



UNIVERSITETS- OG HØGSKOLERÅDET

The Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions

Joint Degrees at the PhD Level

Introduction and Guidelines

Report from a national working group appointed by UHR

Oslo 2015

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1 INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

1.1 Joint degree at the PhD level – intentions and challenges

Higher education institutions are establishing cooperation on PhD education at an increasing rate, both nationally and internationally. This trend is in keeping with the intentions of the Norwegian *Act relating to universities and university colleges* (Higher Education Act), the Bologna Process and the European Research Area (ERA). The Norwegian Government's white paper on structural reform in the higher education sector (Meld. St. 18 (2014-2015)) states: "The Bologna Process has helped to harmonise European higher education (...) by encouraging a variety of national educational systems to cooperate to a greater extent".¹ This same white paper emphasises that academic interaction and cooperation, nationally and internationally, may enhance quality within the sector. Joint degrees are a form of cooperation that requires extensive integration. Ideally, joint degrees result in greater added value for the institutions, the research groups and the PhD candidate.

In 2014, the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions (UHR) published the *Handbook on Joint Degrees*, which focused primarily on the master's degree level. The handbook did not address the particular challenges related to the PhD level. Nonetheless, the *Handbook on Joint Degrees* contains a great deal of important, relevant information about joint degrees that also applies to the PhD level, and it has served as a natural point of departure for the work involved in preparing this report. The report provides information about and reflects on the experiences and regulations related to cooperation and joint degrees at the PhD level, and the final section sets out more specific guidelines for institutions that wish to use joint degrees at the PhD level as a means of enhancing educational and research quality at their own institutions.

While some institutions are beginning to take an interest in cooperation on joint degrees at the PhD level and view it as an appropriate measure in the context of internationalisation, other institutions are more hesitant because it appears to be very labour intensive to become familiar with the regulations in various countries and achieve effective, well-functioning agreements. The challenges are related to clarifying which laws and regulations cannot be waived and to the necessity of entering into highly detailed agreements encompassing everything from funding to admission, implementation, supervision and conclusion.

Input from the higher education institutions via UHR's forum for organised research training has made it clear that the institutions are seeking more specific information about joint degrees at the PhD level. Establishing joint degrees (and cotutelle agreements) may create room to manoeuvre and flexibility for research projects within the institutions' priority areas and help to expand cooperation with top international research environments. Therefore, it will be beneficial to provide more information and guidelines so that the institutions can be better equipped to pursue their plans for cooperation at the PhD level and so they have some basis for understanding what is needed to enter into sound agreements with relevant partners in Norway and abroad.

¹ Meld. St. 18 (2014-2015) *Konsentrasjon for kvalitet. Strukturreform i universitets- og høyskolesektoren*, white paper on structural reform in the higher education sector, Ministry of Education and Research, p. 13 and p. 22.

1.2 Mandate, appointment of a working group, delimitations

In its meeting of 23 May 2014, UHR's research committee decided to establish a working group to continue the effort to formulate guidelines for joint degrees and cotutelle agreements, this time at the PhD level.

Mandate of the working group

Based on the assignment from UHR's research committee, the working group has used the following mandate as a basis for its activities and for these guidelines:

1. On the basis of relevant background information, the working group will acquire knowledge about how joint degrees and cotutelle agreements at the PhD level are understood and practiced nationally and shed light on the basis for the institutions' various strategies and choices.
2. The working group will discuss national practices and national challenges in light of European and/or international ideas and practices.
3. On this basis, the working group will ensure that concepts are explained, when this is deemed necessary.
4. The working group will sort out the challenges facing the institutions and prepare a proposal for recommendations/solutions, when this is possible.

The working group's original deadline deliver the results of its work, preferably in the form of guidelines for the institutions, was 1 April 2015. Due to a lack of capacity, the process has taken somewhat longer than expected, and the guidelines are being presented to UHR's research committee on 17 September 2015.

Appointment of the working group

Members of the working group:

- Anna Kolberg Buverud, Senior Advisor, Office for International Relations and Research, University of Oslo
- Tone Gran, Faculty Director, Faculty of Technology and Maritime Sciences, Buskerud and Vestfold University College
- Per Gunnar Hillesøy, Senior Advisor, University Director's office, University of Bergen
- Harald Lenschow, Senior Consultant, IME, Norwegian University of Science and Technology
- Anne Beate Maurseth, Professor II, Senior Advisor, Division of Research Management, University of Bergen
- Kenneth Ruud, Professor, Prorector of Research, University of Tromsø – The Arctic University of Norway
- Jonny Roar Sundnes, Senior Advisor, Education and Research Administration Office, Department of Academic Administration, University of Oslo

Professor Kenneth Ruud served as chair of the working group. Rakel Christina Granaas, Senior Adviser at UHR, was the group's secretary.

In addition, Etelka Tamminen Dahl, Senior Adviser at the University of Bergen, served as the group's resource person in the start-up phase.

The working group's comments to the mandate

There are clear policy principles, both nationally and internationally, regarding the use of joint degrees as a means of enhancing quality, strengthening international cooperation and achieving greater mobility. The working group has *not* viewed it as its task to take a position on policy issues or to assess whether joint degrees are an appropriate measure. As the group understands the mandate, its purpose is partly to provide information and reflect/comment on the topic of joint degrees and partly to give practical, useful advice to the institutions seeking guidance in their efforts to enter into joint degree agreements (points 1 and 4).

The working group has gathered background information from European sources that sheds light on the PhD scheme in the wake of the Bologna Process, but it has not looked closely at individual countries' schemes or practices related to joint degrees or cotutelle agreements at the PhD level (point 2). The main focus of this report is to clarify what Norwegian legislation and regulations say about joint degrees and to provide a basis for determining what factors should be given focus and addressed when negotiating agreements on joint degrees with other institutions (point 4).

