

# Rules for PhD Studies

## Reykjavík University – School of Business

The Reykjavik University School of Business PhD program aims to graduate well-educated researchers and leaders in the fields in which it is accredited to offer PhD studies.

### 1. Application and Contract

Applications for admission to the PhD program may be submitted at any time. The following documents shall accompany the application:

- Transcripts of university diplomas.
- A curriculum vitae and list of publications.
- The names of three referees who may be contacted for a reference.
- A brief description of the subject of the proposed doctoral research.
- A proposed primary supervisor.
- Information about how the PhD student will finance his/her studies.

Only students who have completed master's studies at the university level or comparable studies may enrol in the PhD program at the School of Business.

If accepted into the program, the Dean of the School of Business shall arrange for a contract to be made between the PhD student and the School of Business providing for the progress of studies, as well as the rights and obligations of the candidate on the one hand, and the supervisor(s) and the School of Business on the other hand. The contract shall include an overview of the financing of the PhD studies.

### 2. Program Structure

The PhD programme at the School of Business comprises 180-240 ECTS, normally to be completed within 4 years but not less than 3 years and concluding with the award of a PhD degree. Candidature is normally full-time, but approval may be given for part-time study. All the main elements of each candidate's individualised program require approval of the candidate's Thesis Committee (see article 4).

Students will take courses that amount to at least 30 ECTS. It is likely that some and possibly most of this course work will be taken at universities and research institutions abroad. The courses should be approved by the student's supervisor.

Doctoral studies at the School of Business provide students with training in the application of scientific methods and in acquiring and communicating new knowledge. In order to complete the PhD programme students must:

- Possess specialised knowledge within the scientific field (knowledge).
- Apply specialised methods and procedures of the scientific field (skills).
- Apply their knowledge and skills in the profession and/or for further studies (competences).
- Make an original and substantial contribution to knowledge (contribution).

A more detailed description of what is required of PhD students at the School of Business in terms of knowledge, skills and competences is found in the Icelandic National Qualification Framework for higher education, doctoral degrees, cycle 3.

PhD students are required to submit for approval to the Thesis Committee a Research Proposal (see article 5) and an annual progress report for each year of their studies, detailing the progress to date and plans for subsequent steps.

PhD students are expected to attend the School of Business Seminar Series and participate in discussions. Furthermore, PhD students are expected to make at least two presentations in the Seminar Series prior to the PhD examination. The first presentation should be made no later than three months after the approval of the Research Proposal.

Students may apply for intermission (authorised absence) from their studies for specified medical or non-medical reasons (e.g., parental leave, challenging domestic circumstances, or caring for a sick relative). There is no specified maximum term, although the period of absence should not be such as to undermine the viability of the PhD studies and research.

### 3. Supervisor(s)

The Dean of the School of Business shall appoint a primary supervisor for each PhD student. Appointment of a secondary supervisor is optional. The role of supervisors is to advise PhD students in their studies and

research, track their progress, ensure compliance with all relevant ethical standards and guidelines, and monitor the quality of all aspects of the work. Supervisors are responsible to the School of Business for compliance with these rules for PhD studies. Supervisors shall sit on the Thesis Committee.

Primary supervisors shall meet the following academic requirements:

- Have a PhD degree.
- Be a permanent Reykjavik University faculty member with a substantial research record and experience of publication in internationally recognised outlets.
- Have specialist knowledge in the subject field of the PhD student's research topic.
- Be an active participant in the research community and a recognised expert in his or her field. Assessment of this qualification shall take account of published articles in peer-reviewed journals and the supervisor's experience of international research cooperation and funding for research projects.
- A secondary supervisor may be appointed, and shall have a PhD degree but need not fulfil other requirements listed above.

#### **4. Thesis Committee and External Examiners**

A Thesis Committee shall be appointed no later than one month before the PhD student's Research Proposal is due. The Thesis Committee shall consist of at least 3 persons. If there is a secondary supervisor, the Thesis Committee shall be made up of the primary supervisor, the secondary supervisor and at least one additional member. If there is no secondary supervisor, the Thesis Committee shall be made up of the primary supervisor and at least two additional members. At least one of the Thesis Committee members shall not be on the RU faculty. The Thesis Committee shall review and provide written approval of the PhD Research Proposal. The Thesis Committee shall track the progress of the PhD studies, and review and approve annual progress reports. The Thesis Committee shall determine when the PhD thesis is ready for examination.

About six months prior to the planned examination date, one or two External Examiners shall be appointed. Thesis Committee members cannot serve as External Examiners. External Examiners shall not have been involved in any research collaboration with the Thesis Committee members in the preceding five years, including, but not limited to, co-authorship of conference/journal papers, collaboration on research projects or collaboration on applying for research grants. The Thesis Committee and External Examiners shall conduct the examination and make a decision regarding the granting of a PhD degree.

