

**School of Business
Reykjavík University**

Rules for PhD Studies

(Approved by the School of Business Faculty Council on 23 May 2016)

As advised in the Reykjavík University Rules for PhD Studies (approved by the RU Executive Committee on 12 March 2014), the present adaptation of the University Rules apply specifically to doctoral studies in the School of Business.

1 Introduction

The aim of doctoral studies at Reykjavik University is to benefit society by:

- a. strengthening research and knowledge generation in the University's academic fields, and
- b. providing advanced training in research and science.

These Rules take into account the Bologna Process on cooperation in higher education in Europe as well as internationally recognised principles relating to the organisation and quality of doctoral studies. These Rules are also consistent with the Regulation on Doctoral Studies in Higher Education Institutions, No. 37/2007 and Article 7 of the Higher Education Institution Act, No. 63/2006.

These Rules apply to doctoral studies at Reykjavik University, regarding both the organisational framework of the studies and their quality requirements. Within the framework of these Rules, the University's Schools have the freedom to organise their doctoral studies in greater detail in light of the unique features and traditions of their respective fields of study.

2 Administrative arrangements of doctoral studies

The School of Business Research Council (SBRC) is responsible for the supervision of the School's PhD program. The SBRC shall make recommendations to the Dean concerning the admission of students to the PhD program, as provided in Article 4 of these rules, and recommend the appointment of supervisors and thesis committees, as provided in Articles 5 and 6, and external examiners, as provided in Article 9. The SBRC and supervisors shall observe the development of doctoral studies at the international level and monitor the quality of the School's PhD program. The SBRC shall ensure that the quality of doctoral studies at Reykjavík University is comparable to the quality of similar programs in other countries.

3 Program Structure

The School of Business PhD Studies program aims to graduate well-educated researchers and leaders in the fields of PhD Studies accredited by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture.

The program comprises not less than 180 ECTS units, normally completed within 3 to 4 years (or the equivalent part-time). In exceptional cases, PhD Studies may be completed in less than 3 years but not less than 2 years and only in instances where credit not exceeding one year (60 ECTS) has been granted for prior work. The time to completion may be extended beyond 4 years subject to

approval following application to the SBRC, stating the length (not exceeding 12 months) of the extension requested and reasons for the extension. Need for extension beyond the period initially requested is also subject to application and approval.

Students will take courses equivalent to a minimum of 30 ECTS. It is likely that some and possibly most of the approved course work will be taken at universities and research institutions outside Iceland. Courses are undertaken with the approval of the supervisor. Students may substitute ECTS credits for oral presentations at international scientific conferences (or similar activity as approved by the SBRC) up to a total of 6 ECTS units. Each such presentation will be deemed to be the equivalent of 1 or 2 ECTS units, as determined by the Supervisor.

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

- Possess a range of general and specialised knowledge within the scientific field of their studies (knowledge).
- Apply advanced scientific methods and procedures to substantive research questions within their field of studies (skills).
- Apply knowledge and skills acquired during their studies to advance the relevant profession and/or in the context of teaching or further studies (competencies).
- Make an original and substantial contribution to knowledge (contribution).

Further details regarding knowledge, skills, and competencies required of PhD students can be found in the National Qualification Framework for Higher Education at <http://www.enicnarc.is/national-qualification-framework.html>.

PhD students are required to submit for approval to the Thesis Committee a Research Proposal (see Article 7 herein). In addition, an annual progress report is required for each year of study, detailing the progress to date and plans for subsequent steps.

PhD students are expected to regularly attend the School of Business Seminar Series and to be active participants. Students are required 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 permitted maximum term for authorised absence, although the period should not be such as to undermine the viability and integrity of the PhD studies.

4 Application and Contract

Applications for admission to the PhD program require the agreement of a proposed supervisor, and may be submitted from 5 February to 30 April for the Fall Semester and 15 September to 5 November for the Spring Semester. The following documents shall accompany the application:

- Transcripts of the applicant's university degrees and 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.
- Name of the proposed primary supervisor.
- Information about how the PhD student will finance his/her studies.

