

Programme description:

PhD programme at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Bergen

This programme description is considered as supplementary regulations to the provisions of the Regulations for the Philosophiae Doctor (PhD) degree at the University of Bergen and should not be interpreted in contravention of the regulations. Last updated by the Programme Board on 10.03.2021.

1 Objectives, scope and qualification

The PhD programme at the Faculty of Medicine leads to the Philosophiae Doctor (PhD) degree.

The scope of the PhD programme is standardised to 3 years of full-time work (4 years with mandatory duty work) and consists of a training component of at least 30 credits and independent research that leads to an academic thesis.

The PhD programme is intended to qualify for research of an international standard and for other work in society where great demands are made to academic insight and analytical thinking, in accordance with good academic practice and standards on research ethics.

1.1 Description of learning outcome

A PhD candidate with completed qualification at the Faculty of Medicine must have these overall learning outcomes defined in terms of knowledge, skills and general expertise.

Knowledge

After completing the programme, the candidate will have knowledge:

- about their subject area and master the subject area's theories and methods, and be at the international forefront of their subject area;
- to be able to evaluate the appropriateness and usefulness of various methods and processes in research and in academic projects in their subject area;
- of their subject area and be able to contribute to the development of new knowledge, theories, methods, interpretations and forms of documentation within their subject area;
- to be able to disseminate research and development through highly ranked national and international channels;
- to be able to participate in debates within their subject area at national and international forums;
- that enables them to critically assess the ethical aspects of a research project;
- about relevant laws and regulations within medical and health related research.

Skills

After completing the programme, the candidate will:

- be able to formulate research questions and topics for academic research;
- be able to plan and conduct research and academic work at a high international level;
- be able to identify and apply relevant research methods to answer a research question;
- be able to deal with complex academic questions, and challenge established knowledge and practice within their subject area;
- identify, analyse and critically reflect on research ethics related to research projects and areas;
- be able to conduct research and dissemination with academic integrity and in accordance with the basic values of academic activities;
- be able to critically reflect on the conflicts of value and interest associated with their research field and the relationship with other stakeholders in society.

General competence

After completing the programme, the candidate will able to:

- express themselves clearly and succinctly both orally and in writing;
- work in a systematic, structured and independent manner based on set goals;
- develop their own knowledge, expertise and skills, continuously and with a purpose;
- provide constructive and critical feedback on other people's academic work;
- build and manage professional networks;
- evaluate the need for renewal, and initiate and engage in ground-breaking thinking and innovation;
- manage and work in interdisciplinary teams dealing with complex issues;
- gain an overview of and acquire advanced knowledge;
- think innovatively, critically and in a nuanced way;
- participate in the organisation and management of meetings, conferences and seminars on academic topics.

2 Admission

Application for admission to the PhD programme must be completed using the faculty's application form, which is available on the website.

2.1 Admission requirements

The PhD programme at the Faculty of Medicine is based on a five-year Norwegian master's education according to the Bologna process, Norwegian postgraduate programme or professional study, or equivalent education as approved by the faculty.

The Faculty of Medicine also approves one-year master's degrees as a basis for admission to the PhD programme if the relevant degree

- A) is part of an overall higher education that consists of a completed bachelor's and master's degree or integrated course of at least four years that can be approved as university education in Norway, as defined by NOKUT's General recognition of foreign higher education and
- B) contains a master's thesis which has a scope corresponding to a minimum of 30 credits (ECTS).

Education from abroad is evaluated according to NOKUT's criteria.

All candidates admitted to the PhD programme at the Faculty of Medicine must reside at the faculty for a total of at least 3 months. The application must state the plans for how this is to be done. The main supervisor must oversee the compliance with the residency requirement. The residency requirement may be fulfilled at other institutions with active research communities and research groups that the candidate is part of. The academic requirements for supervision as well as the intention that the candidate should contribute to the faculty's academic development and environment must be fulfilled.

When applying for admission, the candidate must present a plan for the training component that shows how the candidate plans to fulfil the requirements that are set with regard to the scope of the training component and mandatory requirements. It is possible to adjust the plan during the PhD programme.

Sufficient funding, appropriate for the completion of the project is necessary. The applicant must document sufficient funding, both for living expenses and for project expenses for the duration of the PhD agreement period. Self-financing candidates, ie. candidates who have their own, private funds will not be granted access to the PhD programme.