#### **5. Research Proposal**

No later than 9 months after admission to the PhD programme, candidates shall submit a completed Research Proposal to the Thesis Committee. The Research Proposal serves as the foundation for the work on the doctoral thesis. It shall include:

- The delimitation of the subject
- A summary of the state of the art in the subject
- Research questions
- A proposal for research as a response to the research questions
- An overview of courses already completed and planned courses
- A schedule of the progress of the studies

#### **6. Thesis and Academic Papers**

A doctoral candidate's research is completed with a doctoral thesis, which constitutes independent scientific work of a high academic standard and that meets international publication standards within the subject area with respect to the formulation of the issues raised, definition of concepts, methodological and theoretical bases, documentation and form of presentation.

A doctoral thesis shall in part or in whole be based on at least three papers which make up a collective whole based on their content, and, in the opinion of the Thesis Committee, are acceptable for publication in internationally recognised peer-reviewed journals. Declarations shall be obtained from all co-authors to confirm the contribution of the doctoral candidate. Under normal circumstances, only work published during the past five years prior to submission of a thesis may be included as part of the thesis. In addition to the papers, an introductory chapter explaining the overall content of the thesis shall be prepared as well as a summary of conclusions. Following the granting of the PhD degree, a doctoral thesis shall be made accessible to the general public.

The doctoral candidate should strive to have one or more of the papers comprising the thesis accepted for publication in recognised outlets prior to the examination. Individual PhD contracts can require that one or more of the three papers be submitted for peer-review prior to the examination. Departments within the School may set rules that make further requirements as regards publication of papers.

Theses must be written in English.

## **7. Thesis Examination and Defence**

The Thesis Committee shall review the thesis and form an opinion regarding its suitability for examination no more than 2 months after submission. The Thesis Committee shall return a consensus opinion that the thesis is ready for examination, requires minor changes before being ready for examination, requires major changes before being ready for examination, or is not suitable for examination. In any case, the Thesis Committee shall submit formal feedback to the PhD student. The PhD student can submit a thesis for review by the Thesis Committee no more than twice.

When the Thesis Committee has deemed that the thesis is ready for examination, the thesis shall be sent to the External Examiners and a date shall be set for the examination about two months later. Once the thesis has been sent to the External Examiners, there shall be no further communication between the Thesis Committee and the External Examiners up to the time of the examination. The External Examiners shall review the thesis within 2 months.

The thesis examination is attended by the Thesis Committee and the External Examiners. In case one of these persons is not able to attend the examination, he or she may participate via teleconference.

The thesis examination is held in a closed session and starts with a 20 minute presentation of the research by the PhD student and is followed by the examination conducted by the External Examiners.

The External Examiners and the Thesis Committee shall endeavour to reach a consensus agreement, as follows: pass without revision, pass contingent on satisfying stated revisions, or fail. In case consensus cannot be reached, the disagreement shall be referred to the Dean as outlined in article 8.

The PhD student is not present for the External Examiners and Thesis Committee's deliberations. The Thesis Committee and External Examiner(s) sign a recommendation to the School of Business to either grant the PhD degree, require specific revisions to the thesis prior to granting the degree, or not grant the degree. If revisions are required, these are due 2 months after the examination and are reviewed by the External Examiners, who make a final recommendation.

When a decision has been made to grant the degree, a public defence takes place in which the PhD student presents the research. A discussant is appointed and the defence is open to the public. The public defence is a necessary requirement for the award of the PhD degree.

## **8. Resolution of Disagreements**

In the event of a disagreement between members of the Thesis Committee and External Examiners, the Dean of the School of Business shall be notified immediately. The Dean can refer the matter to the School of Business Research Council, which shall provide a recommendation within one month. The Research Council may seek further clarification from the Thesis Committee and/or External Examiners and may also request formal comments from the PhD student. Alternatively, or subsequently, the Dean may appoint one or more new External Examiners to provide independent evaluations of the PhD thesis. The final decision shall be made by the Dean of the School of Business.

## **9. Role of the School of Business Research Council**

The School of Business Research Council shall be responsible for the following:

- Reviewing applications to the PhD program and making recommendations for acceptance or rejection. The School of Business Research Council will only review applications for candidates who have already identified a willing primary supervisor. Final decisions for acceptance or rejection shall be made by the Dean of the School of Business.
- Reviewing Research Proposals. After a Thesis Committee has approved a Research Proposal, the Thesis Committee will sign off on the Proposal and send it to the Research Council for review. This review will focus on the Research Proposal's adherence to the School of Business's rules for its PhD program. If the Research Council finds what it deems to be serious weaknesses in a Research Proposal, it will notify the Thesis Committee, which will take steps to revise the Research Proposal with the PhD student.
- Reviewing annual progress reports after they have been approved by the Thesis Committee. The Research Council's focus here will be similar to that relating to Research Proposals. Furthermore, the Research Council will focus particularly on factors that have or may delay progress.