality of doctoral studies. Supervisors furthermore have to monitor and contribute to the active participation of the doctoral student in the academic community, both within the University of Akureyri and internationally.

The primary supervisor presides over the doctoral committee and convenes the committee no later than a month from the time when the application is approved. The primary supervisor oversees the writing and submission of the doctoral committee's verdict when the thesis is considered ready for the doctoral defense. The doctoral committee generally meets with the student once every semester during the studies and monitors the student's progress. The doctoral student can request a meeting of the doctoral committee.

If the primary supervisor cannot attend to his/her duties as supervisor due to illness, absence for an extended period or because the respective person leaves his/her post, the Doctoral Council shall find another primary supervisor for the doctoral student. If a considerable disagreement arises between the supervisors or between the primary supervisor and the doctoral student, the matter shall be referred to the Doctoral Council which makes a proposal for resolution.

1) Amended with regulation No. 793/2021.

## Article 10

### *Study progress*

The Centre for Doctoral Studies [and Research Administration]<sup>1</sup> maintains an academic record for each doctoral student, containing information on, for example, when the student first enrolled and the number of credits completed by the student. Furthermore, the academic record shall contain application documents, study and research plans, information on supervisors, progress reports of the doctoral student and transcripts of courses where applicable.

If the situation arises that a doctoral student cannot complete his/her studies or decides to quit, then two exit routes are possible. A doctoral student who has completed a minimum of 30 ECTS can receive a diploma certificate in accordance with the second cycle (level 1) of higher education according to the Icelandic National Qualification Framework for Higher Education; cf. advertisement no. 530/2011. If the Doctoral Council concludes that the student has completed at least 120 ECTS, the student can graduate with a Master's degree in accordance with the second cycle (level 2) of higher education; though, with the requirement that the student submits a thesis amounting to at least 30 ECTS and fulfils in other respects criteria for a Master's degree.

1) Amended with regulation No. 793/2021.

## Article 11

### *Responsibilities of doctoral students*

The doctoral student consults the supervisors on the preparation of a plan of study, structure of the studies, selection of courses, development of a research plan, implementation of research, and preparation of the doctoral thesis. The plan of study is composed of two parts. First of all, the planned research work of the doctoral student shall be described, for example, methods, data acquisition and theorisation. Secondly, the plan shall include a timetable for the studies as a whole. The doctoral committee must approve the plan. Changes to the plan of study are subject to the approval of the doctoral committee.

The doctoral student shall, in consultation with the primary supervisor, submit an annual progress report to the Centre for Doctoral Studies [and Research Administration]<sup>1</sup>. The Doctoral Council sets procedural requirements concerning the preparation of progress reports. The Doctoral Council takes the studies of the doctoral student under review if the student does not submit a progress report (cf. Article 11) or if the report is considered unsatisfactory.

The doctoral student shall participate actively in the academic community of the discipline of the doctoral thesis, and it is expected that the student will present his/her research at a seminar generally once every semester. The doctoral student is expected to spend a total of one semester pursuing studies at one or more foreign universities. The doctoral committee must approve the student's plan and report concerning the period of study abroad.

1) Amended with regulation No. 793/2021.

### Article 12

#### *Composition of studies*

It is not permissible to use a Master's thesis as the foundation for a doctoral thesis. The doctoral studies consist first and foremost in training the student in using scientific work methods and acquiring new knowledge. The doctoral committee can assign the doctoral student the task of attending certain courses, seminars and reading courses to lay the foundation for the doctoral thesis. If a doctoral student attends courses as part of his/her studies then these shall be at the doctoral level and pursued at recognised universities.

### Article 13

#### *Doctoral thesis requirements*

A doctoral thesis shall be a comprehensive work; either in the form of a collection of scientific articles forming a single whole or in the form of a single work (monograph). In the case of a written work based on scientific articles, the doctoral student will write a bespoke overview in which he/she summarises subject matter of the individual articles, the main conclusions presented and the academic connections between the articles. Such a written work shall normally be based on at least three scientific articles. At the time of the submission of the doctoral thesis, two of the articles must have received final approval for publication by the editors of recognised peer-reviewed journals; the third one may still be under review by editors. The doctoral student shall be the primary author of the articles. The role of the doctoral student in the respective articles must always be clear and the Doctoral Council is responsible for verifying together with the doctoral committee that the role of the doctoral student is satisfactory. A doctoral thesis in the form of a single work shall amount to 50,000– 100,000 words and shall be published by a recognised publishing house.

The Doctoral Council can provide *ad hoc* exemptions from the above-mentioned criteria.

