



The PhD Navigation Handbook

Essential information and practical tips
for incoming PhD candidates at the
Department of Political Science

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Introduction

Congratulations with your new position as a PhD student!

Like starting in any job, starting as a PhD student naturally entails a lot of questions, and practicalities to be figured out. This welcoming pamphlet is a condensation of the experiences made by senior and previous PhD colleagues about questions that typically come up in the first couple of months after starting as a PhD student. Of course, the list is in no way exhaustive. So, don't hesitate to knock on the door of your Supervisor, the PhD coordinator, your PhD mentor or other PhD candidates—or any other door at the department—and ask questions.

Who to go to?

During your PhD, you will meet many different people with different roles in relation to your project, but also in relation to your employment: Your supervisor, the PhD coordinator, the PhD School, a mentor, the secretariat, the Work Environment Representative, the Head of Section and the Head of Department, to mention just a few.

In the following, just a brief overview:

- **Your supervisor(s):** They are your main contact and support points at the department. The **main supervisor** carries the responsibility of providing you with guidance in all matters related to your work at the department and your research for the thesis. You will have a **second supervisor** who also provides guidance. You should meet both of them regularly, keep them updated on your progress. Your main supervisor would be the one you meet more often and for anything related to your project. See also below section on [matching expectations](#).
- **Head of Section:** the Head of Section is the person who coordinates teaching and other scientific activities in the research section to which you belong. They decide the teaching plan for the study programs to which the section contributes. Therefore, they decide what teaching tasks and other work duties you need to undertake during your PhD time. Together with your supervisor and you, they will be involved in setting up your [PhD plan](#). You should contact the Head of Section for matters related to your work duties at the Department. The Head of Section will also meet with you once a year for the [employee development dialogue \(MUS\)](#).
- **PhD coordinator:** is the person who has the responsibility of coordinating and integrating the PhD students within the PhD students' group and the department. Also, it is responsible for the circulation of information between Department, PhD School and PhD students, and ensuring that the quality expectations are fulfilled. The PhD Coordinator also organizes

regular activities for the PhD group (workshops, retreat, Colloquium) and helps with the informal meetings of the group (whenever needed).

→ Should a dispute arise between your supervisor and you, or between you and another colleague, you are always welcome to contact the PhD coordinator who will guide you and inform you about your options. In case you feel that the PhD coordinator cannot help you, you can always contact the Head of Department.

- **Head of Department:** The Head of the Department approves your PhD Plan and has an overview of your progress, but is not in the nitty-gritty details of your work at the Department or your thesis work. Their responsibility is that you thrive at the department and have opportunities to develop professionally. They are the person to address if there is something related to your work at the department or in relation to the supervisor or other colleagues – if cannot be solved at lower levels.
- **Mentor:** When you start at the department, your PhD supervisor will find a mentor for you (and will inform the PhD coordinator about that). The role of the mentor is to help you adapt to your new life as PhD student, introduce you to the social environment at the department, and help with everyday questions. If you for some reason do not hear about your mentor, do not hesitate to contact your supervisor.

At times it can be quite confusing to find out who is responsible for what—do not hesitate to ask the PhD coordinator. **A rule of thumb:** If it is in relation to your project, ask your supervisor. If it is in relation to social life at the department or the work environment, ask your mentor. If it is about formalities which your PhD supervisor cannot help you with, ask the PhD coordinator.

For Secretarial Assistance and IT support see [this link](#)

In the following, this document addresses the requirements of the PhD programme and then the practicalities of life at the Department.

Requirements related to the PhD programme:

What you need to know and how the department supports you in fulfilling them

Legal Framework

There are two main legal documents that are relevant in relation to your status as PhD students and employees of SDU. The first one is the Ministerial Order on PhD Programmes – because it sets the rules for participation in any PhD Programme in Denmark, and the second one is the Collective Agreement between the Ministry of Finance and the Danish Confederation of Professional Associations (AC) – because it sets the rules in relation to your employment at the Department.

The Ministerial Order

According to the Ministerial Order on PhD Programmes (PhD Order BEK no. 1039 of 27/08/2013), 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.” (Ministry for Higher Education and Science 2013). Amongst others, the PhD fellow is expected to “gain experience of teaching activities or other form of knowledge dissemination which is related to the student's PhD project” (part 3, clause 7.2 (4)).

The institution may, on its own initiative or following an application from the PhD student offer the PhD student a teaching course (part 3, clause 8.2 (3,)) or teaching guidance (part 3, clause 8.2 (4)) (Ministry for Higher Education and Science 2013).

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, which must, amongst others, contain a plan for teaching activities or other knowledge dissemination (Ministry for Higher Education and Science 2013).

How is this requirement implemented at the Faculty of Social Sciences of SDU?

Based on this Ministerial Order, the **PhD Schools** establish the requirements for graduating the PhD Programme and obtaining the PhD title.

The **PhD School of the Faculty of Social Sciences (SDU)** has established a list of requirements that you need to fulfill in order to graduate the PhD programme and receive the PhD title. See [below](#).

