



AALBORG UNIVERSITY
DENMARK

PHD PLAN AND PROGRESS REPORTS

The principal supervisor is responsible for the overall PhD programme, pursuant to the PhD Order no. 1124 of September 19, 2025, section 8, subsection 1. The main responsibilities of the principal supervisor are assistance with the PhD plan and evaluation of progress during the PhD study in close collaboration with the PhD student. PhD students as well as principal supervisors and programme heads are expected to become acquainted with the following guidelines.

PhD Plan

Within three months of the start of the PhD programme, the PhD student must prepare a PhD plan in close collaboration with the principal supervisor.

For further information on the requirements to the PhD plan, please see the template for the PhD plan.

The PhD student uploads the PhD plan in the IT system PhD Manager. The principal supervisor and vice head of research will receive an email request for their approval in the following workflow: supervisor → vice head of research.

PROGRESS REPORTS

During the PhD study five progress reports have to be made with reference to the PhD plan. A progress report consists of the PhD student's accumulative registration of activities and evaluation of these, i.e. a portfolio, and the principal supervisor's evaluation of the portfolio. This is followed by approval from the Head of the Doctoral School, which among other things presupposes that all required documentation e. g. course certificates have been uploaded with the portfolio, and that the study is progressing satisfactory with regard to fulfilling the requirements of ECTS and teaching hours. The PhD student prepares a portfolio documenting the progress of the PhD study programme in terms of the PhD thesis, ECTS activities, knowledge dissemination, visits to other research environments and publications. The portfolio is a continuous document which accumulates the PhD student's activities and evaluation of these throughout the whole enrolment period.

The five progress reports during the PhD study consist of three written reports and two combined written and oral reports:

- 1st Progress report (portfolio) = after 6 months
- 2nd Progress report (portfolio and oral) = after 12 months
- 3rd Progress report (portfolio) = after 18 months
- 4th Progress report (portfolio) = after 24 months
- 5th Progress report (portfolio and oral) = after 30 months

Part-time PhD students also have to make five progress reports at durations proportional to their



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period of study. If the enrolment period is six years, the deadline of the 1st progress report is after 12 months of enrolment, and so forth. Periods of documented illness, maternity/paternity leave and other approved leave must be taken into account when evaluating the progress of the PhD study.

The principal supervisor and the PhD student must discuss the portfolio, with reference to the PhD plan, before the portfolio is uploaded, and together they determine whether or not the PhD plan should be adjusted.

1st progress report is written and is produced after 6 months of full-time study. The PhD student uploads the portfolio in PhD Manager and the principal supervisor evaluates the progress of the PhD study in PhD Manager under “supervisor’s comments”. After the principal supervisor has submitted his/her evaluation, the Head of the Doctoral School evaluates the progress report.

2nd progress report is written and oral and is produced after 12 months of full-time study. The principal supervisor is responsible for organizing an oral evaluation with a discussant. It is mandatory for the PhD student and principal supervisor to participate.

The PhD student forwards extracts or drafts of written work (15-20 pages). The PhD student sends his/her written work to the principal supervisor and discussant prior to the oral evaluation session; the material shall not be uploaded in PhD Manager. It is recommended that the relevant research group(s) attend the session. The aim is to give the PhD student feedback on the PhD project and to assess whether the PhD plan should be adjusted. The PhD student updates the portfolio taking into consideration the main points from the oral evaluation and uploads it to PhD Manager. The principal supervisor evaluates the progress of the PhD student, based on the oral evaluation and the portfolio, in PhD Manager under “supervisor’s comments”. The evaluation must include the main conclusions of the oral evaluation. After the principal supervisor has submitted his/her evaluation, the Head of the Doctoral School evaluates the progress report.

3rd and 4th progress reports are written and are conducted after 18 and 24 months of full-time study respectively. The PhD student uploads the portfolio in PhD Manager and the principal supervisor evaluates the progress of the PhD student in PhD Manager under “supervisor’s comments”. After the principal supervisor has submitted his/her evaluation, the Head of the Doctoral School evaluates the progress report.

5th progress report is written and oral and is conducted after 30 months of full-time study. The principal supervisor is responsible for organizing the oral evaluation (pre-defense). It is mandatory for the PhD student, principal supervisor and an internal discussant from AAU to participate. In special circumstances, the discussant may be external. It is recommended that secondary supervisors attend the session, if possible. The PhD student sends an extract (e.g., drafts, papers, chapters) of approximately 50-70 pages of the PhD thesis for the discussant and gives a presentation of the PhD project. The PhD student sends the



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extract to the principal supervisor and discussant prior to the oral evaluation session; the material shall not be uploaded in PhD Manager. The discussant gives feedback to the PhD student with a view to identifying focus points for the final stage of the PhD project. It is recommended that the relevant research group(s) also attend the oral evaluation.

As the discussant gives detailed feedback on the PhD student's work, which resembles the work of a supervisor, the discussant cannot subsequently become a member of the thesis assessment committee. Based on the feedback from the oral evaluation, the PhD student updates the portfolio and uploads it to PhD Manager. The principal supervisor's evaluation of progress in PhD Manager must include an outline of the recommendations and conclusions from the oral evaluation. After the principal supervisor has submitted his/her evaluation, the Head of the Doctoral School evaluates the progress report.

About PhD Manager

PhD students should receive a system-generated email from PhD Manager one month before the deadline for uploading the portfolio. Documentation of ECTS activities and knowledge dissemination must be uploaded as attachment to the portfolio. When the PhD student has uploaded the portfolio, the principal supervisor receives an email request asking for his/her approval. When the principal supervisor has approved the portfolio, the Head of the Doctoral School must approve the portfolio.

PhD Manager can be accessed at phdwebaau.sdu.dk Please use your AAU password for log in.

General information about progress reports

Immediately after approval of the portfolio, the PhD student may comment on the evaluation within two weeks, cf. the PhD order, §10, 1. Comments are registered in PhD Manager.

Progress reports may be rejected if the PhD student does not include sufficient documentation of ECTS activities or because of an inadequate description of the progress of the PhD project. In such cases, the PhD student will be asked to revise the portfolio and upload it for approval, as soon as possible.

If the current progress report clearly shows that the PhD student is not following the PhD plan, in spite of adjustments made to the PhD plan the PhD student must be given three months to get back on course. The three-month probation period does not give rise to an extension of the PhD student's enrolment period. The supervisor prepares a detailed plan for the three months period with the goal of getting the PhD study back on track. The PhD student will be consulted in the process. After the three months period has expired, an assessment of the PhD student's progress is made by the principal supervisor. The assessment must conclude whether or not the PhD student has succeeded in getting the PhD study back on track. The Doctoral School Director is responsible for making decision in these matters. Therefore, the principal supervisor must contact AAU PhD after having submitted a negative progress report. AAU PhD will provide administrative support for the entire process.



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This chance to get back on course in connection with progress reports can only be given to the PhD student once during the PhD study, cf. the PhD order §10, 2.