

# System for Quality Assurance of PhD Programmes at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences

Adopted by the university college board on September 28, 2017

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## 1. Introduction

In December 2016, Western Norway University of Applied Sciences adopted Regulations for the degree Philosophiae doctor (PhD) at HVL.

Revised PhD regulation is valid from August 1<sup>st</sup> 2021. The university college works continuously with development of the educational quality. The work is based on the formal requirements stated by the Ministry of Education and Research and relevant agencies as well as the university college's own objectives with regards to educational quality.

The framework for systematic quality work in education at HVL was adopted by the University College Board November 29, 2018. The requirements in the framework apply to the systematic quality work in all educations at HVL, from one-year programme and bachelor to master and PhD, including continuing education and further education. This document sets out the specific requirements for systematic quality work at PhD level.

## 2. Organization

The overall framework for systematic quality work specifies the roles and responsibilities associated with the quality work in education at HVL. The following boards, councils and functions are particularly relevant for the PhD educations:

The University College Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Has overall responsibility for the quality work at HVL and for strategic development of the study portfolio</li><li>• Has the overall responsibility for the student' learning environment</li><li>• Adopt changes and revisions in the system for work on quality in education</li><li>• Adopt local regulations, instructions and mandate for boards, councils, committees and functions with responsibility and tasks in the system for work on quality in education</li></ul>
The central PhD committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is an advisor to strategic management at the institution in issues related to doctoral education</li></ul>
PhD Programme committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is an advisor to the dean in issues related to the PhD programme</li></ul>
Rector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Has overall responsibility for the work with quality in the educations</li><li>• Reports to the board on the systematic work on quality.</li></ul>
Pro-Rector for Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Responsible for the work on quality in the studies at PhD level</li><li>• Chairs the FI-board and the central PhD committee</li></ul>
Dean and Vice-Deans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Have overall responsibility for the quality work in the faculties and for the strategic development of the study portfolio at the faculty</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have the academic and administrative responsibilities related to the implementation of the PhD education in the faculty</li> <li>• Reports annually to rector on the systematic work with quality in the faculty</li> </ul>
Head of Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is administrative and academic head for the PhD programme and reports to the decan.</li> <li>• Leads the work on quality in the PhD programme and ensures that this is carried out in line with the system for quality assurance at HVL</li> </ul>

## 2.1 The central PhD committee

The central PhD committee is appointed by the university college board. The central PhD committee has the following mandate:

- The committee will develop and administrate joint guidelines and routines in accordance with the Regulations for the degree Philosophiae doctor (PhD) at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences.
- The committee will be a strategic, coordinating and advisory committee to the university college board and the university college management in matters relating to doctoral education.
- The committee has delegated authority from the board in the following matters:
  - Adopt form for application to admission to PhD programmes at HVL
  - Revise the quality assurance system for doctoral education at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences (section 2.3-11) in accordance with the university college's PhD regulations.
  - Appoint administrative and academic head of the programme (Head of Programme) after receiving suggestion from the dean
  - Treat matters relating to policy

The PhD committee is composed as follows:

- Rector or Vice-Rector for Research chair the committee
- Dean from each faculty or someone the dean gives authority
- A professor from each PhD programme
- Two PhD research fellows, from different PhD programmes
- An external professor from another PhD environment

The committee's composition must be in accordance with the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act section 28 regarding the representation of both genders in committees.

The three regions should be represented in the committee as far as possible.

The research administration has the secretariat for the central PhD committee

The committee is appointed for a period of four years, except the PhD research fellow representatives who are appointed for a period of two years.

The student parliament may appoint a student at the Master's level as an observer in the committee.

The student observer is appointed for one year at a time.

Personal substitute representatives are appointed.

## **2.2 The programme committee**

A programme committee is appointed for each accredited PhD programme. The dean appoints members of the programme committee in accordance with the composition decided upon by the university college board. The committee's composition should reflect the academic breadth of the programme.

