

## **Information for new PhD fellows at the Department of Law, SDU**

Everyone who becomes a fellow in order to obtain the PhD degree is highly qualified. However, it is rare for a fellow to have previously worked on a research project of the same scope as a PhD project.

In addition to the academic challenges associated with all research projects, there are also a number of more professional challenges that must be learned as part of the research education programme. As a fellow, you obviously bear a significant responsibility for this learning process, but it is important to state that you are not alone in this.

The following pages contain a presentation of important elements of the work as a fellow. There is an overview of what is required of the fellow and how the Department of Law can contribute to a successful project process. The idea of this introduction is to create an overview – it is not a document that lists all the opportunities and obligations that exist in connection with a fellowship.

### **1. The organisational framework for the work**

#### ***1.1. PhD School at the Faculty of Business and Social Sciences***

As a law fellow, you are enrolled at the PhD School at the Faculty of Business and Social Sciences at the University of Southern Denmark. The PhD School includes all fellows of the Faculty of Business and Social Sciences and, in addition to PhD programmes in law, offers PhD programmes in business economics, journalism, social sciences, political science and economics.

The PhD School is managed by the *Head of the PhD School*. The Head of the PhD School has overall responsibility for the PhD School's activities.

The Head of the PhD School works closely with *the PhD Committee*, which consists of five representatives of the academic staff and five representatives of the PhD students at the Faculty. The PhD Committee's tasks include approving PhD plans, PhD courses and applications for credits and dispensation, preparing proposals for internal guidelines and supervision and recommending the composition of assessment committees when assessing PhD theses.

A secretariat is attached to the PhD School, which supports the Head of the PhD School and the PhD Committee in their work with quality assurance and development of the PhD programme.

For each of the PhD School's PhD programmes, a *subject committee* has been established. The subject committees consist of 3–5 representatives from the academic staff within the relevant subject area. The members of the subject committees are appointed by the PhD Committee on the recommendation of the heads of department.

The subject committees act as representatives for the academic staff in the PhD Committee and assess applicants in connection with the enrolment of PhD students. The subject committees may be consulted by the PhD Committee and the Head of the PhD School about important academic issues, including individual cases.

#### ***1.2. Department of Law***

Most legal fellows are affiliated with the Department of Law and are part of one of its research groups, which means that the Head of Department is your overall personnel manager. The Head of Department has delegated certain day-to-day personnel management tasks to the Department's research group leaders. The research group leader of the research group you are affiliated with is thus your immediate manager.

The connection to the Department of Law also means that you are part of both the academic and the social environments at the Department. It is a good idea that you take advantage of academic environment in particular, as it can be a means of inspiration for your work, just as you can draw on colleagues' experience regarding academic, material issues and in relation to methodological considerations.

The Department of Law has appointed a *PhD Coordinator*. The Coordinator participates in most activities relating to the PhD programme at the Department and is thus the Department's VIP representative on the Faculty's PhD Committee and the Department's representative on JurForsk's board, see Section 1.3. In addition to these administrative tasks, it is a very important function for the PhD Coordinator to act as a neutral party at the Department in relation to the fellows. It should be understood that the PhD Coordinator is not your supervisor and is not your boss. In situations where you want to talk about your course, it may be easier to talk to a neutral person such as the PhD Coordinator than having to discuss the topics with either your supervisor or manager.

### **1.3. Danish Legal Research Education Programme (JurForsk)**

JurForsk is a collaboration between several research units in Denmark that educate legal researchers. JurForsk has an important objective to ensure legal research education programmes of high and consistent quality, and in this connection the most important activity in JurForsk is that a number of researcher courses aimed at legal fellows are offered. The courses are organised and run by the participating research units either alone or in collaboration. Sometimes, external presenters are also involved.

It is fully permitted to participate in courses other than those offered by JurForsk, which also happens, but in JurForsk there are relevant legal researcher courses and these are pre-approved by the PhD School at the Faculty, which means that the ECTS credits associated with the courses are automatically recognised by the PhD School.

