

# REGULATIONS

## on Doctoral Studies and Doctoral Examinations at the University of Akureyri No. 822/2022.

### Article 1 *Introduction*

Doctoral studies at the University of Akureyri are in the third cycle of university education. The studies end with a final examination which includes a research project that fulfils international criteria for a doctoral thesis. The objective of doctoral studies at the University of Akureyri is for doctoral students to gain the knowledge, skills and competence necessary to conduct independent scientific research, gather and disseminate new knowledge and play an active role in the scientific community.

Learning outcomes of the studies are in accordance with the requirements presented in the *National Qualification Framework for Higher Education and Degrees* (announcement No. 530/2011). The studies furthermore take into account the Bologna Process on the structure of higher education in Europe and internationally recognised standards on the structure and quality of doctoral studies. All those participating in doctoral studies at the University of Akureyri shall respect the provisions of the code of ethics and other regulations of the University of Akureyri. Supervision of doctoral studies at the University of Akureyri is in the hands of the Doctoral Council and the Centre for Doctoral Studies.

### Article 2 *Doctoral Council*

The Doctoral Council supervises doctoral studies at the University of Akureyri, bears responsibility for the studies, monitors its implementation and quality and ensures that the defined criteria and quality requirements of the studies are complied with, and is furthermore a forum for discussion and collaboration. The Council comprises seven members appointed by the Rector. One member is nominated by the Rector as the chair, four are nominated by the Deans of Schools, two from each School, and two representatives of doctoral students who are nominated from and by that group. A deputy shall be appointed for each member of the Council. Gender balance shall be respected, to the extent possible, with the appointment of all members. Representatives of the Faculties shall be academic staff with a doctorate or with academic competence as a Professor or Associate Professor. They shall have the competence and experience of supervising master's and doctoral students. The chair of the Doctoral Council shall, in addition to the above specified competence requirements, have academic competence as a Professor and have wide knowledge, international connections and experience of doctoral studies, research and administration.

The Doctoral Council discusses applications and their processing. The Doctoral Council appoints the main supervisor and others in a doctoral committee, external reviewers to conduct the formal assessment undertaken halfway through the programme, and opponents at a doctoral thesis defence, having consulted with the main supervisor, the School and the Faculty. In the Doctoral Council, voting is decided by a majority where the chairman has a casting vote in the event of a tie. The Doctoral Council provides the University Council, with an opinion on the competence of Schools and their subdisciplines to offer doctoral studies.

### Article 3 *Centre for Doctoral Studies*

The Centre for Doctoral Studies and Research Administration at the University of Akureyri, hereafter Centre for Doctoral Studies, is under the Rector's Office and deals with matters related to

doctoral studies and research administration at the University. The Centre for Doctoral Studies manages data and provides information about doctoral studies, issuing an electronic handbook which contains all necessary information for doctoral students and supervisors, which the Centre reviews regularly. The Centre for Doctoral Studies furthermore prepares proposals for the Doctoral Council regarding registering new doctoral students and appointment of the main supervisor and others in the doctoral committee, and for external reviewers who take part in the formal assessment undertaken halfway through the programme and for opponents in the doctoral defence.

The Rector appoints the Director of the Centre for Doctoral Studies and provides them with a letter of engagement. The Director shall have a doctorate, experience of administration and broad knowledge of doctoral studies and research. They handle personnel matters and daily management of the Centre for Doctoral Studies and are responsible, administratively and financially, for the tasks allocated to the Centre for Doctoral Studies. The Director works closely with the Doctoral Council on developing doctoral studies, where they have the right to attend and make proposals but do not have voting rights. The Director has good cooperation on issues related to doctoral studies with Schools, Faculties, the Quality Council and University administration, which handles various administrative tasks for the Centre for Doctoral Studies.

#### Article 4

##### *Entry Requirements*

Entry requirements are a master's degree, awarded as first class, or equivalent final examination from second higher education cycle in the academic field on which the doctoral studies will be based or in a related field.

A doctoral thesis shall be in English, which is the international language of the academic community. Applicants for doctoral studies that do not have English as their first language need to submit confirmation of their knowledge of English in the form of TOEFL (minimum score 90), IELTS (minimum band 7) or equivalent confirmation that the Doctoral Council deems valid. Such confirmation may not be older than four years when the application is submitted.