The programme committee has a mandate as follows:

- Discuss and give recommendations to the dean in matters where the dean seek the committee's council.
- The committee has delegated authority from the board in the following matters:
  - Approve changes in the programme description within the scope of the accreditation
  - Decide which Master's degrees qualify for admission to the given PhD programme
  - Approve admission to the PhD programme
  - Approve supervisors, project description and work plan
  - Determine criteria to rank qualified applicants when the number of applicants exceed admission capacity
  - Follow-up of the candidate's progress
  - Appoint evaluation group for the mid-way evaluation
  - Initiate measures to ensure the quality and the quality development of the programme
  - Approve the coursework part for the individual candidate
  - Receive and assess the application for evaluation of doctoral thesis.
  - Nominate evaluation committee members to the central PhD committee
  - Decide on matters regarding the individual doctoral candidate

The programme committee has the following composition:

- Dean or someone the dean gives authority chair the committee

- Three representatives from the academic staff involved in the teaching, supervision or research of the PhD programme.
- One PhD research fellow

At least three of the committee members must have professor qualification

The Head of Programme is secretary for the programme committee.

The committee is appointed for four years, except the research fellow representative, who is appointed for two years. One of the committee members is appointed vice-chair of the committee. At least two substitute representatives from the academic staff are appointed and at least one substitute representative for the PhD research fellow.

The committee's composition must be in accordance with the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act section 13 regarding the representation of both genders in committees.

### **2.3 Head of the PhD programme**

The Head of Programme is administrative and academic head of the PhD programme and is together with the programme committee responsible for the quality assurance and quality development of the programme. The Head of Programme is secretary for the programme committee and will together with the chair of the programme committee decide the agenda for the committee meetings. The Head of Programme enables the programme committee to take initiative to assure the quality of the programme which includes keeping the committee posted on evaluation of the programme (see section 7), on feedback from the midterm evaluation (see section 8) and on the candidates' progress (see section 9).

The Head of Programme is responsible for the day-to-day management of the programme. Central tasks are introduction meeting with PhD candidates, to organize and develop the PhD courses, annual follow-up meetings with supervisors and candidates including the midterm evaluation.

The Head of Programme will work together with the PhD coordinator, and report to the dean at the host faculty of the programme. The Head of Programme for a PhD programme must have professor qualification. The honorary position as Head of Programme equals at least 50 % of a full time position.

### **2.4 Administration**

Division of Research, Internationalisation and Innovation has PhD education as its area of responsibility in the field of Prorektor for Research, and has the secretariat for the central PhD committee.

The PhD coordinator at the host faculty provides administrative support to the Head of Programme in the day-to-day operations of the PhD programme. Additionally, they are responsible for preparing cases for the Programme Committee. From the point of admission to the public defense, the PhD coordinator follows up on administrative tasks for the PhD candidate, ensuring accurate registrations in FS. This includes registration of external courses approved as part of the candidate's training component. PhD courses are managed by the faculties.

The PhD coordinators constitute a network that establishes routines and standardized solutions across the PhD programmes. This network, under the leadership of the Department of Research, Internationalisation, and Innovation, facilitates optimal support for PhD candidates in cooperation with the other administrative sections.

Division of Academic Affairs has the overall responsibility for the administration of examination in PhD courses and for the diploma and the diploma supplement (DS).

Division of Finance will make sure the PhD candidates employed in a PhD research fellow position at the university college get their own project account for operating funds.

Division of Human Resources is responsible for the process of announcement of vacant PhD research fellow positions and the employment of new PhD research fellows.

The university college has developed a form for application for admission to a PhD programme and an Agreement on admission to a PhD programme at HVL.

### **3. Employment in position as research fellow**

Employment in a position as PhD research fellow will be done in accordance with Regulations concerning terms and conditions of employment for post-doctoral research fellow, research fellow and research assistant, and in accordance with the university colleges' own guidelines for the appointment of post-doctoral research fellow and PhD research fellow.

Division of Human Resources is responsible for the processes of announcement of vacant positions and employment in PhD research fellow positions.

The university colleges' routines are collected in the Employee Handbook.

The university college has separate guidelines for duty work at HVL, and guidelines for leave of absence and extension of the PhD research fellow period.

