



AALBORG UNIVERSITET

Doctoral School of Social Sciences and Humanities

Document date: November 2021

Document responsible: AAU Ph.d.

Last revision date: 15.07.2026

Revised by: HEK

Date of approval: 26.08.2026

Approved by: Dean of SSH Faculty

Case No.:

Internal Rules

Internal Rules for the PhD Programme at Doctoral School of Social Sciences and Humanities, AAU

OBJECTIVE AND DEFINITION

The Doctoral School of Social Sciences and Humanities at Aalborg University offers PhD education pursuant to *Ministerial Order No 1124 of 19 September 2025 on the PhD Programme at the Universities and Certain Higher Artistic Educational Institutions (PhD Order)*, cf. *The Danish University Act (Universitetsloven)* and *Statutes of the self-governing institution Aalborg University*.

Internal Rules for the PhD Programme at the Doctoral School of Social Sciences and Humanities, AAU supplements the PhD Order and stipulates the internal rules laid down by the Dean upon recommendation from the Doctoral School Head and the PhD Board. The Internal Rules apply to PhD students who commenced the PhD programme at the Doctoral School of Social Sciences and Humanities, AAU from 1 January 2022 onwards. PhD students who commenced the PhD programme at Doctoral School of the Humanities or the Doctoral School of Social Sciences before 1 January 2022 are entitled to follow the internal rules applicable at the time of enrolment, please see the website of the doctoral school for information on previous rules.

Internal rules are updated 15 July 2026: No. 9 re. length of project description and language requirements, no. 31 re. the form of the thesis, no. 39 re. language of the supervisor statement and finally general linguistic adjustments throughout the document.

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Part 1. Purpose, structure etc.

Ministerial Order on the PhD Programme

1.-(1) The PhD programme is a research programme aiming to train PhD students at an international level to undertake research, development and teaching assignments in the private and public sectors, for which a broad knowledge of research is required.

(2) The PhD programme mainly comprises active research training under supervision.

2.-(1) The ministerial order applies to PhD programmes at the universities and at the higher artistic educational institutions under the Ministry of Higher Education and Science.

(2) The institutions, see subsection (1), may award the PhD degree within fields within which they conduct research and within which they have set up a PhD school, either independently or in cooperation with other institutions covered by the ministerial order.

3.-(1) The PhD degree is awarded to students who have successfully completed the PhD programme, see, however, section 15(2) and (3), and successfully defended their PhD thesis.

(2) Persons who have been awarded a PhD degree have the right to use the title PhD.

4.-(1) The PhD programme is equivalent to 180 ECTS points and normally takes the form of full-time studies; however, the institutions may lay down rules providing for part-time studies.

Rules applying to the Doctoral School of Social Sciences and Humanities at Aalborg University

1. The PhD programme may be organised as part-time studies. Part-time study periods may vary from 4 to 6 years. It is possible to be enrolled as part-time PhD student during the entire enrolment period or during parts of the enrolment period.
2. Leave for academic or personal reasons may be granted in special circumstances, in agreement with the principal supervisor and the head of section (or relevant staff manager), and on the basis of a reasoned application to the head of the doctoral school. Decisions concerning leave are made on the basis of an individual assessment and in consideration of the further completion of the PhD programme. The PhD student must use the application form available on the doctoral school's website.
3. When leave is granted, the enrolment period is typically extended accordingly and the PhD plan must be adjusted.
4. PhD students on leave are not entitled to receive supervision, attend PhD courses, and retain their office space etc.
5. PhD students may apply for up to two extension periods of six months, at the end of the enrolment period. The PhD student must use the application form available on the doctoral school's website. The application must be approved by the principal supervisor and the doctoral school head.
6. The maximum extension period will also be six months for part-time PhD students, unless special circumstances apply. The extension only concerns the enrolment and not the employment of the PhD student.

Part 2. Admission etc. to the PhD programme

Ministerial Order on the PhD Programme

5.-(1) Admission to the PhD programme is based on a Master's degree or equivalent.

(2) The university may decide to let the PhD programme start in connection with a Master's degree programme; however, it must be ensured that the entire study programme has the scope and level described in sections 1 and 4. The university lays down rules thereon, see, however, subsections (3) and (4).

(3) If the university has introduced rules requiring Master's degree students to register for subject elements of a certain scope, see section 11(1) of the University Programme Order (Uddannelsesbekendtgørelsen), students who are enrolled concurrently on a Master's degree programme and a PhD programme must each year be registered for subject elements on the Master's degree programme and the PhD programmes equivalent to registration requirements.

(4) Students admitted under subsection (2) must have the opportunity to complete the Master's degree programme.

