PhD Introduction Course

Legislation

by

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Legislation

- The PhD education in Denmark is governed by national law.
- The Legislation is continuously adjusted – latest version from 2013.
- The ministerial order on the PhD programme is part of the Danish University Act (Universitetsloven).
- The ministerial order sets the requirements for Danish PhD education and the framework for how it should be handled all from matriculation to graduation.
Legislation

- The PhD education in Denmark (at AAU more specifically) is governed by:
  
a) Legislation: Ministerial Order on the PhD Programme at the Universities (PhD order)
  
b) AAU implementation of Legislation: Ministerial Order on the PhD Programme at the Universities (PhD order) with the Doctoral Schools comments
  
c) Rules by the Doctoral School

Details and rules can be found at:
http://www.phd.teknat.aau.dk/intranet
http://www.phd.medicine.aau.dk/Practical+Information/
Purpose of PhD studies set out by the ministerial order

- “…aiming to train PhD students at an international level to undertake research, development and teaching assignments in the private and public sectors, for which a broad knowledge of research is required.”
  - International level.
  - Research, development and teaching.
  - Private and public sectors.
  - Broad knowledge of research is required.

- “…active research training under supervision.”
  - You do the research – the supervisor does just that … supervise.

- “…equivalent to 180 ECTS points …”
  - Formally this means 1680 study-hours/year. However, in reality it is the results which count and not the time you spend
Contents of the PhD programme …

▪ “… independent research under supervision (the PhD project).”
  • The supervisor is there to supervise you – not to do your work.

▪ “… PhD courses totaling approx. 30 ECTS points.”
  • Balance between project specific courses and general courses. Remember the Legislation said “broad knowledge”.

▪ “Participate in active research environments, including stays at other, mainly foreign, research institutions”.
  • Preferably stay at a foreign research institution for 3-6 months during the 3 years of study.
  • If that is impossible you MUST still be actively involved in research at other (non AAU) research institutions. Not sufficient to participate in a conference; not sufficient to collect data in a company or municipality. MUST be an active RESEARCH co-op.
Contents of the PhD programme ...

- “... experience of teaching or other form of knowledge dissemination ...”.
  - Can be teaching but also conference presentation, internal presentations, writing scientific papers etc.

- “Complete a PhD thesis on the basis of the PhD project”.
  - The Doctoral School and the Dean strongly recommends you to base your thesis on a collection of international peer reviewed scientific papers.

- “... for each PhD student ... university shall appoint a principal supervisor” ... “... principal supervisor shall be a recognized researcher within the relevant field, ..."
Contents of the PhD programme ...

- “... the university may ... appoint other supervisors; replace supervisors”

- “… offer the PhD student teaching course ... teaching guidance ... necessary resources ...”.

- “Within three months ... the university shall approve a research and study plan ... for the individual PhD student”
  - Schedule; supervision; course plan; other research environments; dissemination plan; IPR; financing.
Contents of the PhD programme …

- “… at regular points in time … university shall assess whether the PhD student is following the PhD plan and, if necessary, adjust the plan”.

- “… PhD student is not following the PhD plan, in spite of any adjustments made to the plan, the student shall be given three months to get back on course. …”.
  - An assessment is made after the three months; if the outcome is negative the PhD studies are terminated. Positive outcome means continue studies.
Thesis …

‘…thesis shall document the author’s ability to apply relevant scientific methods and to carry out research work meeting the international standards for PhD degrees …’

- No thesis can have more than one author.
- A thesis must have a Danish and English abstract.
- Recommendation to always write in English – also to easier comply with requirements for assessment committee.
- Co-author statements for paper or monograph: if the work is based in part on already published material the other authors must sign a statement describing the PhD fellows contribution.
“Within one week of the submission of the thesis … [the principal supervisor must state if the PhD programme as a whole has been acceptable]”.

- If the programme has not been acceptable, two weeks is given for the PhD fellow to comment on that.

- (note that the enrolment and therefore also salary as a PhD fellow terminates when you hand in the thesis)

- The Doctoral School decides based on the input during the study, the supervisor statement and the PhD fellow’s comments if the programme has been completed satisfactory or not.
Assessment committee ...

“... [immediately following the thesis submission an expert assessment committee is formed – three members with one internal who is born chairman] …”

- The members must be recognized researchers in the field.
- Two external – one from outside Denmark (unless impossible). Don’t write the thesis in Danish unless you absolutely MUST.
- The principal supervisor assists the assessment committee without voting rights. He should ensure that the thesis is assessed on a fair basis.
- After the appointment of the committee the PhD fellow has one week to object to the members. The Doctoral School decides if this is followed or not.
Preliminary assessment ...

- “Within two months [of thesis submission] … the assessment committee shall make its [reasoned] recommendation … as to whether the PhD thesis fulfills the requirements for the award of the PhD degree.”
  - In case of disagreement the majority decides.
  - Positive statement > defense to be planned and carried out.
  - Negative statement > if a revised thesis is possible, a deadline for resubmission must be provided. The PhD fellow and principal supervisor have two weeks to comment on the assessment.
Preliminary assessment ...

- Negative assessment ... the university decides ...
  - Defense may not take place.
  - Resubmission of revised thesis with a deadline of at least three months.
  - A new assessment committee makes assessment of the original thesis. Not normally done – unless the committee has not acted on a fair basis.
Defense ...

- “The thesis shall be defended publicly ... [the PhD fellow explains] his or her work and defend the PhD thesis [before the assessment committee].”

- “… the PhD thesis is made available to the public in due time before the defense.”
  - The defense takes place between two weeks after preliminary statements and not later than three months after thesis submission (assumes positive assessment)
Awarding the degree ...

- “Immediately following the defense … recommendation as to whether the PhD degree should be awarded …”.
  - The recommendation shall be reasoned. Majority prevail.
  - The assessment committee CAN’T give the degree – only the Academic Council can do so.
  - The assessment committee makes a recommendation.
  - Negative recommendation: PhD fellow has one week to comment on the recommendation. A new assessment committee may be appointed.
Various ...

- The university must have own interpretations of some issues – see:
  - [http://www.phd.teknat.aau.dk/](http://www.phd.teknat.aau.dk/)
  - [http://www.phd.medicine.aau.dk/](http://www.phd.medicine.aau.dk/)

- For industrial PhD fellows:
  - A supervisor from the company, where the PhD fellow is employed, must be appointed.
  - One member of the assessment committee must have “company relevant research experience within the field”