You have the opportunity to influence the range of courses offered in JurForsk, as the Department of Law participates in the collaboration and has a representative on the board of JurForsk.

Read about JurForsk on the collaboration website: <http://jurforsk.dk/>

## **2. Elements of the PhD programme**

The PhD programme includes the following elements:

- Completion of an independent research project (PhD project), which ends with a thesis and a public defence
- Participation in PhD courses corresponding to a total of 30 ECTS
- Participation in active research environments, including stays at other research institutions (primarily abroad), private research companies, etc. (change of research environment)

- Gaining experience with teaching activities or other dissemination of knowledge

## **2.1. Completion of research project**

The preparation and quality of the PhD thesis are your responsibility, but in connection with your research work you will be assigned both a principal supervisor and a co-supervisor. The principal supervisor is usually internal, whereas the co-supervisor is usually from another institution.

It is the principal supervisor's task to assist you in relation to the conditions associated with the employment – the supervisor cannot help you with all questions but can usually refer you to the right person at the Department or elsewhere. If you have questions, you are also welcome to seek help elsewhere, for example, from the PhD Coordinator or the Department secretariat.

The supervisor's central task is to assist you in the preparation of your PhD thesis. In this connection, the supervisor must assist as necessary in all aspects of the thesis, be it in problem formulation, choice of research design and method or in connection with academic, material questions. In addition, you can seek advice from the supervisors in relation to how you should work with your research.

It is important to emphasise that you yourself have a responsibility in relation to using your supervisors. Even if the supervisors try to get an idea of how your work process is developing, you yourself are closest to knowing whether the supervisors' assistance is needed, and if so, you should seek out your supervisors.

It is a good idea very early in the process to discuss with your supervisors how to organise supervision so that you are all clear about how you can use the supervisors. Such an agreement can, of course, be adapted along the way as experience with the collaboration is gained.

In individual cases, it may turn out that the work on the PhD thesis is best assisted by a supervisor other than the one appointed at the beginning of the project. In such cases, a change of supervisor may be necessary. The decision about this is made by the Head of Department, but you are welcome to discuss it with the PhD Coordinator before contacting the Head of Department.

## **2.2 Course participation**

As part of the researcher education programme, a fellow must participate in PhD courses corresponding to 30 ECTS credits. It is recommended that the courses are completed within the first 1½–2 years of the PhD programme.

PhD courses may include:

- PhD courses offered by the PhD School, by researcher education programmes that the Faculty participates in or collaborates with or by other Danish or international institutions, e.g. in connection with stays abroad.
- The Danish Agency for Education and Research's Business Course for Business PhD students.
- Other courses of particular relevance in connection with the PhD project, e.g. courses in IT or statistical methods.
- Active participation in seminars, workshops or conferences. Conference participation with a presentation of paper can be included with a maximum of 2 ECTS credits. Conference participation with a poster presentation can be equated to a presentation of paper and can count as a maximum of 2 ECTS.
- Courses in communication and teaching methods for PhD students (max. 5 ECTS).

- Self-study/reading course under the supervision of a lecturer. It is a requirement that some form of evaluation or examination is included in connection with such a course.

At least half (15 ECTS credits) of your course programme must consist of PhD courses with academic content. Communication courses (SDU's courses on 'Academic Writing', etc.) as well as courses on teaching methods may make up a maximum of 5 ECTS. Master's courses can be included when the main supervisor deems it relevant to the project.

In relation to legal fellows, the largest range of courses offered is assembled at JurForsk, which has courses of a general, methodical and specific nature. Participation in other activities, e.g. conferences at which research results are presented, can also provide ECTS credits in this connection.

The course programme is part of the PhD plan and must be approved by the PhD Committee. Often, it is not possible to set out a fully detailed course programme in connection with the preparation of the PhD plan. It is therefore the responsibility of the principal supervisor and the PhD student to identify relevant courses on an ongoing basis so that the PhD plan can be completed.