6.-(1) The institution decides who is to be admitted as PhD students. The institution's internal rules must stipulate the criteria on which admission is based.

(2) The PhD student is enrolled administratively on the PhD programme.

Rules applying to the Doctoral School of Social Sciences and Humanities at Aalborg University

7. Applications for admission on the basis of other degrees than the 300 ECTS Master's degree will be assessed on the basis of information about the level and contents of the study programme in question. It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide the necessary documentation of the level of the study programme.

8. Commencement of the PhD programme in connection with a Master's programme (the 4+4 scheme) is only allowed following approval by the doctoral school head.

9. The PhD application must include the following and be written in English or Danish:

- Application for enrollment
- Copy of diplomas/transcripts
- Curriculum vitae (CV)
- Project description containing the research project title, a description of the research idea and problem formulation, theoretical framework, methodological and empirical focus and an outline of the course of the three years of PhD study (minimum 5 pages, 1 page = 2400 typing units)
- List of written work (optional)
- Sample of written work, e.g. Master's thesis (optional) or other publications (max. 5), if relevant. If publications have been written in co-operation with others, a declaration from each of the authors must be attached stating the extent of the PhD student's contribution to the total work. The declaration must be signed by the co-author(s)
- Applicants who are planning to complete a doctoral thesis in English and who do not have English as a first language or who have not completed an English language-based Master's programme (or an equivalent educational achievement in English) shall provide documentation of proficiency in English. Information is found here: <https://www.en.aau.dk/education/apply/master/admission-requirements#>
- Application for possible credit transfer

Project descriptions will be checked for plagiarism.

10. PhD applicants are assessed by an expert committee and the recommendation of the committee forms the basis of the final decision of the head of department and the head of the doctoral school.

The following criteria must be assessed:

1. Project Proposal

The project proposal must fall within the scope of one of the doctoral programmes of the doctoral school and be closely linked with a research group. The problem formulation, theoretical framework, and methodology of the project proposal must document that the candidate is qualified for the PhD programme. Moreover, the project proposal must document that the project is feasible within the available time and budget.

2. Grade Requirements

PhD candidates must have achieved the grade 10 or above in the Danish grading system (or the equivalent in a different grading system) for their Master's Thesis/final exam. The PhD candidate may be exempted from the grade requirement, if he/she is able to provide other forms of documentation of his/her qualifications.

3. Additional qualifications in relation to completing a PhD programme (e.g. research-related qualifications acquired as research assistant or student assistant; grades on Master exams, other than the final thesis, relevant to the PhD study)

Part 3. Contents of the PhD programme etc.

Ministerial Order on the PhD Programme

7.-(1) The PhD programme is set up in accordance with rules laid down by the educational institution, see, however, subsection (2).

(2) During the programme, the student is required to:

- 1) Carry out independent research work under supervision (the PhD project).
- 2) Complete PhD courses or similar study elements totalling approx. 30 ECTS points.
- 3) Participate in active research environments, including stays at other, mainly foreign, research institutions, private research enterprises etc.
- 4) Gain experience of teaching activities or other form of knowledge dissemination which is related to the student's PhD project.
- 5) Complete a PhD thesis on the basis of the PhD project.

(3) The institution may approve on a case-by-case basis that the PhD programme does not comprise one or more of the elements described in subsection (2), nos. 1-4, if the institution finds that the PhD student has completed other study elements that are comparable to the above (credit transfer).

8.-(1) For each PhD student, the institution designates a principal supervisor who is responsible for the overall PhD programme. The principal supervisor must be a recognised researcher within the relevant field, be employed by the institution and affiliated with the PhD school.

(2) On its own initiative or following an application from the PhD student, the institution may:

- 1) Appoint other supervisors, who must be qualified within the relevant field.
- 2) Replace the principal supervisor and other supervisors.

(3) The institution offers the PhD student a knowledge dissemination course.

(4) The institution offers the PhD student teaching guidance.

(5) The institution ensures that the required resources are available for the PhD student to complete the PhD programme as laid down in the student's PhD plan.

(6) The institution lays down rules for the supervision provided to the PhD student.

Rules applying to the Doctoral School of Social Sciences and Humanities at Aalborg University

11. The PhD student must prepare a preliminary PhD course plan in consultation with the principal supervisor, as part of the PhD plan. For approval of completed PhD course activities, the course diploma or other documentation of participation must be submitted together with the next progress report. These are approved by the supervisor and head of doctoral school.
12. The course University Teaching in Social Science and Humanities is compulsory for PhD students enrolled at the doctoral school, if the PhD student has a teaching obligation at the university. PhD students who have attended the course, before the enrollment as PhD student are exempted.
13. It is compulsory for PhD students to attend the AAU PhD course on the Danish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity or a similar PhD course focusing on research integrity.
14. Conference participation releases ECTS, if the PhD student makes a presentation at the conference. After conferring with the principal supervisor, the suggested number of ECTS credits is stated on the form for approval of ECTS for conference participation and is then submitted with the next progress report for final approval.