In these guidelines, the working group also seeks to raise awareness around the various terms involved and to highlight differing understandings of joint degrees, cotutelle agreements and other types of cooperation on PhD degrees (point 3). The variation in the understanding and use of terms is just as great internationally/in Europe as it is nationally. It is critical that the institutions are aware of and knowledgeable about these variations so they are certain they are talking about the same thing when entering into cooperation. As such, the terms used in these guidelines are *not* standardised. The working group has used the definitions of joint degrees and cotutelle agreements found in UHR's *Recommended Guidelines for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree (PhD)*, but takes into account that terms may be used in different ways.

The process

The working group began its activities in September 2014. It has held four meetings, as well as a workshop with invited representatives of the EUA Council for Doctoral Education, the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT), the Research Council of Norway, the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education, the Ministry of Education and Research, and the following Norwegian higher education institutions: University of Bergen, Norwegian University of Life Sciences, University of Stavanger, Norwegian University of Science and Technology.

1.3 Summary

On the basis of relevant background information, the working group has learned how joint degrees are understood and practiced nationally, and has commented on what may lie at the core of the institutions' various strategies and choices. **Chapter 1** discusses the basis for establishing the working group and the working group's mandate and members. The comments to the mandate emphasise that the group has chosen to put the main focus partly on information and reflection and partly on more practically oriented guidance for the institutions.

Chapter 2 gives a brief presentation of research training in Norway following the Bologna Process. Norwegian doctoral education has been designed on the basis of key European policy documents such as the Salzburg II Recommendations and the EU's seven principles for quality and levels in European doctoral training, and it is placed at level 8, third cycle, in the *Norwegian Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning*.

Joint degrees at the PhD level are rarely used by the institutions. Cooperation at the PhD level is based primarily on academic employees' relationships with colleagues at other institutions (see Chapter 4). So far, Norway has established two joint degrees at the PhD level nationally, but there is no complete list of agreements between Norwegian and foreign institutions.

Chapter 3 reviews the Norwegian legislative and regulatory framework relevant for joint degrees at the PhD level. The Higher Education Act authorises NOKUT to specify basic criteria for the educational programmes. The Regulations on degrees and professional education programmes state that the PhD degree has a nominal length of study of three years following a five-year master's programme. According to current rules, the total length of study (higher education) for approval of a PhD degree is eight (8) years.

The Regulations on quality assurance and quality enhancement sets out the 8/15 requirement for the PhD degree as a general rule.² For joint degrees in cooperation with a foreign institution, it is sufficient that the joint degree programme as a whole satisfies the requirements. The regulations emphasise that universities and university colleges must submit a report to the Database for Statistics on Higher Education (DBH) on all joint degree programmes.

The Academic Supervision Regulations and NOKUT's guidelines on the regulations provide guidance to applicants to all three cycles within the Norwegian Qualifications Framework. These specify the requirements regarding accreditation of study programmes, often with reference to UHR's Recommended Guidelines for the PhD Degree.

UHR's Recommended Guidelines for the PhD Degree are not legally binding, but represent a consensus among the accredited institutions regarding the structure of the PhD degree following the Bologna Process. The guidelines set out requirements regarding admission to and implementation and conclusion of a PhD programme. The institutions' regulations are based largely on these guidelines.

Chapter 4 briefly discusses various forms of cooperation at the PhD level, while **Chapter 5** provides guidance, or serves as a checklist, for what should be included in a joint degree agreement. It is important to formulate the agreement so that it gives a correct, concise description of the collaboration desired by the research environments. The agreement must state on which regulations, guidelines and PhD guidelines it is based, and it must specify whether any of these regulations or guidelines have been waived under the agreement. These guidelines are divided into chapters on requirements regarding admission to and implementation and conclusion of a PhD programme.

² See the discussion of the 8/15 requirement in Section 3.4 which addresses the *Regulations on quality assurance and quality enhancement in higher education and vocational education* (in Norwegian only).

2 BACKGROUND – ORGANISED RESEARCH TRAINING IN NORWAY

2.1 General

In this document, “organised research training” is understood to mean organised doctoral education, or PhD education, which was introduced in Norway in 2003 in accordance with the Bologna Accord. PhD candidates are educated to work as researchers in the higher education and research institute sectors and to hold positions in the public and private sectors.

Norwegian research training is based on a framework established by the Ministry of Education and Research in accordance with basic principles at the European level. The most important European policy documents are:

- *Salzburg II Recommendations*, 2005:
http://www.eua.be/Libraries/Publications_homepage_list/Salzburg_II_Recommendations.sflb.ashx
- *Principles for Innovative Doctoral Training*, European Commission, 2011:
http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/pdf/research_policies/Principles_for_Innovative_Doctoral_Training.pdf
- *Using the Principles for Innovative Doctoral Training as a Tool for Guiding Reforms*, SGHRM Working Group, 2013:
http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/pdf/research_policies/SGHRM_IDTP_Report_Final.pdf

There are no national regulations for the PhD degree in Norway. Relevant Norwegian legislation and regulations that also encompass the PhD degree are the Higher Education Act, the *Regulations on degrees and professional education programmes*, the *Regulations on quality assurance and quality enhancement in higher education and vocational education*, the *Regulations concerning supervision of the educational quality in higher education* (Academic Supervision Regulations), and the *Norwegian Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning*. At the national level, UHR’s *Recommended Guidelines for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree (PhD)* set out minimum requirements for the content of a PhD degree, and the institutions’ own regulations are based primarily on these.³

UHR’s Recommended Guidelines for the PhD Degree and the national regulations encompassing various aspects of the Norwegian doctoral degree are based on the Salzburg II Recommendations and the EU’s seven principles for quality and levels in European doctoral training. The recommendations are a further development of the Bologna Process, which “has helped to harmonise European higher education in a number of areas, not through a joint educational policy, but by increased collaboration among the national educational systems”.⁴

The EU’s seven principles are:

1. Research excellence

³ For a discussion of legislation, regulations and guidelines, see Chapter 3.

