

PhD Policy at the Department of Sociology, Environmental and Business Economics (SEBE)

PhD Policy

Purpose

The training of PhD students ranks among SEBE's highest priorities. While graduation is obviously the most important measure of success, it is not the only one. Earning a PhD is both taxing and rewarding. The primary aim of the policy guidelines set out below is to help the student address the inevitable challenges that go with earning a PhD constructively by providing a stimulating and supportive environment. The policy of SEBE supplements the rules and regulations laid down in The Ministerial Order and the Faculty guidelines.

More specifically, these guidelines concern:

- Introduction of the PhD student
- Supervision
- The role of the PhD coordinator
- Research Groups
- Teaching and other obligations
- PhD courses and stays abroad
- The PhD club and the annual PhD day

Introduction of the PhD student

The introduction of the new PhD student will in general follow the onboarding procedure at SEBE. The new PhD student will be welcomed by the supervisor who will show him or her around, introducing to colleagues, secretaries etc. Furthermore, the Head of Department will officially welcome the PhD student within the next department meeting after the start of the PhD and the research group leader will officially welcome the PhD student with the next research group meeting after the start of the PhD. Finally, a meeting between the PhD-student and the PhD-coordinator will be arranged soon after the start of the PhD to elaborate on all details regarding the responsibility plan (see Appendix 1) and further issues.

Supervision

The Department appoints a principal supervisor and a co-supervisor. The principal supervisor is either a full or an associate professor at the Department with 1) relevant competencies within the doctoral student's field of research and 2) the necessary supervision skills.

The principal supervisor convenes the first meeting. At this meeting the supervisor(s) and the PhD student seek to come to an understanding concerning:

- The scope and frequency of supervision
- The nature of supervision
- Progress and progress reports
- Research Group affiliation

The nature of supervision may change considerably over the course of the project. In the initial stage the supervisor has an important role in helping the student define and delimit the PhD Plan in terms of key research questions, approach and literature. Throughout the process, the supervisor's primary role is to be a critical and constructive reader of the supervisee's drafts. The supervisor should also provide inspiration with respect to relevant PhD courses and national/international scientific conferences, should provide strategic help to identify relevant foreign universities for the student to go to within the stay abroad etc., and will normally help the student finalize the PhD plan. Finally, the supervisor should also take the strategic lead for setting up the first year evaluation as well as the PhD defense and should (together with the head of research group) also guarantee the dissemination of the PhD results within the research group and department. Throughout the program, the supervisor has a dual role in encouraging and monitoring progress.

The PhD plan must be completed and submitted no later than two months (and approved by the PhD school leader within three months) of the start of the programme and must meet the requirements laid down in § 9 of the Ministerial Order. The principal supervisor should actively participate in working out the PhD plan, which is signed by both the doctoral student and the principal supervisor.

Progress reports should contain an assessment of progress made (in terms of the commitments made in previous reports), account for possible delays or changes of direction, and define new goals for the following period. The general purpose of these reports is to keep the project on track and provide information on major changes. In particular, the first year report is used to support recommendations with respect to the termination or confirmation of candidature.

Changes of research direction, insoluble conflicts or personal reasons sometimes necessitate a change of supervisor. Either the supervisor or the supervisee may refer this matter to the Head of Department or the PhD coordinator. If possible, the student will then be assigned to a different supervisor.

The role of the PhD coordinator

The role of the PhD coordinator varies over the course of the programme. Initially, the coordinator informs applicants about the Department's research profile, its current and future vacancies, possibilities of financing etc. The PhD coordinator assists the PhD student in making a budget covering the PhD project and period. Throughout the process s/he is the PhD student's contact person in relation to regulations and working conditions. There is at least one regular meeting each the semester. More generally, the PhD coordinator may be involved in settling conflicts that may arise during the programme.