Upon approval, the PhD Committee decides how many ECTS credits each activity can amount to based on the following principles:

- For courses offered by researcher education programmes in which the Faculty participates, the ECTS value set by the researcher education programme is generally used (1 ECTS point corresponds to approximately 25–30 hours of work).
- Conferences at which the PhD student presents a paper or delivers a poster presentation usually corresponds to 2 ECTS credits.
- Courses at master's level relevant to the project are assessed at half of the ECTS credits applicable to master's students.

PhD courses offered by the PhD School are advertised on the PhD School's website under [www.phdcourses.dk](http://www.phdcourses.dk). Information about courses offered at other national or international educational institutions and researcher education programmes can be applied for via the website's link.

It is compulsory to participate in the PhD School's course *Responsible Conduct of Research* (or an equivalent course offered elsewhere).

### **2.3. Change of research environment**

According to the PhD Executive Order, the researcher education programme includes stays at other, primarily international, research institutions. In view of the international level of the PhD programme, this should normally be a long-term stay abroad of 3–6 months' duration at an international research institution, which is academically relevant for the PhD programme.

Stays at other research environments must be approved by the principal supervisor and the Head of Department and must be stated in the PhD plan. If the stay is not finalised in connection with the PhD plan, it must be stated when the stay abroad is expected to take place. When you have planned your stay abroad, you must submit the information to the Head of the PhD School for approval.

If a long-term stay abroad is not possible or appropriate, this must be substantiated in the PhD

plan, and at the same time the plans must explain how the PhD Executive Order's requirement for a change of research environment is to be achieved.

In connection with stays abroad, you are encouraged to apply for external funding. The Department's secretariat can assist with this work.

#### **2.4. Teaching and knowledge dissemination**

According to the PhD Executive Order, PhD students must gain experience with teaching activities or other forms of knowledge dissemination during the PhD programme. At the PhD School at the Faculty of Business and Social Sciences, this must correspond to at least 300 hours, see more below under Section 5.

Knowledge dissemination may include:

- Teaching
- Supervision of students
- Delivering lectures
- Participation in pedagogical education and supervision
- Preparation of academic books, contributions to books, articles, feature articles or posters

At the Department of Law, the requirement that a fellow must gain experience with teaching activities or other knowledge dissemination is met first and foremost by the fellows teaching one or more legal subjects – either on one of the legal education programmes or on other education programmes offered at SDU – and to a limited extent performing other tasks related to teaching or dissemination. However, in order to prepare the PhD student for a potential career in research, efforts should be made as far as possible for the PhD student to obtain some experience in all the above activities.

### **3. Reporting to the PhD School**

When you are enrolled at the PhD School, you must deliver reports on a number of matters. In this connection, you must submit the following to the PhD School's secretariat:

- *PhD plan* This is an overall plan for the PhD project and the other elements included in the PhD programme, and the plan forms the basis for the ongoing evaluation of the PhD project and how the PhD programme is progressing. The plan is drawn up with the principal supervisor and must be as precise as possible. The plan must be received **by the PhD School's secretariat no later than 2 months** after the start of the PhD programme. You can read more about the content of the PhD plan on the [PhD School's website](#).
- *Evaluation form in continuation of status seminar*. **Within 6–9 months**, an internal seminar will be held and you and your principal supervisor must submit a joint report to the PhD School. The Head of the PhD School must then approve the evaluation.
- *Mid-term evaluation status report*. After **16–18 months of** enrolment, a mid-term evaluation is carried out. Prior to this, a status report prepared by you and your principal supervisor must be submitted. You can read more about the content of the status report on the [PhD School's website](#).
- *Status paper for the third-year evaluation*. No later than **30 months** after enrolment, a third-year evaluation must be completed. In this respect, a 2-page status paper prepared by you in collaboration with your principal supervisor must be submitted. You can read more about the content of [the status paper on the PhD School's website](#).