## 4. Admission

Admission to the PhD programme will be in accordance with the Regulations for the degree Philosophiae doctor (PhD) at HVL, guidelines for assessment of applications for admission to doctoral education at HVL, admission criteria stated in the programme description and admission criteria stated in the supplementary guidelines for the given PhD programme.

The programme committee of the given PhD programme is responsible for admission to the PhD programme. The programme committee may require documentation exceeding the documentation requirements given in the application form. The requirements must be in line with criteria that are available and in accordance with HVL's recruitment policy and academic profile.

The candidate send his/her application for admission to the host faculty at HVL. In general, the candidate must apply for admission within three months after the starting date of the research project that will result in the PhD degree.

The programme committee decide on admission based on an overall evaluation of the application. The project description of the research project that will result in a PhD degree form the basis for admission.

As part of the decision to admit someone into programme, the following must be decided:

- Appoint at least one supervisor, preferably main supervisor
- Identify the persons responsible for addressing the other needs outlined in the application
- Decide on the agreement period with a start date and an end date. Starting date equals start date for funding. Possible prolongation of the agreement period must be in accordance with the regulation for the degree Philosophiae doctor (PhD) at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences and associated guidelines.

The programme committee must reject admission if:

- agreements with external third parties prevent the doctoral thesis from being made available to the public or from being defended in a public forum
- the agreements on intellectual property rights that have been entered into are so unreasonable that Western Norway University of Applied Sciences should not be involved in the project
- the applicant cannot fulfil the requirement which states that a minimum of one year of the project must be carried out after the candidate has been granted admission to doctoral training, c.f. section 2-6 (3) of the PhD regulation.



The applicant may appeal the rejection in accordance with Public Administration Act section 28. The programme committee may annul or change the decision. If the decision is not changed, the appeal is sent to the appeals committee at HVL.

#### **4.1 The PhD agreement**

The admission is validated when the agreement on admission to the PhD programme at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences is completed and signed.

The central PhD programme determine agreement on admission to the PhD programme. The agreement regulates the rights and obligations of the parties. It will ensure that the candidate regularly participates in an active research environment and lays the groundwork for the candidate to complete the doctoral education within the time agreed upon.

It is the responsibility of the individual PhD candidate to make sure the PhD agreement is updated and signed at all times. The completed and signed agreement is sent to the university college archives.

PhD candidates with funding from, employment with, or with other contributions from an external party must enter into a separate agreement with the institution and the external party c.f. adopted guidelines.

If the PhD candidate will be affiliated with an institution abroad, this must be in line with the university college guidelines for such cooperation, and separate agreements must be made. In general, the agreement must be available together with the agreement on admission.

The programme committee for the PhD programme must approve significant changes in the agreement that will influence the realization of the research project or the coursework part.

The programme committee may prolong the agreement period subsequent to an application that give grounds for a prolongation. If the candidate gets a prolongation, the programme committee may give additional terms, c.f. guidelines for admission period for a PhD programme at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences.

#### **5. The coursework part**

The programme description specifies requirements for the content of the coursework part.

The coursework must consist of at least 30 credits, of which 20 credits must be completed following admission to the programme. (The programme committee can make exceptions from the requirement that 20 credits must be taken after

admission.) Credits approved as part of the required coursework should not have been completed more than 2 years prior to the date of admission

The dean is responsible for ensuring that the required coursework, together with the work involved in the doctoral thesis, constitute an education at a high academic level in accordance with international standards

The programme committee approve the coursework part as part of the admission into the PhD programme. Plan for the coursework part is a subsection of the PhD candidate's application for admission.

If the university college itself does not provide all of the required courses, it must facilitate the candidate's participation in comparable courses at other institutions. Doctoral-level courses completed at another institution must be approved in accordance with the provisions of section 3-5, first paragraph, of the Act relating to universities and university colleges. The programme committee give specific recognition of doctoral-level courses from other institutions as a part of the candidate's coursework and make sure these are in line with the programme's learning outcome.