Allocation of ECTS:

Conference with duration of 1-3 days, with contribution: 1 ECTS credit

Conference with duration of 4-5 days, with contribution: 2 ECTS credits

15. At least 20 ECTS must be reserved for subject-specific courses. ECTS for conference participation is considered as a subject-specific course activity and must not constitute more than 8 ECTS.
16. It is mandatory for PhD students to participate in international research environments outside Aalborg University as part of their PhD programme. This includes stays at other, mainly foreign, research institutions, private research companies etc. Please see the doctoral school's website for further information on specific models for research stays.
17. The specific plans for the PhD student's research stay(s) must be stated in the 12-months progress report and form part of the 12-month oral progress seminar.
18. Knowledge dissemination is a mandatory element of the Danish PhD programme, cf. the PhD Order § 7. PhD students must gain experience of teaching activities or other forms of knowledge dissemination, which is related to the student's PhD project, cf. the PhD Order § 7. It means that knowledge dissemination activities should be related to the methodological, theoretical or empirical field of the PhD project. The knowledge dissemination requirement applies to all PhD students enrolled in the Doctoral School of Social Sciences and Humanities and corresponds to 600 hours.¹

Examples of relevant knowledge dissemination activities are:

Teaching activities:

- Seminars, lecturing and project supervision at Bachelor, Master's level

¹ For PhD students who are employed at the university, the work obligation according to the Collective Agreement for Academics in Denmark is 840 hours but at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, the work obligation is reduced from 840 to 600 hours. It is important to remember that the work obligation in the Collective agreement and the requirement to gain experience with knowledge dissemination according to the Ministerial Order are two different things. However, the work obligation is most often used for teaching thereby also fulfilling the knowledge dissemination requirement in the PhD Order.

Knowledge dissemination outside academia:²

- Presentations and workshops at practitioners' conferences and meetings
 - Dissemination and project status reports to practitioners and funding institutions
 - Communication with media and popular articles on different media platforms.
 - Exhibition work and other associated tasks at museums and archives
19. The PhD board may approve a reduction in the stipulated three years of full-time studies (credit transfer) upon application from the PhD student, if the PhD student has completed elements of the PhD programme, before the enrolment. Applications for credit transfer must be submitted before the PhD student is enrolled.
20. The head of the doctoral school appoints a principal supervisor prior to the enrolment of the PhD student. The supervisor is appointed upon recommendation from the department. The principal supervisor must be a researcher employed on a permanent basis at Aalborg University, possessing qualifications corresponding to professor, associate professor or senior researcher level and must have an academic background relevant to the PhD project.
21. In connection with the appointment of the principal supervisor, a co-supervisor is also appointed. The head of the doctoral school must ensure that the secondary supervisors have an academic background relevant to the PhD project. A maximum of 2 co-supervisors may be appointed, unless special circumstances apply.
22. 240 hours of supervision are allocated to the entire PhD programme. Supervision hours will be distributed between principal supervisor and secondary supervisors, in agreement with the PhD student. The principal supervisor is responsible for the overall PhD programme.
23. It is mandatory for AAU-employed PhD supervisors to attend supervisor courses at least once every five years. The doctoral school will offer 1-2 annual supervisor courses.
24. Principal supervisors must be familiar with the requirements of principal supervisors. The requirements are available at the [website](#) of the Doctoral School.

Part 4. Completion of the PhD programme

Ministerial Order on the PhD Programme

9.-(1) Within three months of the start of the PhD programme, the institution approves a research and study plan (the PhD plan) for the individual PhD student.

(2) The PhD plan must, as a minimum, contain the following:

- 1) A schedule.
- 2) An agreement on the type of supervision provided.
- 3) A plan for the PhD project.
- 4) A plan for PhD courses etc.
- 5) A plan for participation in active research environments.
- 6) A plan for teaching activities or other types of knowledge dissemination.
- 7) A financing plan (budget).
- 8) Any agreements on intellectual property rights.

10.-(1) At regular points in time during the PhD programme, the institution must assess whether the PhD student is following the PhD plan and, if necessary, adjust the plan. This assessment is based on an opinion from the

² The number of hours allocated for a specific activity must be determined in co-operation between the PhD student and the supervisor. For a more detailed list of possible dissemination activities, please see the doctoral school's website.

principal supervisor, who, after having consulted the PhD student, confirms that the PhD programme is progressing in accordance with the PhD plan or justifies, in writing, why adjustments are required. The PhD student must be given the opportunity to submit their comments on the principal supervisor's opinion within a deadline of at least two weeks. In the assessment, the institution must take account of periods of documented illness, maternity/paternity/parental leave and other approved leave. The institution lays down rules on the frequency of such assessments.