⁴ See Meld. St. 18 (2014-2015) *Konsentrasjon for kvalitet. Strukturreform i universitets- og høyskolesektoren*, white paper on structural reform in the higher education sector, Ministry of Education and Research, pg. 13.

2. Attractive institutional environment
3. Interdisciplinary research options
4. Exposure to industry and other relevant employment sectors
5. International networking
6. Transferable skills training
7. Quality assurance

Since the introduction of PhD education in Norway, the number of programmes offered at accredited Norwegian institutions has risen dramatically, and the number of completed doctoral degrees has more than doubled. In addition, the number of private and state university colleges offering one or more PhD programmes has increased substantially. To date (as of 2015), there are 25 institutions in Norway that offer PhD education. Of these, eight are universities, eight are specialised university institutions and nine are accredited university colleges. In 2013, more than 200 PhD programmes were offered, and in spring 2014, 9 325 candidates were pursuing doctoral studies at universities and university colleges. According to the Database for Statistics on Higher Education (DBH), there were 1 448 public defences of doctoral theses in Norway in 2014.⁵

Norwegian funding of PhD candidates through research fellowship positions stands out in an international context. About 70 percent of the PhD candidates in Norway have research fellowship positions that cover salary, operating expenses and indirect costs. The positions are funded by the institutions themselves (through allocations from the national budget), the Research Council of Norway or other external sources. The remaining 30 percent are funded by employers (the institutions themselves, research institutes, public and private sector entities) or other external sources. Doctoral research fellows employed at Norwegian institutions of higher education have status as temporary academic staff, and as such they are encompassed by the provisions of the *Act relating to civil servants, etc.* (Civil Service Act).

Norwegian PhD education is placed in the third cycle in the Norwegian Qualifications Framework, and is estimated to comprise three years of full-time study or four years of total time, in which 75 percent of this time goes to the required coursework and research project, and 25 percent goes to teaching or other relevant job duties. The educational programme consists of required coursework which, in accordance with UHR's Recommended Guidelines for the PhD Degree, should comprise a minimum of 30 credits and a doctoral thesis of unspecified size. The practice nationally is that the institutions follow up most of these guidelines in their own regulations, even though they are not required to do so according to legislation or regulations.

The content and level of the coursework may vary from programme to programme. Most faculties (departments) offer their own courses, and there are a number of national and international research schools that provide specialised training. Topics that may be covered in the required coursework include, for example, scientific theory and methods, research ethics and more field-specific or profession-oriented courses. Training in generic skills and research ethics should be provided throughout the *entire* doctoral programme.

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<http://dbh.nsd.uib.no/statistikk/rapport.action?visningId=32&visKode=false&columns=arstall!8!semester&index=1&formel=120&hier=instkode!9!institusjonsnr!9!fakkode!9!ufakkode!9!progkode&sti=¶m=arstall%3D2014> (in Norwegian only)

In keeping with the recommendations in the Salzburg II document, the core of doctoral education is training in good research practice through individual trial and experience in working with an original research project. This makes doctoral education different from education in the first and second cycles in the Norwegian Qualifications Framework. The work involved in a candidate's own research project is carried out under supervision. This must result in a doctoral thesis that is an independent contribution to the development of new knowledge. Completion of a doctoral programme indicates that the candidate, through an individual effort, has earned an academic degree that confirms he or she has acquired an independent, in-depth understanding of research and dissemination of research results. (The Salzburg II Recommendations refers to this as cultivating a "researcher's mindset".)

There is no complete list showing the number of joint degrees at the PhD level offered in Norway. The institutions are required to inform the Database for Statistics on Higher Education (DBH) of the joint degrees they offer, but so far this has not been followed up in a systematic manner. NOKUT has accredited two joint degrees in which only Norwegian institutions are involved. Neither DBH nor NOKUT has complete data on joint degree agreements that have been entered into.⁶

3 RELEVANT NORWEGIAN LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The section below discusses the current legislative and regulatory framework that has/may have significance for agreements on joint degree cooperation. Part of the challenge is to assess the status of the various documents and determine which provisions are laid down in legislation or regulations at the national level and which are recommendations based on current practice. This chapter identifies potential challenges and special conditions that must be taken into account when formulating the content of agreements.⁷

3.1 Act relating to universities and university colleges (Higher Education Act)

The Higher Education Act contains many provisions that apply to all education (e.g. regarding examinations, complaints, student fees, etc.). In this report, only the most important aspects are commented on. Chapters 1 and 2 of the Higher Education Act give the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT) the authority to monitor the quality of higher education, issue general recognition of foreign higher education, and promote quality enhancement that ensures study programmes at the institutions maintain a high international standard. Chapter 3 addresses the accreditation of institutions and the accreditation and

⁶ Pursuant to Section 4-2 of the *Regulations on quality assurance and quality enhancement in higher education and vocational education*, the institutions are required to inform the Database of Statistics on Higher Education (DBH) of the joint degrees they offer. DBH does not keep statistics on joint degrees at the PhD level.

⁷ This document does not address the topic of terms and conditions of employment. Please see the *Regulations concerning terms and condition of employment for the posts of postdoktor (post-doctoral research fellow), stipendiat (doctoral research fellow), vitenskapelig assistant (research assistant) and spesialistkandidat (resident)*: <https://lovdata.no/dokument/SF/forskrift/2006-01-31-102>

revision of courses of study, including the assessment of foreign doctoral degrees. The ministry is responsible for issuing regulations on procedures and establishing standards that provide the basis for accreditation (see below), whereas NOKUT assesses whether the conditions for accreditation of a particular course of study have been met.