2.2. Project description

The project description is usually about 6-8 pages and must state the topic, issues, choice of theory and method, ethical assessments, and information on applications for ethical approval in Norway and abroad where applicable. The project description must also include a dated progress plan for the various parts of the research work, including a tentative publication plan. The project description

must also include proposals for supervisors, and the responsibilities and role for each of the supervisors must be indicated.

An overview of partners and planned study abroad must be included. Any restrictions on intellectual property rights that are intended to protect the rights of others must be disclosed.

For applicants with funding from the Faculty of Medicine or Helse Vest (Samarbeidsorganet), the project description which was awarded the grant should be identical to the one submitted for admission to the PhD programme.

2.3 Evaluation of project

The project descriptions are assessed at the department to which the candidate is to be affiliated. The assessment will be carried out by an admissions committee consisting of two academic staff members. These individuals are appointed by the faculty following proposals from the department. The written recommendation of the admissions committee is part of the admissions criteria.

Project descriptions that are assessed by Helse Vest or UiB in connection with the awarding of grant funds will, as a rule, not be re-evaluated by the department's admissions committee, but will be assessed directly by the faculty. The faculty may still request a statement from the admissions committee if deemed necessary.

2.4 Language requirements

The PhD programme at the Faculty of Medicine is mainly conducted in English. Applicants who were educated abroad must document their proficiency in English in accordance with current rules:

<https://www.uib.no/en/med/115526/english-language-requirements-phd-admission>

Exemptions are made for the following applicants:

- candidates who have been first author on at least two scientific publications published in English in international, peer-reviewed journals
- candidates who can document that their master's programme was taught entirely in English
- candidates who have studied English as a subject at university level (minimum 30 ECTS credits)

2.5 The supervisor's role in the application process

Anyone applying for admission to the PhD programme at the Faculty of Medicine should have two supervisors on admission. The applicant must have established contact with a supervisor who is willing to be the main supervisor. There must also be a proposed co-supervisor, either internal or external. At least one of the supervisors must have employment at the faculty throughout the agreement period. The project description is jointly prepared by the candidate and supervisors, but should be written mainly by the candidate.

There is a requirement that the internal main supervisor must have taken the faculty's two e-learning courses before admission can be granted. If the main supervisor is external, either this person or the internal co-supervisor must have taken the courses.

- PhD supervisor course: <https://mitt.uib.no/courses/1061>
- Treatment of personal data in medical and health research: <https://mitt.uib.no/courses/29100>

Where the external supervisors are not employed by a Norwegian research institution, information about their qualifications and place of work should be documented by a CV which lists their competence, experience, and current workplace.

2.6 Regulations concerning former students at the Medical/Dental Student Research Programme

Former research students who have an approved training component before admission will have 20 weeks deducted from their agreement period. The provision that the applicant should be rejected if less than one (1) year of full-time work remains on the research project at the time of application does not apply to applicants who are to complete their PhD as continuation of the research project less than a year after completing the cand.med. or master's degree with a research programme.

Former research students who have published all the papers that are going to be part of their PhD, may be granted admission to the PhD programme for up to one year without funding to complete and submit their thesis, provided that their supervisor and department recommend this. An application for admission on these terms must be submitted no later than 15 August for students who complete their medical or dental degree in the spring or by 15 January for students who complete their medical or dental degree in the autumn.

2.7 Attachments to applications for admission

- The candidate's CV
- Documentation of higher education (diplomas and transcripts, as well as diploma supplements where available)
- Documentation that the master's thesis is of 30 credits if this is not clearly stated in the diploma/transcript
- Documentation of English language proficiency (where required)
- Completed Affidavit of Financial Support
- Supervisor statement
- CV from supervisors not employed at the UiB (where required)
- Project description
- Copy of passport (for applicants without a Norwegian national identity number)
- NOKUT evaluation for applicants with education from outside of Scandinavia. Doctors with education from the EEA who have been licensed to work as a doctor in Norway do not need to submit a NOKUT evaluation.

The faculty may request additional documentation, if this is necessary for evaluating the application.

3 Agreement period

An application for admission to a PhD programme must normally be submitted within one (1) month after the start of the research project which leads to the PhD degree.