Only persons who have completed master's degrees at the university level or comparable studies may enrol in PhD Studies in the School of Business. All applications are reviewed by the SBRC, which makes a recommendation to the Dean.

If accepted into the program, the Dean of the School of Business shall arrange for a Doctoral Student Contract between the PhD student and the School of Business. Prospective students may register for PhD Studies in the School of Business only after having their eligibility and contract of studies approved by the Dean or nominee.

5 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 the Rules for PhD Studies. The supervisor is a member the Thesis Committee and usually acts in the role of Chair at meetings of the Thesis Committee (see Article 6).

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, 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.

In the event that the principal supervisor ceases to be a permanent employee of Reykjavik University, a replacement supervisor must be appointed from among the permanent Reykjavik University faculty.

6 Thesis Committee

A Thesis Committee shall be appointed no later than one month before the PhD student's Research Proposal is due (see Article 7). 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. Thesis Committee members shall review the PhD Research Proposal and must give separate written approval (which may take the form of email) before the proposed research begins. 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.

7 Research Proposal

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

- Delineation of the subject
- A summary of the state of the art in the subject
- Scholarly questions that the proposed research will examine
- A proposal for research as a response to the research questions
- An overview of any courses already completed and planned courses
- A proposed schedule for the progress of the studies

After the Research Proposal has been approved by the Thesis Committee, final approval must be obtained from the SBRC (see article 12).

8 Thesis and Academic Papers

A PhD student's research is completed with a doctoral thesis, which constitutes independent scientific work of a high academic order such that it meets international publication standards within the subject area with respect to the formulation of the issues raised, definition of concepts, theoretical and methodological bases, documentation, and form of presentation. The thesis must be written in English.

The doctoral thesis incorporates at least three papers, which in the opinion of the Thesis Committee and Examiner/s are acceptable for publication in internationally recognised peer-reviewed journals. Prior to submitting the thesis for examination, the PhD student shall submit a minimum of three papers for consideration for publication in internationally recognised peer-reviewed journals, and must be first author on at least two of the papers. Departments within the School may set rules that contain further requirements regarding publication of papers.

Declarations shall be obtained from all co-authors of papers included in the thesis to confirm the contribution of the doctoral student. 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.

The thesis is accompanied by an abstract of no more than 500 words. In addition to separate publishable papers, the thesis includes at least one introductory chapter and at least one concluding discussion chapter. The introductory chapter (or chapters) includes a substantive review of relevant literature, and the discussion chapter (or chapters) provides a coherent account of the overall body of work leading to a summary of findings. Collectively, the chapters comprising the thesis represent an integrated treatment of the research work submitted for examination.

Following the granting of the PhD degree, a print version of the thesis shall be lodged with the Library and a digital copy lodged with Skemman. The general public shall have access to the thesis.

9 External Examiners

About six months prior to the planned examination date, two External Examiners shall be appointed. External Examiners shall meet the following academic requirements:

- Have a PhD degree.
- 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 the relevant field. Assessment of this qualification shall take account of published articles in peer-reviewed journals, experience of international research cooperation, and funding for research projects.

Thesis Committee members cannot serve as External Examiners. External Examiners shall not have been involved in any research collaboration with Thesis Committee members or the PhD student 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 selection process for External Examiners shall involve the details of two or more prospective examiners being submitted to the SBRC for consideration. Final appointment of External Examiners is by approval of the Dean of the School of Business.

10 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 revisions before being ready for examination, requires major revisions before being ready for examination, or is not suitable for examination. In any case, the Thesis Committee shall submit written 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. After the thesis has been sent to the External Examiners, there shall be no communication between the Thesis Committee and the External Examiners up to the time of the examination.