It is possible to pursue doctoral studies in fields where the University of Akureyri has authority to grant doctoral awards and where the necessary facilities and specialised knowledge are available. The Doctoral Council decides on whether an application falls within the University's remit for doctoral studies.

#### Article 5

##### *Submission and Processing of Applications*

Applications for doctoral studies are received throughout the year, and they shall be submitted through the University website. Processing of an application should normally be completed and answered within six weeks from the date of receipt, taking into account summer leave. The application may be in English or Icelandic.

The procedure for applications for doctoral studies is as follows:

- a) The prospective doctoral student applies for entry to doctoral studies through an electronic portal and the application must be accompanied with, among other things, a study plan, a research proposal, an accredited copy of examination certificates, and CVs for the applicant and intended main supervisor. The application shall also have the doctoral student's plan for a visit, in total one semester, to one or more universities or research institutions outside Iceland. If applications to parties who will fund the doctoral studies are available, summaries from them shall also accompany the application. A doctoral student consults with the intended main supervisor when preparing both the study plan and research proposal and also when making a detailed time and financial plan for the study programme

as a whole. A study plan shall contain, for example, the structure of the studies and choice of courses. The research proposal shall explain the doctoral students planned research work, for example, the objective of the research and methods to be used in gathering and analysing data.

- b) The Centre for Doctoral Studies assesses the primary documentation according to the regulations in force, confirms their origin, assesses the validity of examination certificates and degrees and confirms that the applicant's documentation fulfils the formal requirements. The Centre for Doctoral Studies then sends the conclusion of the assessment of primary documentation and a copy of the application with accompanying documentation to the Doctoral Council.
- c) The Doctoral Council scrutinises the application documentation and accepts or rejects the application for doctoral studies, based mainly on the following criteria:
  - The applicant must fulfil entry requirements specified in these regulations.
  - The University must have the necessary facilities and available specialists need to be in place in the academic field covered by the doctoral project.
  - The proposed main supervisor needs to have competence in the relevant academic field, see article 7 in these regulations.
  - There must be a sound financial basis for the doctoral project and sufficient resources must be available.
- d) The Centre for Doctoral Studies notifies the applicant in writing of the conclusion.
- e) Within one month of the application being accepted, the doctoral student shall register with the Centre for Doctoral Studies and with the Student Registry and complete payment of the registration fee. The doctoral student needs to renew registration annually where registration and payment of the registration fee are a prerequisite for the student being able to pursue doctoral studies.

## Article 6

### *Agreement between the Centre for Doctoral Studies and the Doctoral Student*

When the study programme commences, an agreement shall be made between the doctoral student and the Centre for Doctoral Studies, with the participation of the relevant School and Faculty on the structure of the study programme, with regards to, for example, facilities, service, rights and obligations of the student and the supervisor during the period of study. If applicable, institutions or companies that are involved in the doctoral project can become parties to the agreement. The agreement is a prerequisite of the doctoral student being able to commence studies, and it shall be reviewed as required.

## Article 7

### *Doctoral Committees and Main Supervisor*

a) *Doctoral Committees and their Role.* Each doctoral student shall have a doctoral committee, which comprises three to five supervisors, including one main supervisor and two to four additional supervisors. A minimum of one of them shall be an external party. Members of a doctoral committee shall have completed a doctorate, have experience in supervising students in graduate studies, for example, by membership in doctoral committees or experience of supervising master's students. They shall also be active specialists in the relevant academic field and have published peer-reviewed material related to the project and academic field of the doctoral student. The Doctoral Council appoints all parties to a doctoral committee. It is authorised for a specialist in the relevant field that has not completed a doctorate to work with the doctoral committee.

The doctoral committee shall monitor progress of the studies and support active participation by the doctoral student in the academic community, both within the University of Akureyri and internationally. The doctoral committee is responsible for the doctoral studies in question, fulfilling the

appropriate learning outcomes and requirements, see *National Qualification Framework for Higher Education and Degrees* (announcement No. 530/2011), on the quality of doctoral studies and the requirements of the University of Akureyri as specified in these regulations.