The Higher Education Act makes little mention of the PhD degree. The criteria and requirements are laid down in regulations and guidelines for the PhD degree. As such, NOKUT's understanding of the regulations and of UHR's Recommended Guidelines for the PhD Degree provide the basis for more specific criteria and requirements regarding the design of PhD programmes, including joint degrees.

Section 4-13 of the Higher Education Act refers specifically to the PhD degree in connection with a decision to impose involuntary termination.

<https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/2005-04-01-15> (in Norwegian only)

3.2 The Norwegian Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (NRK)

Efforts related to the *Norwegian Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning* (NRK) are a continuation of two international processes: the European Qualifications Framework process and the Bologna Process. The legal authority for introducing the framework was incorporated into the Higher Education Act in 2005, and the framework for higher education was approved in 2009.

The levels in the NKR refer to the levels in the *European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning* (EQF). In the NKR, the PhD degree is placed in the third cycle, level 8. Since 1 January 2013, the NKR has generally been implemented in all higher education, and all PhD programmes have learning outcome descriptors that satisfy the requirements for level 8. However, there is great variation in how and at what level of detail this has been done. (The requirements are elaborated on in the Academic Supervision Regulations.)

http://www.nokut.no/Documents/NOKUT/Artikkelbibliotek/Norsk_utdanning/NKR/20140606_Norwegian_Qualifications_Framework.pdf

3.3 Regulations on degrees and professional education programmes, protected titles and nominal length of study at universities and university colleges

The *nominal length of study for the PhD degree is three years*, which comes in addition to a five-year master's degree. Therefore, a completed PhD programme must comprise a *total of eight years of higher education*.

Some countries have PhD schemes that conflict with Norwegian provisions on admission requirements or nominal length of study. For example, British universities may approve admission to a PhD programme from a one-year master's degree, and in some cases from a bachelor's degree. Given both the level and the requirements regarding total time for higher education, this cannot currently be approved within Norway's regulatory framework. Any cooperation on a joint degree with a British university must be based on Norwegian admission requirements.

In Sweden, the nominal length of study for a doctoral degree is four years (two plus two years). This presents a challenge because Norwegian institutions' PhD regulations adhere to the recommended three years as the nominal length of study and because it is unclear whether a nominal length of study of three years, as set out in the *Regulations on degrees and professional education programmes*, should be regarded as an absolute requirement, including with a view to a possible extension. When cooperating on a joint degree with Sweden, the Norwegian institution must, if possible, either waive the applicable regulations or create new regulations for a four-year PhD programme and apply for approval from the Ministry of Education and Research (cf. Section 3.7).⁸

<https://lovdata.no/dokument/SF/forskrift/2005-12-16-1574> (in Norwegian only)

3.4 Regulations on quality assurance and quality enhancement in higher education and vocational education (Quality Regulations)

Section 3-1, third paragraph, establishes what is often referred to as the “8/15 requirement” in connection with accreditation of a PhD programme:

In the event of accreditation of a new doctoral degree programme, the study programme must have an academic environment corresponding to at least eight person-years with qualifications at the associate professor level, of which at least six must be in full-time combined research and teaching positions and at least four must have qualifications at the professor level. In addition, the institution must be able to document that it has the capacity and recruitment potential to admit at least 15 doctoral students to the study programme during the five-year period following start-up. The institution must be able to show that over time it can maintain a doctoral degree environment with at least 15 doctoral students.

The fact that the term “programme” can be (and is) used in very different ways is not taken into account. For example, the University of Bergen regards a programme as an organisational framework and has only one PhD programme for all candidates.

Section 4 of the Quality Regulations addresses joint degrees, but not at the PhD level in particular. The line of thinking from the master's level is carried over to the PhD level without recognising that PhD education has a unique position due to the requirement that candidates carry out an independent doctoral project (cf. the Salzburg II Recommendations and *Using the Principles for Innovative Doctoral Training* in which doctoral candidates are referred to as “first stage researchers”).

Section 4-1, second paragraph, reads as follows: “For studies that will be included in the basis for a joint degree and that the individual institution itself does not have the authority to establish, the provisions on accreditation in accordance with Section 3-1 of these regulations

⁸ The working group contacted NOKUT in connection with the ambiguities/challenges relating to any cooperation on a joint degree with British or Swedish universities, but no final solution was found. NOKUT will likely give closer consideration to these ambiguities/challenges in 2015–2016. The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for taking the final decision on requirements regarding cooperation with countries whose doctoral programmes have a duration other than three years. NOKUT is working on a proposal to change the criteria for recognition of foreign doctoral degrees that correspond to the Norwegian, and the changes in these criteria may affect the regulations for cooperation on joint degrees. The report from the working group for recognition of foreign doctoral degrees will be submitted to the board of NOKUT in autumn 2015.

shall apply *to the extent they are suitable*. In such cases, NOKUT may also accredit parts of a study programme.” (Our emphasis)

Section 4-2 addresses the responsibility of the institutions for, among other things, conferral of degrees and content of diplomas, and emphasises that the cooperating institutions must enter into an agreement at the institutional level. The cooperating partners must be recognised/accredited institutions of higher education in accordance with the system in the relevant country, and they must be accredited at the joint degree’s level.

In cooperation with the institution abroad, the Norwegian institution may be exempted from NOKUT’s 8/15 requirement. According to the Ministry of Education and Research, it is “sufficient that the joint degree as a whole satisfies the academic requirements of the study programme. This implies that the Norwegian institutions must only satisfy parts of this accreditation requirement. NOKUT must require the Norwegian educational institution to submit documentation showing that the joint degree as a whole satisfies this requirement.”⁹

Section 4-2, fifth, paragraph, emphasises that universities and university colleges must inform the Database for Statistics on Higher Education (DBH) as to which joint degrees the institution offers.