The standard length of the PhD programme is three (3) years of full-time study. It is not acceptable to plan to complete the PhD programme at a rate of progress that leads to an agreement period that is longer than six (6) years. The exception is the dual competence programme in dentistry, where the total planned agreement period can be up to eight (8) years, depending on the specialisation.

A shorter agreement period is granted if the candidate has already completed parts of their PhD programme, or when the admission builds upon prior employment in educational positions (fellow, research assistant, etc.), such that the total time to the doctoral project comprises three years (cf. Section 1-3(6) of the regulation concerning terms and conditions of employment for the posts of post-doctoral research fellow, research fellow, research assistant and resident).

3.1 Terms of extension after the end of the funding

The candidate's rights in the PhD programme, including the right to supervision, is dependent on a valid PhD period. On application, the agreement period may be extended. The application must include an explanation of what has been accomplished/published, what remains of the work towards the PhD degree, and a plan for completing the PhD within a reasonable time frame. The application may only be granted if the faculty, after an overall assessment, finds that the project can be completed during the extension period. A confirmation from the supervisor and the basic academic unit about supervision during the period of extension must be presented. A clear plan with a detailed description of milestones showing the planned progress during the extension period must be enclosed so that the department can follow up with the candidate. In the event of an extension, the candidate must apply for approval of the training component before the expiry of the extension, if this has not already been done.

Should a second extension be necessary, a valid reason for further delay, progress since the previous application and a clear plan for completion will be necessary.

If the candidate has not applied for an extension by the expiry of the agreement period, the candidate's rights can be terminated without further notice.

3.2 Maximum duration of the agreement period

The maximum extension period in the programme is two (2) calendar years from the end of the ordinary agreement period. Statutory leave and mandatory duty are not included. The candidates themselves are responsible of documenting any leaves of absence as early as possible.

4 Structure and content of the programme

4.1 Supervision

At the Faculty of Medicine, PhD candidates normally have two supervisors upon admission. The main supervisor has the overall responsibility for the supervision, and for the cooperation between the supervisors. If the main supervisor is not employed at UiB, an internal supervisor must have a specific, delegated responsibility to follow up with the candidate in terms of follow-up of practical matters and regulations at UiB.

With a justified application, PhD candidates may appoint up to four supervisors. The application must state how the responsibility is divided between the supervisors.

The requirements of impartiality under the PhD regulations for supervisors (Section 6-1) entail, among other things, that the person who is to be the supervisor cannot have a familial bond of being a sibling/spouse/partner/parent/child or an in-law of the candidate or one of the other supervisors.

The main supervisor's and the candidate's obligations are described in separate guidelines:

<https://www.uib.no/en/med/81613/supervision>

At the Faculty of Medicine, UiB's ethical guidelines apply to the relationship between supervisor and candidate: <https://www.uib.no/en/student/112539/ethical-guidelines-relations-between-supervisors-and-students-or-candidates>

4.2 Changes in supervisors and termination of supervisory relationships

The PhD candidate and supervisor may upon agreement request the faculty to make changes to the supervisory relationship for the PhD candidate. The application for a change in supervisor must be substantiated. An application for a change of supervisory relationship must be submitted to the faculty using a specific form, and without any delay. Changes to the supervisor will not be backdated, and applications should normally be submitted at least 6 months before the PhD period expires. The supervisor may not withdraw until a new supervisor has been appointed.

If the candidate or supervisor wishes to terminate the supervisory relationship because the other party does not comply with its obligations as specified under the regulations and in the accompanying agreements, the matter should first be addressed with the person in question, with a view to finding a solution that is academically sound and which all parties can accept. The PhD candidate and the supervisory group must together seek to find a solution to the situation which has arisen. If this is not possible, the department must be contacted for assistance in finding a solution. In such cases, the faculty may rule to change supervisors without everybody involved agreeing.

Disputes concerning the supervisor's or candidate's academic rights and obligations may be submitted by the parties or the department for consideration and resolution by the faculty. The decision of the faculty may be appealed to the Central Appeals Committee.

All parties must, to the greatest extent possible, ensure that conflicts over rights and any other issues that may lead to conflict are addressed early on, to avoid any risk of a delay in the PhD candidate's project.