Should there be a dispute within the doctoral committee or between the committee and the doctoral student, it will be referred to the Centre for Doctoral Studies which will mediate towards a solution. In the event of the dispute proving difficult to resolve, the case is referred to the Doctoral Council, which discusses with the parties involved and then rules on the case.

b) *Main Supervisors and their Role.* The main supervisor of a doctoral student shall have a doctorate, competence of a Professor or Associate Professor and normally be a tenured member of the academic staff of the University of Akureyri. They must be active in the research community with respect to writing activities and international cooperation. The main supervisor heads the doctoral committee and convenes a meeting normally no later than one month from acceptance of the application. They invite the doctoral student to a meeting of the doctoral committee, normally once every semester during the period of study, but the doctoral student can also request a meeting of the doctoral committee.

It is authorised with the agreement of the Doctoral Council that a doctoral student has an external main supervisor and one of the additional supervisors in such a case, who is a tenured member of the academic staff of the University of Akureyri, shall adopt the role of contact person with the Centre for Doctoral Studies.

If the main supervisor cannot perform their supervisory duties because of illness, absence for a prolonged duration or if the party in question were to stop working, the Doctoral Council shall find another main supervisor for the doctoral student after having consulted with the members of the doctoral committee.

## Article 8

### *Obligations of a Doctoral Student*

A doctoral student consults with the main supervisor on all primary issues in the study programme, for example, with regards to applications to the ethics committee, on the structure and implementation of research and on applications for grants or writing articles for journals and on the doctoral thesis. A doctoral student shall participate actively in the University community to which their doctoral project belongs. It is expected that they present their project regularly at seminars and at least annually at a conference.

## Article 9

### *Composition and Length of the Study Programme*

A doctoral project shall be equivalent to 180 ECTS credits. In addition to this, the doctoral student can, in consultation with the doctoral committee, attend specific courses at recognised universities to strengthen the foundation of the doctoral project. It is not authorised to use a master's thesis as the basis for a doctoral thesis.

A full year of study is equivalent to 60 ECTS credits. The duration of the study programme is therefore on average three to four years' full-time study. It is permitted to apply to the Doctoral Council to study part-time (a minimum of 50%), and study progression will then be based on the approved percentage. If a doctoral student does not succeed in completing the study programme within the set time, or requests to take a break in studies, they can apply for an exemption to the Doctoral Council on the forms provided for that purpose.

## Article 10

### *Study Progression and Withdrawal*

The Centre for Doctoral Studies keeps a student record for each doctoral student, who shall provide an annual study progression report on the relevant form to the Centre for Doctoral Studies. The Centre for Doctoral Studies provides a description of the procedure for preparing a study progression report.

Should the situation arise where a doctoral student considers that they cannot complete the study programme or decide to withdraw from their studies, they shall send written notice of withdrawal to the Centre for Doctoral Studies, after having consulted with the main supervisor.

There are various forms of withdrawal. A doctoral student who has completed at least 60 ECTS credits can apply for a diploma, certificate in accordance with cycle 2.1 in *National Qualification Framework for Higher Education and Degrees* (announcement No. 530/2011). If the Doctoral Council assesses that a student has completed at least 120 ECTS credits, the student can graduate with a master's degree in accordance with cycle 2.2. In both instances, the party in question must apply to the Faculty at which the main supervisor works and must meet the competence criteria of the Faculty in question.

## Article 11

### *Formal Assessment Undertaken Halfway Through the Programme*

Around the middle of the estimated duration of the study programme, there is a special assessment of the doctoral student's knowledge and of the status of the project, with the objective of increasing the quality of learning and of enhancing the student's capabilities prior to the defence. The doctoral student shall request the assessment with at least two months' notice (not including July). The formal assessment is made by the relevant doctoral committee, along with one or two external reviewers who are specialists in the relevant field and who fulfil requirements made for opponents. The Doctoral Council appoints reviewers after having received reasoned proposals from the main supervisor. The Doctoral Council provides a description of the procedure for making a formal assessment.