<https://lovdata.no/dokument/SF/forskrift/2010-02-01-96?q=forskrift+om+kvalitetssikring+og+kvalitetsutviklin>

3.5 Regulations concerning supervision of the educational quality in higher education (Academic Supervision Regulations)

Section 7-4 sets out supplementary provisions for the accreditation of a study programme or parts of a study programme that are constituent parts of a joint degree. It must be clearly defined which parts of the programme are the responsibility of each cooperating institution, there must be satisfactory procedures in place for the development and quality assurance of the programme as a whole, and the constituent parts of the programme must make up a whole, as seen in relation to the programme’s level and learning outcomes.

Parts of the programme offered by institutions subject to the Higher Education Act must meet the standards and criteria for accreditation of study programmes (basic conditions, plan, academic environment).

See the English translation:

http://www.nokut.no/Documents/NOKUT/Artikkelbibliotek/Norsk_utdanning/Forskrifter_Kriterier_mm/Regulations_concerning_supervision_of_the_educational_quality_in_higher_education.pdf

⁹ Quoted from a letter from the Ministry of Education and Research to NOKUT, dated 21 May 2015 (ref. 13/5628-), in response to NOKUT’s enquiry in an email dated 12 January 2015. This moderates NOKUT’s current guidelines on accreditation of joint degrees in which states the Norwegian institution must satisfy all the requirements alone when engaging in cooperation with foreign institutions. See NOKUT’s *Addendum to the Guidelines for the Academic Supervision Regulations* (in Norwegian only):

http://www.nokut.no/Documents/NOKUT/Artikkelbibliotek/Norsk_utdanning/Akkreditering/Veiledere/Veiledning_s%C3%B8knad_om_akkreditering_fellesgrad.pdf

In addition, NOKUT has drawn up *Guidelines for the Academic Supervision Regulations* which include guidance for applicants to all three cycles in the NKR, as well as to joint degrees in the first and second cycles. NOKUT's guidelines are based on the requirements in the Academic Supervision Regulations and the Quality Regulations (see above). The basic requirements at the PhD level are, among other things, a three-year timeframe (180 credits), the 8/15 requirement, learning outcome descriptors in accordance with NKR's third cycle, level 8, and a specification of mandatory components.

In addition, NOKUT recommends that the institutions use the guidelines and templates prepared by UHR (in Norwegian only).

<http://www.nokut.no/no/universitet-og-hoyskoler/kvalitetssikring-og--utvikling/akkreditering-av-nye-studietilbud/sokerveiledninger/>

3.6 UHR's Recommended Guidelines for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree (PhD)

As there are no national regulations on PhD education, UHR's Recommended Guidelines for the PhD Degree have been given national status as the *advisory* document for how Norwegian PhD education should be constituted, in accordance with the Bologna Accord, Salzburg II and the ERA.

http://www.uhr.no/ressurser/forskrifter-veiledninger-retningslinjer/doktorgrad_-_veiledninger_og_retningslinjer

The Recommended Guidelines are *not* legally binding, but have authority by virtue of being a consensus document in which UHR's research committee and board have agreed on how Norwegian PhD education should be organised through processes with their basis in the PhD-accredited institutions. Although the terms "requirements" and "provisions" are often used in connection with the guidelines, the guidelines are nonetheless understood to be advisory in nature.

The Recommended Guidelines propose minimum requirements for admission to and implementation and conclusion of a PhD programme. The requirement that the coursework must normally consist of minimum 30 credits is set out here, but is not laid down in legislation or regulations. The institutions have followed this up in their own regulations, and NOKUT operates with the same requirements in its criteria for recognition of new PhD programmes and for recognition of foreign doctoral degrees as equivalent to Norwegian, with reference to UHR's Recommended Guidelines and the institutions' regulations. NOKUT has applied the requirements as if they were absolute, which may be a challenge in cooperation with countries which, for example, do not give academic credit for the required doctoral coursework.¹⁰

¹⁰ Salzburg II emphasises that the use of credits in doctoral education is not necessary and may have the opposite effect than intended. See Section 2, Clues for Success, point 2.6 Credits: "Applying the credit system developed for cohorts of students in the first and second cycles is not a necessary precondition for establishing successful doctoral programmes. Some universities consider credits useful for the taught components of doctoral education, especially in cross-institutional (joint) doctoral programmes. Credits, however, do not make sense when

Section 24 of UHR's Recommended Guidelines discusses joint degrees and cotutelle agreements. The guidelines emphasise that joint degree agreements are usually recommended only when cooperation has previously been established with at least one of the parties. Unless another agreement has been reached, the boards of the institutions should decide on more specific guidelines. Agreements on joint degrees at the PhD level may be entered into at the institutional level and signed by the rector or the rector's authorised agent.

It is possible to choose not to follow the recommendations in the guidelines when this is necessary or expedient, e.g. out of consideration for the regulations at the cooperating institutions. NOKUT also allows for this possibility, see Section 3.4 above. Section 24.4 of UHR's Recommended Guidelines states the following: "Admission requirements, the requirement that the doctoral thesis must be made available to the public, and the requirement that the public defence must be evaluated by an impartial committee cannot be waived".¹¹

See also UHR's Agreement on Admission to the PhD Programme, which is a template for the agreement document that should be signed by the parties involved: the institution, the PhD candidate and any other institution. The agreement template reflects the provisions in the Recommended Guidelines and the institutions' regulations, and provides some guidelines for patent rights and crediting academic publications to institutions.

3.7 The institution's own regulations

The institutions' own regulations are based largely on UHR's Recommended Guidelines, but there are exceptions to this. In its *Guidelines for the Academic Supervision Regulations*, NOKUT makes it clear that if UHR's templates are not used, then "the topics in the template must nonetheless be addressed".

As stated in Section 3.4, it is good to be aware that higher education institutions in Norway have somewhat different practices and ideas about what constitutes a PhD programme. The main distinction is between viewing a programme as an academic entity versus as an organisational framework for research training. Most Norwegian institutions follow the first alternative.