4.3 Midway evaluation

The Faculty of Medicine has adopted a set of guidelines for the midway evaluation. The departments may also have their own procedures for its implementation. If the midway evaluation reveals delays or other challenges, the department of the head of research must initiate a follow-up within one month. <https://www.uib.no/en/med/136089/midway-evaluation>

4.4 Progress report and its follow-up

Each year, the PhD candidate and the main supervisor must submit separate and independent written reports on the progress of the PhD programme (Section 9 of the PhD regulations). The departments follow up with their candidates after the progress report each year. The head of research and the administrative manager of the department are responsible for reviewing the reports, and the head of research is responsible for following up with candidates who report poor progress or other matters that require that measures be implemented. The programme committee for the PhD programme reviews the department's summary reports each year as part of the work on quality assurance.

4.5 Training component

The training component at the Faculty of Medicine is 30 credits and shall contain academic and methodical schooling and be linked to the work with the thesis and for qualification to professions where there are great demands on academic insight. A maximum of 10 credits can be completed before formal admission to the PhD programme and these courses cannot be more than 5 years old on admission. Exceptions can be made for former research students who are continuing their student research project. In addition to the activities that give ECTS credits, the candidates must complete the Faculty's e-course *Treatment of personal data in medical and health research*: <https://mitt.uib.no/courses/29100>

At the Faculty of Medicine, the candidates must take a mandatory basic course. The midway evaluation is also mandatory, and gives 1 credit. The training component must include science theory and ethics with a scope of at least 5 credits and provide training in the dissemination of academic work to a scope of 6 credits. Courses in laboratory animal science are compulsory for candidates who will be working with laboratory animals.

A maximum of 10 credits may come from courses at the master's level. In addition, the training component must consist of activities at the PhD level and postgraduate level for candidates in dentistry.

The training component should, as a rule, be completed and approved at least 6 months before the scheduled submission.

See also the faculty's Guidelines for calculating course credits for the training component:
https://www.uib.no/sites/w3.uib.no/files/attachments/training_component_course_credits_2021.pdf

4.6 Thesis

A doctoral thesis should be of an international PhD level and have a scope equal to 2.5 years of full-time study. Theses at the Faculty of Medicine can be written as a monograph or based on several papers that are published or planned to be published. If a paper has not been sent to a peer-reviewed journal at the time of submission, the plan for publication must be stated in the co-author declaration. Compliance with the Norwegian Register for Scientific Journals, Series and Publishers shall be ensured: (https://dbh.nsd.uib.no/publiseringskanaler/Forside.action?request_locale=en). Articles published elsewhere should not be included in a PhD thesis.

If the thesis is based on several papers, the research question and conclusions presented in the papers are to be presented in an overall perspective of a compilation, which in this way documents the context of the thesis.

Regardless of the format, the thesis must contribute to the development of new knowledge in the chosen field and must be of such quality as to qualify for publication as a part of the academic literature in the field. The thesis should preferably be written in English. Theses in Norwegian, Swedish or Danish are also accepted for evaluation.

Please refer to the faculty's Guidance on Requirements relating to Doctoral Theses:

http://ekstern.filer.uib.no/mofa/forskning/Retningslinjer/samledokument_guidance_on_requirements_relating_to_doctoral_dissertations_for_the_phd_degree_at_the_faculty_of_medicine_and_dentistry_approved_05.09.16_1.pdf

5 Completion

5.1 Submission and evaluation

Before submission of the thesis, the compilation of article-based PhD theses must be analysed using the plagiarism detection system with which the institution has an agreement. Compilation is defined as the introduction to the published articles. Monographs are run through the software in its entirety.

The candidate is responsible for delivering their thesis to the department, which formally applies for submission on behalf of the candidate. As a rule, the candidate submits the thesis electronically, as a single PDF file. Other forms of submission may be permitted following prior agreement with the department that receives the thesis.

Together with the thesis, an application form must be submitted with a proposal for an assessment committee and an account of multiple authorship (applies to article-based theses) on a specified form.

Candidates who are no longer active in the PhD programme but who, under the PhD regulations, have a right to submit their thesis are responsible for obtaining co-author declarations from the former main supervisor or other central representatives of the co-authors. If the department recommends the submission, this must be stated by the department signing the application for submission and proposal to the assessment committee. If the department does not recommend the submission, the candidate can deliver the thesis directly to the faculty, without a signature from the department/supervisor and without a proposal to an assessment committee. The faculty will then contact the department and request a proposal for the assessment committee.