#### Article 14

##### *Interim evaluation*

No later than at the midpoint of the planned period of study, a detailed interim evaluation of the status of work on the thesis is carried out. The doctoral student shall request the evaluation with at least a three-month notice. This interim evaluation is carried out by a special review committee composed of the supervisors and two external reviewers who are specialists in the discipline in question. These reviewers are expected to fulfil the requirements set for opponents. The Doctoral Council appoints the review committee.

The doctoral student writes a short summary of the thesis and the main conclusions. The student submits this summary to the review committee and presents and discusses the thesis at a seminar. On the basis of this, the doctoral student's general knowledge and the status of the thesis shall be assessed with respect to whether the content is appropriate and sufficient for a doctoral thesis.

#### Article 15

##### *Evaluation of doctoral thesis*

Prior to a doctoral thesis being submitted for defence, the doctoral committee evaluates the doctoral thesis and submits a carefully reasoned verdict to the Centre for Doctoral Studies [and Research Administration]<sup>1</sup> concerning whether the doctoral thesis is satisfactory and whether the student is prepared for the doctoral defence. The verdict shall include a list of and short description of the scientific articles on which the thesis is based, if applicable, as well as an overview describing the professional work of the student during the doctoral studies (such as teaching, lectures, posters, reports). The verdict shall be signed by all of the doctoral committee members. At the same time as the thesis is submitted, a certified academic record for the doctoral student shall furthermore be submitted.

The Doctoral Council can require the student to improve on the work. The Doctoral Council can also reject the work completely.

When the doctoral committee and Doctoral Council have approved the work, the doctoral student shall submit a manuscript that is sent to the opponents. Opponents must have received the thesis at least four months before the intended defence is to take place. Two months later, they shall have sent the Doctoral Council a reasoned opinion on whether they believe that the thesis is acceptable for defence, as well as comments concerning necessary changes, as appropriate. The doctoral student shall respond to the comments and explain his/her position to the doctoral committee within one month. At the conclusion of this process, the student submits the thesis according to the process decided upon by the University of Akureyri.

A prerequisite for holding the doctoral defence is that the doctoral student has made the improvements that were considered necessary.

1) Amended with regulation No. 793/2021.

#### Article 16

## *Opponents*

Opponents at a doctoral defence shall be two independent parties who do not have a seat on the doctoral committee and at least one of them shall work outside the University of Akureyri. They are appointed by the Doctoral Council, after receiving recommendations by the doctoral committee and with the approval of the respective Dean of the School. Opponents shall have been recognised as entitled to the status of professor and shall have completed a doctorate or acquired equivalent education in the relevant academic discipline or a related one. They must also be recognised experts in that discipline.

## Article 17

### *Doctoral defence*

A doctoral thesis shall be publicly defended. The Director of the Centre for Doctoral Studies [and Research Administration]<sup>1</sup> organises the doctoral defence in consultation with the Doctoral Council, School and Faculty. The doctoral student presents his/her thesis and opponents make comments and engage in a debate with the student. A grade is not given for the doctoral thesis; only a pass/fail. The University Council sets more detailed rules on the procedure for doctoral defences.

1) Amended with regulation No. 793/2021.

## Article 18

### *Requirements concerning knowledge, skills and competences at the conclusion of doctoral studies*

The Doctoral Council defines a specific framework for doctoral studies in accordance with the the Icelandic National Qualification Framework for Higher Education, no. 530/2011, which is a systematic description of the structure of education and degrees at higher education. The framework specifically addresses knowledge, skills and competences of students at the conclusion of their studies cf. the Higher Education Act no. 63/2006.

With reference to the framework of the Ministry, the Doctoral Council shall, in its framework, describe the content and learning outcomes of individual study programmes in doctoral studies, as well as elaborating the framework further in terms of the characteristics of the respective School/discipline. In this way, doctoral students can see what knowledge, skills and competences they are expected to possess at the conclusion of their studies. It also becomes easier for postdoctoral researchers to acquire certification and accreditation of their studies, both in Iceland and abroad, whether for further studies or employment.

## Article 19

### *Entry into force and review*

These regulations are prepared by a working group of the Centre for Doctoral Studies, approved by the Quality Council of the University of Akureyri and confirmed by the University Council of the University of Akureyri. The regulations are established according to Article 7 of the Higher Education Act no. 63/2006, Articles 18 and 22 of the Act on Public Higher Education Institutions no. 85/2008, and Article 3 of Regulations for the University of Akureyri no. 387/2009. They enter into force upon publication in Section B of the Law Gazette.



A review of these regulations shall have taken place no later than two years after their entry into force.

Should there be a discrepancy between the Icelandic and the English version, the Icelandic version is valid.

University of Akureyri, 21 June 2018

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Eyjólfur Guðmundsson, Rector and Chair of the University Council

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Eydís Kr. Sveinbjarnardóttir  
Vice-Chair of the University Council.

Section B – Date of issue: 12 July 2018