(2) If the institution assesses that the PhD student is not following the PhD plan, in spite of any adjustments made to the plan, the student must be given three months to get back on course. The three months do not give rise to an extension of the PhD programme. The chance to get back on course in connection with a regular assessment pursuant to subsection (1) can only be given to the PhD student once during the PhD programme.

(3) The institution must make a new assessment as described in subsection (1) as soon as possible after the end of the three-month period.

(4) If the assessment described in subsection (3) is negative, the student is expelled from the PhD programme. The institution must inform any other employer(s) of the expulsion without delay.

Rules applying to the Doctoral School of Social Sciences and Humanities at Aalborg University

25. No later than three months after admission, the PhD student must submit a PhD plan for approval by uploading it to PhD Manager. The deadline is three months for both full-time and part-time PhD students. The PhD plan must be approved by the principal supervisor and the vice head of research. The template is available on the doctoral school's [website](#).

26. In connection with the PhD plan, the PhD student and principal supervisor must ensure that there is a matching of expectations as regards the form and contents of supervision and the distribution of hours.

27. During the PhD study, PhD students must submit five progress reports. Progress reports constitute the evaluation of the progress, with reference to the PhD plan. The five progress reports 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

The requirements are described in detail at the website of the Doctoral School.

28. Part-time PhD students must also submit a total of five progress reports at durations proportional to their period of study.

29. If the PhD student does not follow the PhD plan and makes progress as expected, the head of the doctoral school may initiate a three-month period to get the PhD study back on course. This must be based on an assessment from the principal supervisor. The assessment must be accompanied by a plan for the three-months re-establishment period stating what has to be done. AAU PhD, on behalf of the doctoral school head, informs the PhD student of his/her right to comment on the assessment from the supervisor. Based on the assessment and the comments from the PhD student, if any, the head of the doctoral school makes the final decision as to whether a three-month period should be initiated. Immediately following the end of the three-month period, the principal supervisor must forward an assessment of the progress of the PhD student to AAU PhD. The assessment must clearly indicate whether the PhD student has been able to get the PhD

study back on track. Again, AAU PhD, on behalf of the doctoral school head, informs the PhD student of his/her right to comment on the assessment from the supervisor. Based on the assessment and the comments from the PhD student, if any, the head of the doctoral school makes the final decision as to whether or not the PhD study can continue.

Part 5. PhD thesis

Ministerial Order on the PhD Programme

11. The PhD thesis must document the PhD student's or the author's ability to apply relevant scientific methods and to carry out research work meeting the international standards for PhD degrees within the field in question.

12.-(1) The institution lays down rules on the writing and submission of the PhD thesis, see, however, subsections (2)-(5).

(2) A PhD thesis cannot be submitted for assessment by two or more authors jointly.

(3) The PhD thesis must contain an abstract in Danish and English.

(4) Any articles included in the thesis may be written in cooperation with others, provided that each of the co-authors submits a written declaration stating the PhD student's or the author's contribution to the work, see, however, subsection (5).

(5) The institution may lay down rules limiting the number of written declarations submitted pursuant to subsection (4). However, the main author of the article must always submit a written declaration pursuant to subsection (4).

13. The PhD student's enrolment at the institution expires upon the submission of the thesis.

14.-(1) Within one week of the submission of the thesis, the principal supervisor must submit an opinion on the PhD programme as a whole, including the completion of the individual elements of the PhD plan, see section 9.

(2) If the principal supervisor states in the opinion that the PhD programme is not completed satisfactorily, the PhD student must be given at least two weeks to comment on the principal supervisor's opinion.

(3) On the basis of the opinion of the principal supervisor, see subsection (1), the PhD student's comments, if any, see subsection (2), and the regular assessments, see section 10(1), the institution must determine whether the PhD programme has been completed satisfactorily.

15.-(1) The thesis can only be accepted for assessment if the PhD programme is completed satisfactorily, see, however, subsections (2) and (3).

(2) In special cases, the institution may decide that a thesis may be accepted for assessment without the author having completed the PhD programme, if the institution assesses that the author has in other ways acquired other comparable qualifications.

(3) The institution may accept a PhD thesis written by a PhD student from a foreign educational institution for assessment if the PhD student has completed a period of study at the Danish institution as part of a mutually obliging collaboration agreement on PhD training, including the assessment, defence, awarding of degrees etc., and if the institution assesses that the PhD student has acquired qualifications comparable with those acquired under a Danish PhD programme.