The External Examiners and the Thesis Committee shall conduct the examination and make a decision regarding the granting of the PhD degree. In case one of these persons is not able to attend the examination in person, he or she may participate via teleconference.

The thesis examination starts with a 20-minute presentation of the research by the PhD student. This is followed by the External Examiners separately and jointly conducting the examination. The examination shall be chaired by the Dean (or nominee, who may be a member of the SBRC) serving in an administrative capacity without participating as an examiner.

The Thesis Committee and the External Examiners shall endeavour to reach a consensus agreement, including an opinion about whether the thesis includes work suitable for publication in internationally recognised peer-reviewed journals. As joint signatories, the External Examiners and Thesis Committee members forward their opinion to the Dean of the School of Business, recommending from among the following options:

- **Pass without revision.**
- **Pass contingent on satisfying stated revisions, which may be minor (requiring up to 2 months to complete).**
- **Pass contingent on satisfying stated major revisions (requiring more than 2 months but not more than 12 months to complete).**
- **Fail.**

The PhD student is not present for the joint External Examiner and Thesis Committee deliberations. If revisions are required, these are reviewed by the External Examiners within two months, after which a final written recommendation is submitted to the Dean.

If disagreement prevents a consensus being reached during any stage of the examination of a PhD thesis, or if any individual among the relevant parties (the Thesis Committee, External Examiners, and PhD student) feels unable to accept the consensus opinion, Article 11 applies.

When a decision has been made to grant the degree, a public defence takes place in which the PhD student presents the research. The presentation provides an overview as well as coverage of particular highlights. The presentation is scheduled to last approximately 60 minutes, inclusive of approximately 40 minutes for the presentation and 20 minutes for questions and answers. Advance notice of the defence is circulated within the University and posted on the University's Website. The defence is open to the general public. The public defence is a necessary requirement for the award of the PhD degree.

11 Resolution of Disagreements

It is acknowledged that differences of opinion and disagreements are inherent to scholarship, and may occur in the context of PhD studies between members of the Thesis Committee, between the External Examiners and the Thesis Committee collectively and individually, between External Examiners, and between the PhD student and Thesis Committee members and External Examiners. It is acknowledged that disagreements may occur at any time during the tenure of an individual PhD student.

In general, disagreements are likely to be satisfactorily resolved following detailed discussion, deliberation, and analysis amongst the parties concerned. When such actions do not succeed in producing a timely resolution, the disagreement shall be brought to the attention of the Dean of the School of Business.

When notified of a disagreement, the Dean may refer the matter to the SBRC, which shall provide a recommendation within one month. The SBRC may seek further clarification from any of the relevant parties. When disagreements occur as part of the examination of the PhD thesis, the Dean may appoint one or more additional External Examiners to provide independent evaluations of the thesis. Irrespective of the nature of the disagreement, the final decision shall reside with the Dean of the School of Business.

12 Role of the School of Business Research Council

The SBRC shall be responsible for the following:

- Review applications to the PhD program and make recommendations for acceptance or rejection. The SBRC will only review applications from students 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.
- Review Research Proposals. After a Thesis Committee has approved a Research Proposal, the Thesis Committee will sign-off on the Research Proposal and send it to the SBRC for review. This review will focus on the Research Proposal's adherence to the School of Business's rules for PhD Studies. If the SBRC finds what it deems to be serious weaknesses in a Research Proposal, the Thesis Committee shall be advised in order that the Research Proposal is revised accordingly.
- Review annual progress reports after they have been approved by the Thesis Committee. The SBRC's focus here will be similar to that relating to Research Proposals. Furthermore, the SBRC will give particularly attention to factors that have or may delay progress.
- Review the suitability of proposed External Examiners with reference to criteria specified in Article 9. If a proposed External Examiner is considered by the Research Council not to satisfy the requirements of Article 9, the Thesis Committee will be requested to propose a replacement.
- The SBRC has a role in resolving disagreements as described in Article 11.