- *Application for approval of ECTS in connection with courses.* This happens on an ongoing basis.

In addition to the reports mentioned, you may need to make reports to the PhD School in other cases, typically in the event of major deviations from the basis on which you have been awarded the fellowship, or changes to already approved conditions. For example, this may be significant changes to time frames, including delays in sub-elements, changes to the form of the thesis, changes to the place or duration of stays abroad or significant changes to the course programme or dissemination activities. In the event of such changes, the PhD student and the principal supervisor jointly prepare a description of the changes and the reasons for them. The description is forwarded to the PhD School's secretariat.

#### **4. Ongoing evaluations**

##### **4.1. Status seminar**

**Within 6–9 months**, an internal status seminar will be held. The purpose of this evaluation is to ensure an initial overview of the PhD programme with a focus on delimitation, quality and the progression of the PhD project.

This evaluation takes place at the Department of Law in connection with one of the two annual Department seminars (January or August) and takes the form of a presentation of the PhD project to the Department. Two of your senior research colleagues will then ask detailed questions about the project with a view to qualifying it,<sup>1</sup> and you will also have the opportunity to get feedback from your other research colleagues at the Department.

You can read more about the status seminar on the [PhD School's website](#).

##### **4.2. Mid-term seminar/evaluation**

After **16–18 months** of enrolment, a mid-term seminar/evaluation is held with the participation of two evaluators – one internal and one external. The purpose of the mid-term evaluation is to provide a basis for and an assessment of the project's development and results achieved and to ensure that the PhD programme is completed on time. The evaluation thus provides a basis for a possible adjustment to the plans for the remaining period of study. The evaluation also provides the opportunity to get a second opinion on the PhD project by involving an internal and an external evaluator in addition to the principal supervisor.

The evaluation is carried out on the basis of (draft of) one or more articles or chapters that are expected to be included in the final thesis (approx. 50 pages) and which are to be submitted to the two evaluators well in advance of the seminar. The overall material should allow the evaluators to assess the research design and methods and the preliminary results. It is not expected for the material to be separately edited or adapted for evaluation purposes.

At the seminar itself, the written material is presented and both its content and design are discussed. The PhD supervisors can take part in the discussion and the principal supervisor can also permit other people who are present to participate. There is no immediate limitation on the topics that the evaluators may choose to discuss with the PhD student.

<sup>1</sup> Prior to the seminar, you must submit an updated project description and your presentation (PowerPoint presentation) to the two specially appointed research colleagues.

On the basis of the written material and the seminar, the evaluators prepare a statement about the PhD programme to date and the plans for the PhD project, including the strengths, weaknesses and risks of the project. In the statement, the evaluators may put forward suggestions and ideas for future work. The evaluators' statement must be submitted to the principal supervisor as soon as possible and no later than two weeks after the seminar. The PhD student will also get a copy of the statement and will have the opportunity to comment on the statement within two weeks.

As part of the mid-term evaluation, the principal supervisor will also prepare an assessment of the programme to date as well as any planned adjustments and changes in relation to the original PhD plan. The PhD School sends a copy of the statement from the principal supervisor to the PhD student, who can comment on this within two weeks.

The principal supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the overall material – i.e. the status report (see Section 3 above), the evaluators' statement and the principal supervisor's statement – is sent to the PhD School's secretariat no later than one month after the PhD seminar has been held.

You can read more about the mid-term evaluation on [the PhD School's website](#).

#### **4.3. Third-year evaluation**

No later than **30 months** after enrolment, the final evaluation of the PhD programme is carried out before the PhD thesis is submitted. The purpose of this evaluation is to conduct an assessment of the project's progression, follow up on the evaluators' recommendations from the mid-term evaluation and review planned/completed study elements. The evaluation also gives the PhD student the opportunity to get a second opinion on the PhD project.