Rules applying to the Doctoral School of Social Sciences and Humanities at Aalborg University

30. The PhD thesis must be in compliance with the principles stipulated in The Danish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and contribute to the development of new scientific knowledge and be of sufficiently high quality to merit publication as part of the scientific literature in the field.

31. The PhD thesis may take the following forms:

- a) Monograph
- b) Article-based
- c) Combination model

The monograph is a coherent scientific work and is based on individual authorship. It is recommended that it does not exceed 250 standard pages (1 standard page = 2400 typing units), however, the length of the monograph may vary with the research field of the PhD.

The article-based dissertation typically consists of 3 – 5 scientific contributions (journal articles, book chapters, papers in conferences proceedings), which have been published in or are potentially publishable through recognized publishing channels, and a linking text (kappa). The structure of the dissertation must reflect academic practices in the field of study, and the final decision whether the scientific contributions in combination with the linking text (kappa) qualify for achieving the PhD degree is made by the assessment committee and not by journal editors or referees.

Scientific contributions may be written in collaboration with others but must include clearly identifiable independent contributions of scientific importance by the PhD student. Declarations of co-authorship identifying the PhD student's share of contribution must be submitted with the dissertation. One scientific contribution in an article-based dissertation must be single-authored, or alternatively the PhD student must be first author on, or have made a major contribution to, at least two scientific contributions.

The linking text (kappa) is always single-authored and it is recommended that it does not exceed 70 standard pages. The linking text (kappa) is expected to tie the scientific contributions together. It should relate the PhD study to previous research and demonstrate its scientific contribution. It should discuss the methodological and analytical choices and summarize how main findings contribute to the development of new knowledge that meets the international standards of the field.

The combination model typically consists of a short monograph (approx. 130 standard pages) and two scientific articles, which have been published in or are potentially publishable through recognized publishing channels. The short monograph may include a linking text (kappa) that ties the scientific contributions together and summarizes how main findings contribute to the development of new knowledge that meets the international standards of the field. The linking text (kappa) may also be included as a separate document and constitute a more concentrated synthesis of the PhD thesis. In this case, the recommended length is 30 standard pages for the linking text (kappa) and 100 pages for the short monograph, however, the length of the monograph may vary with the research field of the PhD. Articles may be written in collaboration with others but must include clearly identifiable independent contributions of scientific importance by the PhD student. Declarations of co-authorship identifying the PhD student's share of contribution must be submitted with the dissertation.

General guidelines decision concerning the form of the PhD thesis is closely linked to the subject matter of the thesis and should be discussed thoroughly with the principal supervisor. It is recommended that the form of the PhD thesis is decided no later than at the 12-month evaluation.

Guidelines for all three models (monograph, article-based, combination model) are guidelines and not strict rules. This means that there can be variations across the different disciplines and scientific traditions at the Doctoral School of SSH, which does not completely match the main models. Irrespective of the three models, it is quality, not length, which matters.

32. It is recommended that the PhD thesis, regardless of the form of the PhD thesis, does not exceed 250 standard pages (1 standard page = 2400 typing units). Included in the number of pages are: foreword, acknowledgements, abstracts, table of content, all chapters and possible articles, reference list and footnotes. Exempt are all appendices.

33. The PhD thesis must be written in Danish or English. Should the PhD student wish to write in another language, he or she must submit a reasoned application to the head of the PhD school.
34. The PhD thesis must contain an abstract of max.10 pages in English and Danish.
35. If the scientific contributions are written in cooperation with others, co-authors' declarations must be submitted separately for approval by the head of the doctoral school.
36. The PhD student must submit a declaration concerning compliance with good scientific practice as well as the use of AI in the thesis.
37. On completion of the PhD project, the PhD student submits the PhD thesis electronically through VBN, as stipulated in the [AAU procedure for submission of PhD theses](#).
38. The PhD student's enrolment and employment will be terminated from the submission date, also if the PhD thesis is submitted before the expected end date.
39. Two weeks before the submission of the PhD thesis, the principal supervisor must submit an opinion on the PhD programme as a whole. The principal supervisor may involve the secondary supervisor(s) in the writing of the opinion. The supervisor's opinion must be approved by the head of the doctoral school, who certifies that the PhD programme as a whole has been completed. The supervisor's opinion is enclosed as supplements to the PhD diploma and must follow the template available on the doctoral school's website.
40. The decision as to whether a thesis may be accepted for assessment without the author having completed the PhD programme rests with the head of the doctoral school. The decision is made on the basis of an expert assessment of the qualifications of the author. The author must submit the form regarding submission without previous enrolment together with material documenting that the author has acquired qualifications comparable to the Danish PhD programme.
41. PhD students who have completed a period of the PhD study at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, as part of a mutually obliging collaboration agreement may submit their PhD thesis for assessment at Doctoral School of Social Sciences and Humanities, if the requirements stipulated in the Procedure for double and joint degree collaborations are complied with.