Provisions on joint supervision and joint degrees are included in the regulations for PhD education at the individual institution. When joint degree agreements are entered into, the institutions may choose to waive the regulations if necessary out of consideration for the regulations at the cooperating institution(s). It should be made clear who has the authority to approve such a waiver.

- Exceptions, both individually and as a whole, must be clearly justifiable based on the academic quality requirements set for a corresponding PhD degree at the institution.

measuring the research component or its associated dissemination outputs. *Applied wrongly, rigid credit requirements can be detrimental to the development of independent research professionals.*" (Our emphasis)

¹¹ See Section 5.3 regarding admission.

4 FORMS OF COOPERATION

4.1 General

The purpose of entering into various forms of contractual cooperation is to promote long-term institutional cooperation, development of the research environments, enhanced quality of research and education, and increased internationalisation.

Joint supervision regulated by written agreement may be established in cooperation with other Norwegian or foreign institutions. Such agreements will entail binding cooperation and will help to facilitate the institution's national and international orientation.

As part of the effort to expand international cooperation and the desire for PhD candidates to conduct a research stay at an institution abroad, an agreement on supervision, also known as a cotutelle agreement, may help to formalise cooperation.

Experience shows that the desire to formalise cooperation arises on the basis of a supervisor's established ties for the purpose of strengthening the academic network. Academic cooperation may be further developed at the departmental, faculty or institutional level. Both the academic environments/researchers and the PhD candidate can document their cooperation and include it as part of their career development.

When assessing various forms of cooperation, it is important to be aware of how terminology is used, especially regarding "degree" versus "programme". What kind of degree should a doctoral degree be, and what kind of programme should lead to this degree?

4.2 Co-supervision

Forms of cooperation at the PhD level may be ranked according to the extent of integration. In its simplest form, this may entail joint supervision, meaning that the PhD candidate receives supervision at two different institutions. The candidate is usually only admitted at one institution and follows the programme there, and thus receives his/her diploma from that same institution.

- Agreement for each PhD candidate.
- Admission to one programme at one institution.
- Formally appointed supervisor from another institution, often based on the researcher's own network/research groups.
- The PhD candidate is present at the other institution for short periods of time.
- No (required) institutional agreements.
- The degree is awarded by one institution.
- The external supervisor, the nature of the co-supervision, and the name of the cooperating institutions may appear on the diploma.
- Cotutelle agreements.

Co-supervision, understood as cotutelle agreements, has no clear definition either nationally or internationally. Section 24-3 of UHR's Recommended Guidelines for the PhD Degree gives the following description:

The term “cotutelle agreement” is defined as the joint academic supervision of PhD candidates and cooperation on doctoral training for PhD candidates. A cotutelle agreement must be entered into for each candidate and should be based on stable, academic institutional cooperation.

Individual institutions understand and use the term “cotutelle” differently, and they may need to discuss the issue and arrive at a common understanding and use of the term. Various understandings of cotutelle agreements range from something more than co-supervision to, in some cases, something closer to a joint degree agreement (cf. the definition in UHR’s Recommended Guidelines for the PhD Degree, which emphasises that any such agreement must be based on stable, academic and institutional cooperation).

4.3 Consortium models

Horizon 2020 views consortia as a beneficial instrument for strengthening research and research groups at the institutions. H2020 has a general emphasis on international networking and mobility.¹²

A defining feature of a consortium model is that it involves more than two parties and that all of the partner institutions have a shared, equal responsibility for the entire programme. In other words, there is not just one institution that takes the lead, and as a consequence, it is recommended that a programme committee be established. Many institutions have “sandwich programmes” in which part of the education is taken at one institution and part at another, and this is then recognised as part of each institution’s degree. Regarding the required coursework, the many national and international researcher schools work according to the sandwich model. Consortium models may be organised in various way according to the alternative forms of cooperation described above. Of course, the model chosen is also significant for the applicant pool being targeted.

If the consortium partners have their own, different models for programme types, this may lead to problems for the collaboration. Before establishing any joint PhD programme, it is important to clarify which model(s) will be used as the basis. What do the parties want the joint degree to consist of and is it possible to implement this given the legislation in the various countries, the academic traditions and the framework conditions for administrative support? There is a clear risk of a culture clash as well as conflicting regulations if the points of departure are different. Potential partners must be aware of this prior to start-up and ensure that everyone enters into the collaboration with their eyes wide open.

4.4 Joint degrees

The most integrated form of cooperation is known as a joint degree, or joint PhD programme, in which two or more institutions combine their efforts to provide a joint doctoral degree

¹² Among the instruments mentioned in H2020 is ITN-EID: Innovative Training Networks – European Industrial Doctorates. Two academic institutions cooperate with the business sector. To complete the doctorate, the candidate is required to spend 1.5 years in the company or six to nine months at each academic institution (with the time divided equally). Also mentioned is ITN-EJD: Innovative Training Networks – European Joint Doctorates, which requires interdisciplinary cooperation on a joint degree between at least three accredited institutions.

programme. Joint degrees are the primary focus of discussion in this document, and Chapter 5 addresses various points that should be included in an agreement on a joint degree.

5 GUIDELINES FOR ENTERING INTO AGREEMENTS ON JOINT DEGREES AT THE PHD LEVEL

5.1 General

By establishing a joint degree, several research institutions, even relatively small ones, can join together to offer an educational programme that each institution on its own would not have the capacity to provide.

The primary goal of a joint degree should be high quality, both in the education provided and in the research conducted in the relevant field, and it should bring clear added value to the institution.

An agreement on joint degrees should normally be entered into only if there already exists an established, stable academic collaboration between the institutions and at least one of the other consortium participants.

Joint degrees take a variety of forms and have different names, for example:

- joint degree;
- double/multiple degree;
- dual degree (may be similar to the sandwich model).