The candidate must develop possible changes in an approved plan for coursework together with his/her supervisor. Changes in plan for coursework must be approved by the programme committee.

The PhD coordinator register candidates in the national student database (FS) based on the information provided in the application form. The Division of Academic Affairs facilitates the registration for courses, realization of courses and the registration of results from examination in the coursework part in FS.

The candidate may appeal about a grade and formal errors in the examination, in accordance with the provisions of section 5-2 and § 5-3 of the Act relating to universities and university colleges

Provisions on examination and cheating in regulations governing studies and examinations at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences applies for PhD education.

## **6. Supervision**

The PhD candidate must have at least two supervisors, one main supervisor and one co-supervisor. The main supervisor has the main responsibility for the candidate academically.

The main supervisor should have an employment at HVL. If the programme committee has appointed an external main supervisor, the co-supervisor must be employed at HVL.

All supervisors must have a doctoral degree within their field and be active researchers. Exceptions to the requirement of a doctoral degree may be made for professors and associate professors. All supervisors must complete a course in PhD supervision or the equivalent.

The dean, the Head of Programme and the supervisors must ensure that the PhD candidate actively participates in the research environment. The PhD candidates shall get the necessary training in research ethics. They shall be made familiar with, and also familiarise themselves with, research ethical guidelines and data protection legislation in force.

The candidate must make herself/himself available for supervision regularly. The candidate and the supervisors must sign the Agreement on admission to a PhD programme, part B: Agreement on academic supervision. This agreement states the rights and duties of the parties with regards to supervision in the agreement period.

The programme committee may appoint a new supervisor, if the PhD candidate or the supervisor asks for it. The supervisor cannot resign before a new supervisor has been appointed. Procedure for changing supervisor is described in the agreement for admission part B.

The programme committee consider and decide in disputes about the supervisors and candidates' academic rights and obligations at the request of one of the parties.

## **7. Evaluation of the courses and the programme**

The students' evaluation of the courses and the study programmes gives the university college opportunity to assess and document the quality of the programme. The quality assurance system for educations at HVL provide principles for evaluation of study programmes and courses, and these also apply for PhD.

The Head of Programme facilitates and follows-up the evaluation of the programme in accordance with the principles for evaluation stated in the quality assurance system for HVL. The dean and the Head of Programme are responsible for implementing possible decisions about measures/changes.

## **8. Mid-way evaluation**

Every doctoral candidate must have a mandatory mid-way evaluation, organized by the faculty.

During the midterm evaluation the candidate present and evaluate the progress of his/her study and PhD project for his/her supervisor and an evaluation group of at least two people.

The evaluation and input from the evaluation group is done on the basis of a selected text from the doctoral thesis sent to the evaluation group in advance and the candidate's oral presentation. The evaluation group will give constructive and critical feedback, and advice on how the candidate may proceed in the continued work on his/her doctoral thesis.

The evaluation group summarize their feedback in a written report, which is sent to the candidate, supervisor, Head of Programme and faculty after the midterm evaluation.

The evaluation group is appointed by the programme committee after receiving suggestion from the main supervisor. The members of the evaluation group must have a doctoral degree within the relevant academic field of research and be active researchers. At least one of the members should be external.

## **9. Report**

Supervisors and PhD candidates report annually on the progress of each candidate's PhD education. The parties have committed themselves to this when they signed the agreement on admission to PhD programme, part A. They use a progress report form given by the central PhD committee. Progression and possible discrepancies between the report and approved plan for the PhD education, must be reported to the Head of Programme by November 1 every year. If necessary, the Head of Programme will discuss the progress of the individual candidate with the candidate and his/her supervisor.

The Head of Programme will send a report to the dean and the programme committee, summarizing status for the PhD candidates' progress and status for the PhD programme. The section of the report concerning the PhD candidates' progress is based on the progress reports and, when necessary, discussions with the individual candidates. This section will indicate whether the candidate has made progress as planned or whether the parties meet the supervision requirements. The report's section on status for the PhD education is based on numbers for admission, completed PhD degrees, and progression. The work on quality in PhD courses is also briefly described. Implemented quality promotion measures are reported, and / or measures for quality assuring and developing the PhD education is proposed. The PhD coordinator will assist the Head of Programme with work relating to the report.