Part 6. Assessment committee

Ministerial Order on the PhD Programme

16.-(1) Upon the submission of the PhD thesis at the latest, the institution appoints an expert assessment committee composed of three members. The institution appoints a chairman from among the committee members.

(2) The members of the assessment committee must be recognised researchers within the relevant field, see, however, section 27, no. 2, and section 28(2). Two of the members must be external researchers, of whom at least one member must be from outside of Denmark, unless this is not practicable considering the subject in question. The PhD student's supervisors must not be members of the assessment committee; however, the principal supervisor assists the assessment committee without voting rights.

17 Immediately after having appointed the members of the assessment committee, the institution must inform the PhD student or the author thereof, see section 15(2). The PhD student or the author is entitled to object to the members appointed within a period of at least one week.

Rules applying to the Doctoral School of Social Sciences and Humanities at Aalborg University

42. On the basis of a recommendation from the PhD study board, the head of the doctoral school appoints the expert assessment committee; the members must be professors, full-time employed associate professors or possess corresponding qualifications. The proposed chair of the assessment committee must be employed at Aalborg University unless special circumstances exist. The head of the doctoral school must be consulted in such instances. More than one gender must be represented in the assessment committee, unless special

circumstances apply. Standard rules for impartiality apply, which includes that members of the assessment committee are not allowed to have published with the PhD student nor have acted as evaluators of the PhD thesis at the 30-month oral progress seminar. Further information on the procedures is found on the Doctoral School's [website](#).

43. The recommendation must be accompanied by a short CV of any external members and a short reason for the proposed members. Before submitting the proposal, the department must ensure that the persons in question are willing to join the assessment committee. The recommendation should be submitted at least one month before submission of the PhD thesis.
44. During the assessment period, any contact between the assessment committee and the PhD student regarding the PhD thesis and the assessment must go through the PhD administration at AAU PhD.

Part 7. Preliminary assessment of the PhD thesis

Ministerial Order on the PhD Programme

18.-(1) Within two months of the submission of the PhD thesis, the assessment committee must make its recommendation to the institution as to whether the PhD thesis fulfils the requirements for the awarding of the PhD degree. The month of July is not included when calculating the two-month deadline. The recommendation must be reasoned, and in the event of disagreement, the majority will prevail. The institution sends a copy of the recommendation to the PhD student or the author as soon as possible.

(2) If the recommendation is favourable, the defence of the thesis can take place.

(3) If the recommendation is not favourable, the assessment committee must state in the recommendation whether the PhD thesis may be resubmitted in a revised version. In such case, a deadline for resubmission must be stated. The PhD student or the author and the principal supervisor must be given the opportunity to submit their comments on the recommendation within a period of at least two weeks.

(4) If the recommendation is not favourable, the institution must make one of the following decisions based on the assessment committee's recommendation and the PhD student's or the author's and the principal supervisor's comments, if any:

1. That the defence of the thesis may not take place.
2. That the PhD thesis may be resubmitted in a revised version within a deadline of at least three months. If the PhD thesis is resubmitted, it is assessed by the same assessment committee, unless special circumstances apply.
3. That the PhD thesis must be submitted for assessment by a new assessment committee.

Rules applying to the Doctoral School of Social Sciences and Humanities at Aalborg University

45. The assessment committee submits its preliminary recommendation to the PhD administration at AAU PhD. The recommendation must be in compliance with the doctoral school's guidelines. The recommendation must follow the Doctoral School's template which can be found at the Doctoral School's [website](#).
46. The recommendation must be approved by the head of the doctoral school, before it is forwarded to the PhD student.

Part 8. Defence of the PhD thesis

Ministerial Order on the PhD Programme

19.-(1) The PhD thesis must be defended publicly in accordance with rules laid down by the institution. At the defence, the PhD student or the author must be given the opportunity to explain their work and defend the PhD thesis before the members of the assessment committee, see, however, subsection (3).

(2) The institution must ensure that the PhD thesis is made available to the public in due time before the defence.

(3) If special circumstances apply, subject to agreement with the PhD student or the author, the institution may decide that a planned defence can be completed with the participation of only two members of the assessment committee.

20.-(1) The institution decides the time and place of the public defence.

(2) The defence takes place two weeks after the assessment committee's submission of its recommendation, at the earliest, see section 18(1), and within three months of the submission of the PhD thesis, at the latest, see, however, subsection (3) and section 18(1), second sentence.

