UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN

Ministerial Order on the PhD Programme at the Universities and Certain Higher Artistic Educational Institutions (PhD Order)

December 2025

This is an English translation of *Bekendtgørelse om ph.d.-uddannelsen ved universiteterne og visse kunstneriske uddannelsesinstitutioner* (ph.d.-bekendtgørelsen). The translation is conducted by the PhD Administration at UCPH, December 2025.

In the event of any inconsistency between the Danish and English language versions of the document, the Danish version prevails.

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Pursuant to section 8(1) and section 34(1) of the Danish Act on Universities (the University Act) (*Universitetsloven*), see Consolidation Act no. 391 of 10 April 2024, and section 10(1) nos. (1) and (3), section 12 and section 15(2) of the Danish Act on Higher Artistic Educational Institutions *(Lov om videregående kunstneriske uddannelsesinstitutioner*), see Consolidation Act no. 787 of 8 August 2019, the following is stipulated pursuant to the authorisation laid down in section 1(1) and section 5(1) of Consolidation Act no. 1118 of 28 October 2024 concerning the delegation of the powers of the Danish Minister for Higher Education and Science to the Danish Agency for Higher Education and Science and concerning the regulation of the appeals procedure:

Chapter 1

Purpose, structure etc.

Section 1

(1) The PhD programme aims to train PhD students to undertake research, development and teaching assignments at an international level in both 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.

Section 2

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

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

Section 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 dissertation.

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

Section 4

(1) The PhD programme corresponds to 180 ECTS credits and normally takes the form of full-time studies; however, the institutions may define rules for part-time studies.

Chapter 2

Admission etc. to the PhD programme

Section 5

(1) Admission to the PhD programme shall be contingent upon an educational level corresponding to a Master's degree.

(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 establishes 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 enrolled concurrently on a Master's degree programme and a PhD programme must be registered for subject elements that meet the registration requirements on the Master's degree programme and the PhD programmes each year.

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

Section 6

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

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

Chapter 3

Contents of the PhD programme etc.

Section 7

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

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

1. Conduct independent research under supervision (the PhD project).
2. Complete PhD courses or similar subject elements totalling approx. 30 ECTS credits.
3. Participate in active research environments, including stays at other, mainly foreign, research institutions, private research enterprises etc.
4. Gain experience in teaching activities or other forms of knowledge dissemination related to the PhD project.
5. Complete a PhD dissertation based on 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 subject elements that are comparable to the above (credit transfer).

Section 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 be affiliated with the graduate 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 defined in the student's PhD plan.

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

Chapter 4

Completion of the PhD programme

Section 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 time 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 finance plan (budget).
8. Any agreements on intellectual property rights.

Section 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 it. This assessment is based on an opinion from the principal supervisor, who, after consulting 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 two weeks. In the assessment, the institution must consider periods of documented illness, maternity/paternity/parental leave and other approved leave. The institution defines the rules on the frequency of such assessments.

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

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

(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.

Chapter 5

PhD dissertation

Section 11

(1) The PhD dissertation must document the PhD student's or author's ability to apply relevant research methods and to conduct research meeting the international standards for PhD degrees within the field in question.

Section 12

(1) The institution establishes rules on the writing and submission of the PhD dissertation, see, however, subsections (2)-(5).

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

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

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

(5) The institution may set 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).

Section 13

(1) The PhD student's enrolment at the institution expires upon the submission of the dissertation.

Section 14

(1) Within one week of submission of the dissertation, 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 that the PhD programme has not been 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.

Section 15

(1) The dissertation can only be accepted for assessment if the PhD programme has been completed satisfactorily, see, however, subsections (2) and (3).

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

(3) The institution may accept a PhD dissertation 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 to those acquired under a Danish PhD programme.

Chapter 6

The assessment committee

Section 16

(1) No later than upon submission of the PhD thesis, the institution appoints an expert assessment committee consisting of three members. The institution designates one of the members as chair of the committee.

(2) The members of the assessment committee must be recognised researchers within the relevant academic field, see section 27(2) and section 28(2). Two of the members must be external researchers, of whom at least one must be from abroad, unless this is deemed inappropriate for academic reasons. The PhD student's supervisors may not be members of the assessment committee; however, the principal supervisor assists the assessment committee without voting rights.

Section 17

(1) 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.

Chapter 7

Preliminary assessment of the PhD dissertation

Section 18

(1) Within two months of the submission of the PhD dissertation, the assessment committee must make its recommendation to the institution as to whether the PhD dissertation fulfils the requirements for awarding the PhD degree. The month of July is not included when calculating the two-month deadline. The recommendation must be substantiated, 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 favorable, the defence of the dissertation can take place.

(3) If the recommendation is not favorable, the assessment committee must state in the recommendation whether the PhD dissertation 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 favorable, the institution must make one of the following decisions based on the assessment committee's recommendations and the PhD student's or the author's and the principal supervisor's comments, if any:

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

Chapter 8
Defence of the PhD dissertation

Section 19

(1) The PhD dissertation must be defended publicly in accordance with internal 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 dissertation before the members of the assessment committee, see, however, subsection (3).

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

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

Section 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 dissertation, 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 the date and time arranged for the defence.

Chapter 9
Award of the PhD degree

Section 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 substantiated, 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 dissertation be assessed by a new assessment committee, if requested by the PhD student or the author within a period of at least one week.

Section 22

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

Section 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 dissertation 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 a joint document, if this document is also 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 enforceable under Danish law, if the institution assesses that the PhD student has acquired qualifications comparable to 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).

Section 24

(1) 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.

Chapter 10

The institution's rules

Section 25

(1) The institution establishes rules on:

1. Admission to the PhD programme, see section 6(1).
2. The organisation of the PhD programme, see section 4(1), section 7(1) and section 10(1).
3. The 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. The supervision of PhD students, see section 8(6).
5. The writing and submission of the PhD dissertation, see section 12(1).
6. The defence of the PhD dissertation, see section 19(1).

(2) The university also establishes 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 established by the institution. For exemptions to be granted, exceptional circumstances must apply.

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

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

Chapter 11

Other rules

Section 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 dissertation, see section 18(1), first and second sentences.

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

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

Section 27

(1) 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 where the PhD student is employed. This supervisor must be qualified within the relevant field.
2. At least one member of the assessment committee, see section 16(1), must have relevant business-related research experience within the field in question.

PhD students at institutions of vocational higher education

Section 28

(1) If the PhD student is employed at an institution of vocational higher education, the university or the artistic higher educational institution appoints a principal supervisor, see section 8(1), and an additional supervisor 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 in the relevant subject area at a senior associate professor level[2].

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[1] For information on the academic requirements for appointment as senior associate professor, see the Ministerial Order on Job Structure for Lecturers at Academies of Professional Higher Education, University Colleges and the Danish School of Media and Journalism and the Ministerial Order on Job Structure for Lecturers on Academy Profession Programmes and Professional Bachelor Programmes at Maritime Educational Institutions.

[2] For information on the academic requirements for appointment as senior associate professor, see the Ministerial Order on Job Structure for Lecturers at Academies of Professional Higher Education, University Colleges and the Danish School of Media and Journalism and the Ministerial Order on Job Structure for Lecturers on Academy Profession Programmes and Professional Bachelor Programmes at Maritime Educational Institutions.

Section 29

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

Appeals against decisions made by the institution

Section 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, to be entitled to submit complaints, authors who have not completed the PhD programme must have had their PhD dissertation 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.

Chapter 12

Commencement etc.

Section 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

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/ Charlotte Løchte