The PhD coordinator arranges at least one meeting annually among PhD students and supervisors to discuss general problems and ideas. At these meetings the PhD student is introduced to funding opportunities for their research stay abroad by the external funding office at SDU. Furthermore, the PhD coordinator may be asked to observe the first-year seminar, to monitor the progress of the PhD-plan, and to inform the students about post-doc career opportunities. Finally, the PhD coordinator helps the PhD students to organize the annual PhD day.

Research Groups

The participation in research groups is mandatory and should be seen as an important source of inspiration for PhD students as well as for other members. Thus, research groups provide opportunities for presenting and receiving feedback on a regular basis from a team of dedicated researchers; the PhD student is trained in delivering feedback himself/herself; there is a great deal of inspiration to be drawn from the work of these colleagues, both in terms of seeing how problems may be solved and in terms of co-authoring, data-sharing, introduction to relevant conferences etc. Like other researchers at SEBE, the doctoral student can be a member of two research groups, but only a core member of one.

Teaching and other obligations

Decisions on teaching and other work obligations equivalent to 6 months of work are made by the Head of Department in collaboration with the PhD student and the principal supervisor. The principal supervisor is in turn responsible for providing supervision regarding all aspects of teaching of the PhD student. Specifically, this primarily includes guidance regarding relevant teaching methods and materials as well as key administrative teaching tasks. The principal supervisor is further responsible and also recommended to include other relevant SEBE-members in this regard such as corresponding course responsible, study service members, and IT-service to guarantee a stringent process of the PhD student's teaching tasks.

During the PhD program, the PhD student can participate relevant introductory SDU courses in teaching methods and university pedagogy.

In accordance with Faculty guidelines, the teaching activities should be relevant to the PhD project as far as possible, should fit into the PhD plan and should not interfere with the student's possibilities of completing his or her project, participate in courses or stay at a foreign university. The Department is responsible for registering the nature and scope of work done and keep the PhD student as well as the principal supervisor informed on a continual basis. A more detailed account of these regulations is laid down in the Faculty guidelines.

PhD courses and stays abroad

The Ministerial Order on the PhD Programme stipulates that the student complete courses totalling about 30 ECTS points and recommends that this be done within the first 1½-2 years of the course. The course programme must be approved by the principal supervisor. As concerns stays at foreign research institutions, the Faculty guidelines recommend a 3-6 months' duration. It is expected that the PhD student applies for external funding to finance the stay abroad.

Both courses and stays at foreign universities must be approved by the supervisor and the Head of Department.

The PhD club and the PhD day

PhD students are encouraged to form and participate in a PhD club where PhD students at the department are organizing social activities among themselves or with all department colleagues. It is the Department's intention to support the activities of the PhD club as far as possible. The PhD club is an obvious framework for introducing new doctoral students to the group as a whole as well as for discussing issues of common interest. The PhD club with support of the PhD coordinator is responsible for planning and organizing the annual PhD day.

Appendix: PhD responsibility plan at SEBE

Challenges and tasks within the PhD-program	Main Responsible				
	PhD-student	Head of Department	Head of Research Group	Principal supervisor	PhD-coordinator
ADMINISTRATION					
Welcome of PhD-student at the department					
Welcome of PhD-student at the corresponding research group					
Development of the 3-year-PhD-plan					
Strategic organization of stay abroad					
Operative organization of stay abroad					
Funding of stay abroad					
Strategic organization of the PhD-defense					
Setting-up the PhD budget					
RESEARCH					
Strategic organization of the first-year-evaluation					
Supervision of PhD-projects					
Planning trips to national and international conferences					
Dissemination of PhD-results in RG meetings					
Participation at PhD-courses					
Set-up of assessment committee for PhD-defense					
TEACHING					
Elaboration of teaching plan					
Teaching supervision					
MENTAL WELL-BEING AND FURTHER CAREER STEPS					
Monitoring of the progress of the PhD-plan					
Informing about post-doc-career-opportunities					
Supervision problems					