## Article 12

### *Requirements for a Doctoral Thesis*

A doctoral thesis shall be a complete work, variously in the form of scientific articles that form a whole, or in the form of a monograph. A doctoral thesis shall be in English, see article 4 in these regulations. In the case of a work based on scientific articles, a separate overview shall be written where the content of individual papers is summarised, and overall conclusions shall be presented and their content linked in an academic manner. The overview shall normally be about 10,000 to 15,000 words and based on at least three scientific papers. When a doctoral thesis is presented, two of the papers must have been accepted for publication by the editorial boards of recognised peer reviewed journals, and the third may be under consideration by editors. A doctoral student shall normally be the first author of the papers. The contribution of the doctoral student in the papers in question must always be clear. A doctoral thesis in monograph form shall normally be between 50,000 and 100,000 words. The Doctoral Council provides a description of procedure for the structure of a doctoral thesis.

## Article 13

### *Requirements for Knowledge, Skills and Competence on Completion of Study Programme*

The Doctoral Council specifies, where required, specific criteria for individual study programmes in doctoral studies in accordance with *National Qualification Framework for Higher Education and Degrees* (announcement No. 530/2011), which describes the structure of studies and degrees at university level. The criteria particularly cover knowledge, skills and competence on

completion of studies, see the Higher Education Act No. 63/2006. The criteria are published in the Doctoral Studies Handbook.

#### Article 14

##### *Assessment of a Thesis for Doctoral Defence*

When a doctoral committee, under the supervision of the main supervisor and having consulted with the doctoral student, considers that a doctoral thesis is ready for defence, the committee submits a reasoned opinion on the form for that purpose to the Centre for Doctoral Studies. The opinion shall be signed by all members of the doctoral committee and by the doctoral student. When the thesis is submitted, a student's record shall also be available, confirmed by the Centre for Doctoral Studies. The Centre submits this documentation to the Doctoral Council at least four months prior to the estimated date of the defence. The Doctoral Council assesses whether the documentation is considered adequate, pursuant to the regulations on doctoral studies, for the defence to take place. When positive conclusions from the doctoral committee and Doctoral Council are in place, the doctoral student submits the doctoral thesis electronically in its final form (PDF) to the Centre for Doctoral Studies.

#### Article 15

##### *Opponents*

The doctoral committee sends reasoned proposals for opponents in the doctoral defence to the Centre for Doctoral Studies at least four months prior to the intended defence. Opponents shall be two independent parties not working at the University of Akureyri and at least one of them working at a recognised university abroad. They may not have any connection to the doctoral student or to the doctoral committee that would make it possible to question their competence as opponents. They shall have completed a doctorate and have the competence of a Professor or Associate Professor and be recognised specialists in the relevant or related academic field. The Centre for Doctoral Studies submits proposals for opponents to the Doctoral Council, which endorses and appoints them, when the submitted documentation is deemed adequate. The opponents receive the accepted doctoral thesis for discussion at least two months prior to the intended defence.

#### Article 16

##### *Doctoral Defence*

The doctoral thesis shall be defended in public. The Director of the Centre for Doctoral Studies organises the doctoral defence in consultation with the Doctoral Council, School and Faculty. On completion of oral defence, the chairperson of the Doctoral Council and the opponents decide whether to award a doctorate. A grade is not given for the doctoral defence and doctoral thesis. The Doctoral Council sets regulations of procedure for the execution and conclusion of a doctoral defence which are endorsed by the University Council.

#### Article 17

##### *Academic Title*

After having been awarded a doctorate, the party in question is authorised to use the academic title Philosophiae Doctor and the abbreviation PhD.

#### Article 18

##### *Joint Doctoral Degree*

It is authorised to award a doctorate jointly with another university, when there is an agreement between the universities in question before the doctoral student commences studies at the University of Akureyri. Such an agreement requires the endorsement of the Rector, the Dean of School and the Doctoral Council.

## Article 19

### *Entry into Force*

These regulations are set in accordance with 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 articles 2 and 48 of the Regulations for the University of Akureyri No. 694/2002 and enter forthwith into force. At the same time, Regulations on Doctoral Studies and Doctoral Examination at the University of Akureyri No. 701/2018, become void.

*University of Akureyri, 23 June 2022.*

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**Eyjólfur Guðmundsson, Rector**