(3) If special circumstances apply, the institution may decide to postpone the defence. Postponement of the defence is subject to agreement between the PhD student or the author and the institution, including on the date and time arranged for the defence.

Rules applying to the Doctoral School of Social Sciences and Humanities at Aalborg University

47. The department appoints a senior academic to act as moderator at the oral defence and ensures that the moderator is familiar with the formal procedures for the conduct of this event. The supervisor cannot act as moderator.

48. The PhD defence must take maximum 3 hours inclusive of a break. The oral defence begins with a lecture by the PhD student that presents the main argument and knowledge contribution of the thesis and addresses the most important critical points raised by the assessment committee. The PhD student's presentation of his or her work may take approximately 45 minutes. Each assessment committee member may spend approximately 30 minutes on questions and dialogue with the PhD student. The moderator may allow others to make contributions (questions ex auditorium). The moderator must ensure that the PhD student gets the necessary time to answer the questions asked. The total question time shall not exceed 2 hours.

49. The PhD thesis is made available to the public at the respective department, immediately after the PhD student receives notice of the positive preliminary recommendation.

50. Time and place of the public defence is decided by the department, in consultation with the chair of the assessment committee and the PhD student.

51. The defence can be held in either of the two following forms:

1) All participants are physically present.

2) Hybrid format. At least the PhD student, chair of the assessment committee and moderator of the defence are physically present. One or more external members of the assessment committee attend virtually. It is recommended that all defences are streamed thus enhancing the visibility of the research at Aalborg University.

A fully virtual defence requires permission from the doctoral school head and will only be given in extraordinary circumstances.

The PhD student must be involved in planning the defence.

52. If unusual circumstances apply, the head of the doctoral school may approve that the defence is postponed. Postponement of the defence is subject to an agreement with the PhD student.

Part 9. Award of the PhD degree

Ministerial Order on the PhD Programme

21.-(1) Immediately following the defence, the assessment committee must make its recommendation as to whether the PhD degree should be awarded and must notify the institution and the PhD student or the author thereof. The recommendation must be reasoned, and in the event of disagreement, the majority will prevail.

(2) If the recommendation of the assessment committee is negative, the institution may decide to let the thesis be assessed by a new assessment committee, if so requested by the PhD student or the author within a period of at least one week.

22. The PhD degree may be awarded if the assessment committee submits a recommendation to that effect.

23.-(1) The institution issues a certificate of the award of the PhD degree.

(2) Such certificate must be in Danish and English and contain information on the relevant field and the subject of the PhD thesis as well as information on the PhD programme completed.

(3) As part of a mutually obliging collaboration agreement on PhD training, including the assessment, defence, awarding of degrees etc., the institution may provide a certificate with an endorsement, signature or the like from one or more foreign institutions with which the institution collaborates, making it appear as a joint document, if the document is also made enforceable under foreign law (joint degree).

(4) As part of a collaboration agreement, see subsection (3), the institution may also provide a certificate from one or more foreign institutions with which the institution collaborates with an endorsement, signature or the like, such that the certificate is also made enforceable under Danish law, if the institution assesses that the PhD student has acquired qualifications comparable with those acquired under a Danish PhD programme.

(5) The institution and one or more foreign institutions with which the institution collaborates may, as part of a collaboration agreement, see subsection (3), each issue a certificate of the award of the same PhD degree (double degree or multiple degree).

24. If the PhD degree is not awarded, the institution will upon request issue documentation in both Danish and English concerning the elements of the PhD programme that have been completed.

Rules applying to the Doctoral School of Social Sciences and Humanities at Aalborg University

53. No later than one week after the defence, the chair of the assessment committee must send the final recommendation to AAU PhD as to whether the PhD degree should be awarded. The recommendation must be in compliance with the formalities as stipulated in the guidelines for assessment committees.

54. AAU PhD issues the PhD diploma with supervisor's opinion enclosed, immediately after the PhD degree has been awarded by the Academic Council.

55. Double or joint PhD degrees may be awarded, when the PhD student has been formally enrolled at Doctoral School of Social Sciences and Humanities and as part of a formal collaboration agreement in accordance with the requirements stipulated in Procedure for double and joint degree collaborations.

Part 10. The institution's rules

Ministerial Order on the PhD Programme

25.-(1) The institution lays down rules on:

1. Admission to the PhD programme, see section 6(1).

2. Organisation of the PhD programme, see section 4(1), section 7(1) and section 10(1).
3. Appointment of the principal supervisor, see section 8(1), and any further supervisors, see section 8(2), section 27(1), no. 1, and section 28(1).
4. Supervision of PhD students, see section 8(6).
5. Writing and submission of the PhD thesis, see section 12(1).
6. Defence of the PhD thesis, see section 19(1).