The faculty may decide to allow a minor revision of the thesis in accordance with the PhD regulations, section 11-5. Should this be decided, the candidate must submit their reworked thesis by the deadline given by the faculty. Should the candidate not submit a reworked version of the thesis by this deadline, the thesis will be assessed as originally submitted.

The committee chairman is responsible for submitting a tentative date for the public defence to the Faculty, within one month of the committee receiving the thesis. The date of the public defence must be more than ten weeks after the submission is received by the faculty, and must be planned so that the recommendation can be ready within 4 weeks before the public defence. The public defence must be held within the framework of the academic year, and cannot be held during the periods between week 26 and week 33 (inclusive), between 20 December and 5 January (inclusive), or during Easter week.

For further procedures on completion, please refer to the faculty's website:

<https://www.uib.no/en/med/81652/submission-and-public-defense>

For supplementary regulations and procedures on assessment, please refer to the faculty's guidelines for the evaluation process for doctoral degrees at the Faculty of Medicine:

http://ekstern.filer.uib.no/mofa/forskning/Retningslinjer/Guidelines_for_the_evaluation_process_for_the_doctoral_degree%20Vedtatt%2005.09.16.pdf

5.2 Correction of formal errors

Application for correction of formal errors can be submitted to the faculty in accordance with the provisions of the PhD regulations. If the application is approved, the errors may be corrected in the version of the thesis to be published. The errata list must accompany the printed thesis and can be printed at the back of the thesis or added as an insert.

Errors that are of a substantive nature or that may affect whether the thesis can be approved cannot be corrected.

Formal errors include typographical errors and linguistic corrections, references, page layout, text format etc. Correction of formal errors can make the text more understandable or grammatically

correct, but the candidate cannot change the text to make it more precise or change the meaning of the text. Changes in tables cannot be approved as errata.

That the candidate cannot make any substantial changes includes situations where the candidate before the defence is informed that a manuscript is accepted or printed by a publisher in a revised form. It is the manuscript that was submitted for assessment that is the basis for the public defence. The candidate may, however, in the preface of the printed thesis, refer to the published article.

5.3 Language (trial lecture and defence)

The trial lecture and defence should be held in its entirety in one language, usually the thesis language.

6 Quality assurance

6.1 Evaluation system for the PhD programme

The faculty is responsible for the elements in the quality assurance system that are delegated to the programme level. The programme committee for the PhD programme follows up this responsibility in collaboration with the faculty management.

6.2 Composition of the programme committee

The programme committee consists of the head of committee, the head of the research programme, the academic coordinator for PhD programme, 1 head of research school, 2 academic staff members, 2 PhD candidates and 2 students. The faculty administration has secretarial function for the programme committee.

6.3 Course evaluation

All courses at PhD level at the Faculty of Medicine will be evaluated every three years. The departments that implement the individual course are responsible for carrying out the evaluation, and for reporting to the Programme Committee within the set deadline.

6.4 Evaluating the framework of the training component and course portfolio

When necessary, the programme committee assesses the framework for the training component and the scope of the course portfolio, and the need to change the framework, create or shut down courses.

6.5 Report on PhD programme's attainments

A report on the PhD programme's attainments is prepared annually by the faculty based on the department's reports, and constitutes a basis for assessing whether measures should be introduced in the PhD programme.

6.6 Progress report

The annual progress report from the individual candidate and the main supervisor is reviewed by the departments, which adopts follow-up and introduction of measures in the individual PhD course. The programme committee for the PhD programme reviews the department's summary reports and assesses the need for systematic measures.

6.7 Midway evaluation

The midway evaluation provides an overview of the progress of an individual PhD course and will reveal any delays with regard to the planned progress. The head of research at the department that the candidate is affiliated with is responsible for following up candidates where a worrying level of progression is revealed in the midway evaluation.

6.8 Candidate survey

All candidates who have completed the programme are given the opportunity to evaluate the PhD programme in connection with the doctoral promotion. The faculty analyses the results of the candidate survey with a view to taking possible steps.

6.9 Delay and dropout survey

Every three years, a delay and drop-out survey is conducted, where information is obtained from those who are delayed or who have dropped out. The faculty administration analyses the results of the survey and prepares any measures in cooperation with the programme committee of the PhD programme.

6.10 Programme evaluation

Every six years, an external committee, appointed by the faculty, will examine the PhD programme in its entirety: information to potential applicants, admission, measures underway and the quality of the completed research.