In order to follow up on the evaluators' recommendations from the mid-term evaluation, the internal evaluator is again involved in this final evaluation of the PhD programme. Based on a specific assessment, the Department may also choose to involve the external assessor. The follow-up of the evaluators' recommendations from the mid-term evaluation must be based on a short status paper from the PhD student (see Section 3 above). Based on the PhD student's status paper, the internal evaluator is expected to address any criticisms/risks that the PhD student should be aware of. The evaluator prepares a statement, which is sent to the principal supervisor.

As part of the third-year evaluation, the principal supervisor also prepares a statement that must include an assessment of the programme to date and any planned adjustments and changes in relation to the PhD plan, as well as an assessment of the PhD student's ability to complete the programme in accordance with the PhD plan. The PhD School sends a copy of the statement from the principal supervisor to the PhD student, who can comment on the statement within two weeks.

You can read more about the third-year evaluation on [the PhD School's website](#).

### **5. Work for the Department**

As a PhD fellow with employee status, there is an obligation to perform work tasks equivalent to 840 hours during the employment period. Of these, 300 hours are to be used for

teaching/knowledge

dissemination, see Section 2.4 above. The remaining hours can be used for other academic tasks, e.g. research assistance, marking exam papers, internal examiner work, miscellaneous committee work, etc.

Working hours are calculated as follows:

- Teaching: 5 hours per teaching hour
- Exam paper marking: 0.5 hours per assignment
- Supervision of students: The Department's norms for supervision work
- Research assistance: all hours are included, provided that the work involved is not of direct relevance to the thesis
- Presentations: all hours are included – including preparation and presentation
- Participation in committee work at the Department or Faculty: The Department's norms for committee work

In order to prepare the PhD student for a possible career in research, the Department wishes the PhD students to be involved in one or more of the above tasks. At the same time, however, the aim is that over and above the tasks associated with teaching and knowledge dissemination, the PhD students are only assigned tasks to a limited extent.

## **6. Secondary employment**

In special circumstances and to a limited extent, PhD fellows may take on other tasks than those connected with their employment as a fellow. However, it is important to remember that work tasks linked to the fellowship must have first priority and that the task of writing a PhD thesis is rather demanding.

At any rate, secondary employment will require a permit from the Head of the PhD School and will require that the secondary employment has academic relevance for the PhD project. For example, this may be teaching at other educational institutions or completion of a work task that began before confirmation of enrolment in the PhD programme was received. The permit is granted by the Head of the PhD School upon justified application from the PhD student accompanied by a recommendation from the principal supervisor and the Head of Department.

## **7. Leave and maternity leave**

PhD students must give written notice of maternity leave no later than three months before the expected birth to the Head of Department, the personnel office and the PhD School's secretariat. The PhD student is covered by the contractual maternity rules. Information about current rules for maternity and adoption can be obtained by contacting HR or found in the Danish Personnel Agency's circular on maternity, adoption and care days.

Upon application to the Head of the PhD School, leave may be granted if the PhD student has been on sick leave for a given period and this gives rise to an extension of the enrolment. The PhD student should be aware that sick leave must be reported to the relevant department secretariat. The PhD programme will not be extended for illness lasting less than one month. You must use a special form to apply for other types of leave.

In special circumstances, other types of leave from the PhD programme may be granted – following a justified application to the Head of PhD School, accompanied by a recommendation from the principal supervisor and the Head of Department – e.g. other temporary employment, provided that the period of leave has academic relevance in relation to the PhD project. You must always apply for leave of absence prior to the planned period of leave. In consultation with the Head of PhD School, the Dean will decide whether leave can be granted and will send written notice to the PhD student.

**Further information:**

PhD Executive Order: <https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/R0710.aspx?id=152430>

Guidelines for the PhD Executive Order:

<https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/R0710.aspx?id=159087>

PhD School's website:

[http://www.sdu.dk/da/forskning/phd/phd\\_skoler/phduddannelsen\\_under\\_samfundsvidenskab](http://www.sdu.dk/da/forskning/phd/phd_skoler/phduddannelsen_under_samfundsvidenskab)

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