A lack of, or inadequate, progress reports from the candidate may result in involuntary termination of the candidate's participation in the doctoral programme prior to expiry of the period of admission, c.f. section 3-2 of the PhD regulation.

The programme committee decide when necessary on measures for the quality assurance of the PhD programme.

The dean reports to rector. Rector reports to the university college board as a part of the annual report. The board decide on measures to be taken.

## **10. The doctoral thesis**

### **10.1 Submission of the doctoral thesis**

The thesis requirements are described in the university college's PhD regulation section 4-10.

It is the responsibility of the main supervisor to notify the dean and the programme coordinator that the candidate is close to submitting his/her thesis, in order for the necessary preparations to start.

To get the PhD thesis evaluated, the PhD candidate must send an application. The candidate sends the application and the necessary attachments to the university college.

The programme committee discuss and makes a decision with regards to the application.

If the application does not meet the requirements stated in the PhD regulation section 5-3, the programme committee must reject it.

The programme committee may reject applications if it is obvious that the thesis does not meet the standards of high academic quality and will not be approved by a committee.

If the application meets the requirements and the programme committee approve the application, the process of appointing an evaluation committee will start.

Normally the time period between submission of the doctoral thesis for evaluation and the public defence of the thesis should not exceed 5 months.

### **10.2 Appointment of the evaluation committee**

The programme committee for the given PhD programme nominate members to an expert committee that will evaluate the PhD thesis, the trial lecture and the public defence.

Requirements for the composition of the committee are given in the PhD regulation section 5-5. Efforts should be made to ensure that at least one of the committee members has experience in the evaluation of a PhD thesis.

In accordance with the PhD regulations § 5-5 (8), members appointed for the midterm evaluation group are considered having contributed to the thesis, and thus cannot normally be appointed as members of the evaluation committee.

In the recommendation, the programme committee must give reasons for the composition of the committee and show how its members combined covers the research field of the doctoral thesis. Committee members are subject to the provisions in chapter 2 of the Public Administration Act regarding impartiality.

The Dean appoints the evaluation committee and chair of the evaluation committee after receiving the nomination from the programme committee.

The board determine procedure for appointment of the committee.

The Head of Programme will notify the PhD candidate of the proposal for the composition of the committee. The candidate may submit written comments no later than one week after the proposal has been made known to the candidate. If the candidate does not have any comments, Head of Programme must be notified as soon as possible.

### **10.3 The evaluation committee's report**

The evaluation committee determines whether the thesis is worthy of being defended for the PhD degree. The committee's report must be submitted no later than 3 months from the date when the committee received the thesis. The decision presented in the report and any dissenting views must be explained before it is sent to the programme committee.

The programme committee forward the report to the PhD candidate.

The candidate is given 10 working days in which to submit written comments to the report. If the candidate does not wish to submit comments, he/she must notify the programme committee of this in writing as soon as possible.

Any written comments by the PhD candidate must be sent to the Dean.

The programme committee will send the report from the evaluation committee and any comments from the candidate to the Dean without unnecessary delay.

The Dean decide whether the thesis is worthy of being defended. The PhD regulation section 5-11 and section 5-12 give procedure for how the Dean treat a unanimous or non-unanimous committee decisions.

The PhD regulation section 5-7 give procedures for reworking of a submitted doctoral thesis, section 5-9 for correction of formal errors in the doctoral thesis and section 5-13 for resubmission.

After the PhD candidate submits the doctoral thesis for evaluation, he/she will be allowed to correct formal errors in the thesis. A list of the errors that the candidate wishes to correct (an errata list) must be attached to the application. The application to correct formal errors may be submitted only once, and no later than two (2) months after the candidate has submitted the thesis.