The relationship between the dual degree and double/multiple degree is complicated. There are various international definitions of these types, see e.g. the ECA's Guidelines for Good Practice for Awarding Joint Degrees.¹³ There are several different Norwegian definitions of the term "joint degree" as well. These guidelines are based on the definition found in Section 24-2 of UHR's Recommended Guidelines for the PhD Degree:¹⁴

The term "joint degree" is defined as a collaboration between two or more institutions in which the cooperating institutions as a group are responsible for admission, academic supervision, the conferral of the degree and other elements as described in these recommended guidelines. The collaboration is normally organised in the form of a consortium and is regulated by a contract between the consortium members. For a completed joint degree, a joint diploma is issued in the

¹³ ECA (European Consortium for Accreditation): Guidelines for Good Practice for Awarding Joint Degrees (2012), pp. 37-39.

¹⁴ For other definitions, see e.g. the Marie S. Curie Programme: http://ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions/about-msca/actions/itn/index_en.htm, *Handbook on Joint Degrees*: http://www.uhr.no/documents/Fellesgradsh_ndbok_endelig.pdf, or NOKUT: <http://www.nokut.no/no/Universitet-og-hoyskoler/Kvalitetssikring-og--utvikling/Akkreditering-av-nye-studietilbud/Fellesgradar/>

form of: a) a diploma issued by the consortium members as a group, b) a diploma issued by each of the consortium members, or a combination of a) and b).

5.2 Planning

Programme and agreements

Good agreement templates and checklists are beneficial when beginning cooperation on a joint degree. These guidelines address some important items that should be included in an agreement, but the institutions themselves must specify in detail how the degree will be designed based on their own needs. Agreements should take into account that it may be appropriate to issue both a joint diploma and two separate diplomas. The collaboration should result in higher academic quality, and the cooperation agreements should encompass all aspects that could create administrative obstacles throughout the collaboration.

When the rules/regulations of the various institutions deviate from each other, the parties should reach a common understanding of how the relevant differences will be dealt with. In general, the starting point will be to follow the rules of the country/institution with the strictest requirements, but it is up to the institutions to decide whether they will, or can, waive their own requirements. The logic here is that the collaboration must have added value for the academic institutions and for the individual candidate. In other words, the requirements may be stricter in a joint degree than for candidates in ordinary PhD programmes at Norwegian institutions.

Agreement documents

The following elements should serve as the basis for conferral of the PhD degree by Norwegian institutions:

- The candidate should normally be admitted to both (all) of the institutions.
- The degree should comprise 30 credits of required coursework or equivalent, approved courses.
- The doctoral thesis must be made available to the public.
- The evaluation committee must be impartial.¹⁵
- A public, oral defence of the doctoral thesis must be held.

The agreement between the institutions will preferably specify the conditions for admission, including the requirements for infrastructure and information about any restrictions arising from intellectual property rights, etc.¹⁶ It should also be made clear which elements are most important when ranking applicants, and it must be clearly stated who is responsible for taking decisions regarding admission.

PhD candidates will normally be admitted to a joint study programme, and the institutions have a shared responsibility for the education and supervision provided. It is recommended to have a programme committee comprised of representatives from both/all of the institutions that

¹⁵ Cf. Section 5.5 on evaluation committees.

¹⁶ Cf. UHR's template entitled *Agreement on Admission to the PhD Programme*, which has separate paragraphs on copyrights, patent rights and other intellectual property rights. See Part A, Section 9; Part B, Section 6; Part C, Section 7.

decides on the basic components of the academic collaboration and assumes responsibility for admission.

The agreement must be signed by the rector or his/her authorised representative. Normally the agreement will be approved at the institutional level, unless otherwise agreed. In addition, the agreement should include the institution, department/basic unit and candidate as parties to the agreement, and the candidate's rights and obligations must be addressed (cf. footnote 17).

5.3 Admission

Requirements regarding funding

- Adequate funding and social welfare benefits must be secured for the entire PhD cycle.
- Agreement on the point in time when the funding, e.g. a research fellowship, becomes active.
- The parties involved must describe the joint solutions that everyone agrees to.
- Any deviations from the norm must be reasonable, both individually and as a whole.
 - The latitude for negotiating deviations can vary. Each higher education institution should determine how much deviation it is willing to accept.

Formal qualifications (level, scope, marks)

- Five-year master's programme.
 - Following a special assessment, the institution may approve another educational equivalent.
- Any requirements regarding marks.
- Requirements regarding the project description.
- Any requirements regarding relevant professional practice.

Decisions regarding admission

- In Norway, decisions regarding admission to a PhD programme are an individual decision (*enkeltvedtak*).
 - The individual decision sets requirements as to how the admission is prepared, how the decision is taken, and how the decision is communicated.
 - An explanation of how the applicants are prioritised is required.
 - An explanation of denial of admission is required.
 - The parties must be clear about their previous practices and explore whether differing rules and practices can be reconciled.
- The agreement should clearly state who is responsible for taking decisions regarding admission, e.g. an admissions committee.

- The agreement should state who will sit on the admissions committee.¹⁷
- Complaints regarding denial of admission
 - In Norway, applicants have the right to submit a complaint regarding denial of admission. The agreement should formulate a joint scheme for this.
- Two-part framework on admission
 - An institutional agreement between institutions A and B.
 - An individual agreement between the two institutions, the supervisors and the candidate.¹⁸
- Status of the candidate
 - It must be clarified whether the person admitted to a PhD programme is an employee (e.g. a doctoral research fellow) or a PhD candidate with other funding.
 - The consequences of the candidate's status (rights, etc.).

5.4 Implementation

Agreement and plan for the required coursework

- Scope and content of the required coursework
- Academic credits
 - Many countries do not have mandatory coursework or courses/classes for academic credit. The agreement must explain how this will be dealt with.
 - The agreement must clarify how any mandatory and/or general courses will be incorporated.
- Quality assurance of the courses/classes that comprise the required coursework.