(2) The university also lays down rules on admission to the PhD programme pursuant to section 5(2).

(3) The rules must contain a provision that the institution may grant exemptions from the rules laid down by the institution. For exemptions to be granted, exceptional circumstances must apply.

(4) The rules and material amendments thereto must comprise the necessary interim arrangements.

(5) The institution's rules must be made public on the institution's website.

Rules applying to the Doctoral School of Social Sciences and Humanities at Aalborg University

56. Exemptions from the internal rules laid down by Doctoral School of Social Sciences and Humanities at Aalborg University may be granted by the head of the doctoral school.

Part 11. Other rules

Ministerial Order on the PhD Programme

26.-(1) In connection with the conclusion of a mutually obliging collaboration agreement on PhD training, including the assessment, defence, awarding of degrees etc., with one or more foreign educational institutions, the institution may derogate from the requirements set out in the ministerial order concerning:

1) The composition of the assessment committee, see section 16(1), first sentence, and section 16(2), second sentence.

2) The deadline for preliminary assessment of the PhD thesis, see section 18(1), first and second sentence.

3) The deadline for scheduling the defence of the PhD thesis, see section 20(2).

(2) In such cases, the institution is responsible for informing applicants and PhD students who are covered by the collaboration agreement about the conditions applying to the programme, including the rules in the ministerial order derogated from, see subsection (1). This information must be made available before the application deadline.

27. The following applies to PhD fellowships financed through the Industrial PhD scheme:

1) In addition to the principal supervisor, see section 8(1), the institution appoints a supervisor affiliated with the company in which the PhD student is employed. Such supervisor must be qualified within the relevant field.

2) At least one member of the assessment committee, see section 16(1) must have company-relevant research experience within the relevant field.

PhD students at institutions of vocational higher education

28.-(1) If the PhD student is employed at an institution of vocational higher education, the university or the higher artistic educational institution appoints a principal supervisor, see section 8(1), and an additional supervisor who must be affiliated with the vocational institution. The supervisor must be qualified in the relevant subject area at senior associate professor level.¹⁾

(2) One of the members of the assessment committee must have industry-relevant research experience at senior associate professor level²⁾ in the relevant subject area.

29. The Danish Agency for Higher Education and Science may grant exemptions from the ministerial order if unusual circumstances apply, except in the situations mentioned in section 19(3), section 20(3) and section 26(1).

Appeals against decisions made by the institution

30.-(1) The educational institution's decisions made pursuant to the ministerial order may be appealed to the Danish Agency for Higher Education and Science if the appeal concerns legal issues. Complaints must be submitted within two weeks of the complainant having been informed of a decision, see subsections (2) and (3).

(2) Complaints may be submitted by PhD students and authors. However, in order to be entitled to submit complaints, authors who have not completed the PhD programme must have had their PhD thesis accepted for assessment pursuant to section 15(2).

(3) The complaint must be submitted to the educational institution, which will issue a statement. The complainant must be given at least one week to respond. The institution then forwards the case to the agency for processing.

Rules applying to the Doctoral School of Social Sciences and Humanities at Aalborg University

57. Mutually obliging collaboration agreements deviating from the requirements set out in the ministerial order regarding the assessment committee, the assessment process, and the defence must be approved by the dean upon recommendation from the head of the doctoral school.

58. Complaints about the university's decision under the ministerial order must be submitted in writing to AAU PhD.

Part 12. Commencement etc.

Ministerial Order on the PhD Programme

31.-(1) This ministerial order enters into force on 1 October 2025.

(2) Ministerial Order no. 1039 of 27 August 2013 on the PhD Programme at the Universities and Certain Higher Artistic Educational Institutions (PhD Order) is repealed.

Danish Agency for Higher Education and Science, 19 September 2025

ORIGIN, BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

As of 1 January 2022, the Doctoral School of Social Sciences and Humanities was established following the merger of the Doctoral School of Social Sciences and The Doctoral School of Humanities. *Internal Rules for the PhD Programme at Doctoral School of Social Sciences and Humanities*, AAU replaces internal rules in force at the previous doctoral schools. Internal Rules are approved by the Dean upon recommendation from the PhD Board and Doctoral School head.

OVERALL FRAMEWORK

The Danish University Act (Universitetsloven)

Statutes of the self-governing institution Aalborg University

Ministerial Order No 1124 of 19 September 2025 on the PhD Programme at the Universities and Certain Higher Artistic Educational Institutions (PhD Order)

The Ministry of Finance Circular of April 10, 2025 on the Collective Agreement for Academics in Denmark, Appendix 5, regarding PhD Fellows

CONTACT/RESPONSIBILITY

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