Application will be assessed by chair of the programme committee or programme coordinator. The errors (errata) approved for correction can be corrected in the dissertation published in connection to the public defense. A list of approved errata will be added as an insert in the dissertation that is available during defense, and the list will be sent to the committee for information. It is not possible to replace submitted manuscripts with approved articles if they have been accepted after the dissertation was written.

#### **10.4 Public availability of the doctoral thesis**

When the doctoral thesis is found worthy of a public defence, the PhD candidate must submit the thesis to the university college in the approved format and in accordance with the rules of the university college, c.f. section 5-3 of the PhD regulations

The PhD candidate must submit a brief summary of the doctoral thesis in English and Norwegian to be made available to the public.

The thesis should be made available in the form in which it was submitted for evaluation, or following revisions made on the basis of the committee's preliminary comments, c.f. section 5-7 of the PhD regulations.

The doctoral thesis must be made available to the public no later than 2 weeks prior to the date of the public defence.

There can be no restrictions placed on a doctoral thesis being made publicly available, except in the event that a prior agreement has been reached concerning a delay in public access at an agreed upon date.

## **10.5 Trial lecture**

The central PhD committee recommend procedure for trial lecture.

Head of Programme is responsible for the announcement and the administration of the trial lecture, in cooperation with the PhD coordinator.

The Dean, or someone the dean gives authority, chair the trial lecture.

The PhD candidate must give a trial lecture after the doctoral thesis has been submitted.

The candidate will be informed of the title of the trial 10 days prior to the lecture.

The evaluation committee assigns the topic of the trial lecture and conduct the evaluation. The trial lecture is held in connection with the public defence and must be approved before the public defence can be held. A revision of the PhD regulations from August 1<sup>st</sup> 2021 opens for that the trial lecture can be held separate from the public defence, and that a separate committee may be appointed.

If the evaluation committee does not approve the trial lecture, the committee must give reason for its decision. The candidate must give a new trial lecture on a new topic. A new trial lecture must be held no later than 6 months after the first lecture. The lecture must be evaluated to the extent possible by the same committee that evaluated the first lecture. A new trial lecture may only be held once

## **10.6 The Public Defence**

The public defence of the doctoral thesis must take place after the trial lecture has been held and approved, and no later than 2 months after the university college has found the thesis to be worthy of a public defence.

The time and location of the public defence will be announced by the university college at least 10 working days prior to the scheduled date.

The committee that originally evaluated the doctoral thesis must also evaluate the public defence. The Dean will appoint two of the members of the evaluation committee opposing speakers.

The dean, or someone the dean gives authority, chairs the public defence.

The chair of the public defence gives a brief explanation of the procedures relating to the submission and evaluation of the doctoral thesis, and the trial lecture

The PhD candidate will explain the purpose and findings of the doctoral research project.



The first opposing speaker begins the questioning of the PhD candidate and the second opposing speaker concludes the questioning. After both opposing speakers have concluded their questioning, members of the audience will have the opportunity to comment. A revision of the PhD regulations from August 1<sup>st</sup> 2021 opens for questions ex auditorio to be held between the first and the second opponent.

One of the opposing speakers concludes the questioning, and the chair of the defence concludes the defence proceedings.

The evaluation committee assess the public defence of the thesis and conclude whether the defence was approved or not approved. The evaluation committee submits its report to the Dean.

## **11. Approval of the doctoral examination**

The Dean makes a decision on approval of the doctoral examination on the basis of the evaluation committee's report.

If the Dean does not approve the public defence, the PhD candidate may only defend the doctoral thesis one more time. A new defence may be held after 6 months and must be evaluated to the extent possible by the same committee that evaluated the first defence.

The candidate may appeal the decision as indicated in the Regulations for the degree of philosophiae doctor (PhD) at HVL.

Based on a statement by the Dean that the required coursework, doctoral thesis and doctoral examination have been approved, the Doctor of Philosophy Degree will be conferred on the candidate by rector.

The university college issues the certificate and doctoral diploma. The diploma provides information about the academic training in which the candidate has participated. The university college determines what additional information is to appear on the certificate.

The university college will issue an attachment to the certificate in keeping with the applicable guidelines for Diploma Supplement.