Supervision

- Agreement on which party is responsible for how much and what kind of supervision – clarification of expectations.
- Agreement on the minimum qualifications of supervisors.
 - Many countries require qualifications at the professor level.

Mobility and internationalisation

- Plans for, and agreement on, stays at both/multiple institutions.
- Ensure stays with dynamic research environments.
- Participation in conferences with presentation of papers.
- Work on international teams.

¹⁷ Cf. Public Administration Act: <https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/1967-02-10>.

¹⁸ Cf. footnote 17.

Reporting

- Norway recommends the use of progress reports and midterm evaluations, which the institutions follow up in various ways. Agreement on how this can be implemented or waived, and how the information will be shared.
- Agreement on to whom reports will be submitted.
- Agreement on procedures related to failure to submit reports.

The doctoral thesis

- Specification of requirements (monograph/article-based/other forms of dissemination and documentation, requirements regarding any addendums).
- Requirements regarding published/unpublished articles.
- International publication – agreement on how to give credit to authors.
- Clarification of any restrictions arising from intellectual property rights.
- Requirements regarding language.

Overall learning outcome

- Agreement on how training in generic skills and research ethics will be addressed in the required coursework or the research project (presentations at conferences, seminars, etc.).
- Formulation of learning outcome descriptors for parts and/or all of the programme, cf. Academic Supervision Regulations.

Conflict management

- What will be done if provisions in the agreement are understood differently during the programme?
- What will be done if the candidate wants to change supervisors?
- What will be done if it becomes clear during the programme that the candidate will not be able to satisfy the requirements in the agreement?
- Disciplinary cases will be referred to the ordinary disciplinary body at one of the consortium partners. The agreement must specify which partner will handle such cases.

Termination prior to expiry of the agreement period

- Voluntary termination: cessation of rights arising from admission, but agreed to between the parties.
 - The candidate may transfer to an ordinary PhD programme at one of the consortium partners. The parties must enter into an agreement on this.
- Involuntary termination may be imposed when the candidate's progress is extremely delayed without a justifiable reason or when the candidate commits a serious ethical breach.
 - When involuntary termination is imposed, the candidate is terminated from the programme. The rights related to admission cease to exist.

5.5 Conclusion

Submission of the doctoral thesis

- The institutions may have different rules and routines regarding submission of the doctoral thesis. These should be coordinated when entering into an agreement.
- The costs associated with submission should be clarified.

Evaluation committee

- The requirement regarding an impartial evaluation committee has its origins in Section 6 of the *Act relating to procedure in cases concerning the public administration* (Public Administration Act) and cannot be waived (cf. footnote 15).
 - If another country's regulations conflict with Norwegian regulations, e.g. in France it is usual for the supervisor to sit on the committee, it may be proposed that the supervisor is available for consultation (cf. Section 15.1 of UHR's Recommended Guidelines for the PhD Degree) and that the supervisor may approve the report to be submitted to the French partner institution following approval of the public defence.

Public availability of the doctoral thesis

- In accordance with Norwegian regulations, the requirement that the doctoral thesis must be made publicly available cannot be waived, and must therefore be stipulated in the agreement.¹⁹
 - It may be stipulated in the agreement that a candidate may only be awarded the degree by the one institution if the requirement of public availability becomes a problem during the work on the thesis.

Doctoral examination

- The Norwegian doctoral examination consists of two parts: a trial lecture and public defence of the thesis.
 - The requirements regarding the trial lecture are flexible, but the intention behind the examination should be maintained to the extent possible.
 - The requirement regarding a public defence of the thesis must not be waived. This may conflict with e.g. British institutions' requirements regarding a closed examination.
 - A closed examination with a genuine possibility of failure may be stipulated in the agreement as an advance, quality-assurance test, prior to the public defence. According to Norwegian principles, the supervisor must not be involved in the decision or state an opinion on the quality of the thesis (see above under the point on evaluation committees).²⁰

Diplomas

- Joint diploma?
- Joint diploma in addition to one or more national diplomas?

¹⁹ See Section 11 of UHR's *Recommended Guidelines for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree*, and Part C, Section 7 of the Agreement on Admission to the PhD Programme.

²⁰ There is also a procedure known as a "preliminary defence", e.g. at KU Leuven: <https://admin.kuleuven.be/rd/doctoraatsreglement/en/phdregulation-set>

- Only national diplomas?

Norwegian institutions have great flexibility. In most cases, a joint diploma will be the best documentation since it will be the most coherent option vis-à-vis candidates and working life. However, when choosing one method over another, consideration must be given to the partners' legal situation and the distribution of tasks among the partners.

- If there is a coordinating institution, this should normally issue the joint diploma.
 - The partners should comply as far as possible with the coordinator's technical and practical requirements regarding diploma issuance.
 - Each institution should review its mandatory requirements regarding diploma content so that the coordinator can incorporate this into the diploma in a manner that the other institutions can accept.
 - When Norwegian institutions issue a joint diploma, the Common Student System will serve as the basis for issuance of diplomas so that existing routines and technological solutions may be re-used to the greatest extent possible.
 - The title and information page in Norwegian diplomas should be flexible and able to be adapted to a joint degree.
- The informational parts of the diploma must provide:
 - Adequate information about all factors of relevance to the partners, such as rules related to the conferral of degrees and the scale of marks.
 - Learning outcome descriptors.
 - Description of the study programme.
 - Statement that all/both institutions together are responsible for the entire programme.
 - Description of the collaboration in accordance with the educational plan and other agreements.
- The Diploma Supplement follows a common standard established by the European Council, UNESCO and the EU.
 - The items containing specific national information, e.g. about the structure of the educational system, should take into account all factors of relevance for the institutions.

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