The Collective Agreement for Academics

The following information applies only to **PhD students employed under a 5+3 year scheme**.¹ For any PhD students employed at the Department (either directly or via a project run at the Department) under a 5+3 scheme, the employment contract is full-time, with a fixed duration of 3 years. PhD students are paid a salary in accordance with the agreement between the Ministry of Finance and the Danish Confederation of Professional Associations (AC, see [Retsinformation](#)) and have a corresponding work obligation of maximum 840 hours over the 3 year period of time (AC §7

¹ For PhD students enrolled in a 4+4 scheme different rules apply.

stk 2).² This work obligation is towards the department (on account of the salary) and does not cover the time spent on the research for and the writing of the PhD thesis.³

How is this work requirement handled at the Department of Political Science and Public Management?

The **official document** describing the rules for distribution of the workload is available on SDU.net [here](#). Please refer to it (for convenience, a copy of this document is available at the [end of this document](#) as well).

Below we provide a short summary of the distribution rule of the **840 hours**:

- To start with, PhD students receive a **lump-sum of 240 hours for professional development** (this is intended to include *learning teaching skills* by following pedagogical courses, and implementing these skills by *developing teaching materials and preparing teaching activities*, etc).
- The remaining **600 hours are distributed between teaching tasks and other tasks as follows**:
 - *PhD students hired directly at the department* must have a **minimum of 400 hours in teaching tasks** (this is allocated to students in function of the teaching needs in the different study programs), and the **remaining 200 hours** can be allocated either to teaching (in addition to the 400 hours mentioned above) or to tasks to the benefit of the department or the section to which the students belong, in agreement with the head of section and head of project/supervisor.
 - *PhD students who are hired on projects* must have a **minimum of 400 hours in teaching tasks** as allocated based on teaching needs in study programs, and can **distribute the remaining 200 hours** between work for the projects and work for the department/section, in agreement with the head of section and head of project/supervisor. The work tasks for the department can include teaching ((in addition to the 400 hours mentioned above).

So, I am in a PhD programme now! What am I going to do?

² §7 Stk. 2. Ph.d.-stipendiaten har pligt til at udføre arbejdsopgaver for ansættelsesinstitutionen, efter dennes anvisning, i et omfang, der ved ansættelse i 3 år svarer til i alt 840 arbejdstimer. [Translation: Subsection 2. The PhD fellow is obliged to carry out work tasks for the employing institution, according to its instructions, to an extent that, in the case of employment for 3 years, corresponds to a total of 840 working hours.] Source: [Retsinformation](#)

³ Please note that full-time employment amounts to more than 840 hours over 3 years. This means that you have time reserved to work on your thesis, while devoting 840 hours of work for the department in activities that train you in a diverse skill-set.

You signed the contract, got an office and got to meet the first colleagues. Now the work can begin. To get off to a good start, please familiarize yourself with what is expected of you to complete the PhD program. Here it is important to check the **exact rules which apply to your situation** and to [distinguish between the 4+4 and 5+3 program](#). Essentially, 4+4 involves the incorporation of Master studies into the PhD, while 5+3 means that PhD students are enrolled in a 3 year PhD programme after graduating a Master's study.

In general terms, from the perspective of the PhD School, the [PhD programme](#) will contain the following elements:

1. An independent research work under supervision (the PhD project) resulting in a thesis and a public defense
 2. Completion of the [PhD thesis](#) on the basis of the PhD project
 3. Participation in [PhD courses](#) totaling 30 ECTS points
 4. Participation in active research environments, including stays at other, mainly foreign, research institutions, private research enterprises etc. (study period at other research institutions)
 5. Gaining of experience of teaching activities or other form of [knowledge dissemination](#) of an extent of 300 hours which is related to the PhD student's PhD project
- OBS concerning the last point: please be aware that the department has specified expectations about tasks that PhDs are required to do for the department which likely will result in more than 300 hours of teaching (See text marked in yellow [below](#)).**

During the PhD there will be several **milestones** which serve as stepping stones to make sure you are on the right path. [Here](#) you can read about the specific rules which apply to your situation. These milestones refer mainly to **evaluations** that you need to pass during your PhD journey. They involve feedback from your supervisors, colleagues and matter experts and serve the purpose to guide your work, and prepare you for the final assessment and defence. After each evaluation, you and your supervisor need to submit a report to the PhD school. [Please find all the relevant forms here.](#)

Matching expectations with your Main Supervisor

To secure a good start it is important that you have a thorough **dialogue with your Main Supervisor** where you match expectations. If you are in need of ideas (tips) what such discussion could be about, see the Table below. It is advisable to go through the different points on the check list and discuss mutual preferences and expectations. Likely, not all the points at the check list can be discussed at the first meeting. Then it is important to agree on when you will get back to these points. These points are only suggestions, and you should feel free to adapt them to your situation and needs.

To **best prepare** for such a meeting please think in advance about how you want to work and what is important for you. Of course, agreements made at the start of the PhD period can later be updated as you get more familiar with the work and get to know yourself and your working preferences better.

→ It is also a good idea to check this [webpage](#), to see what the role of a PhD supervisor is all about, and also the Faculty's ideas about the relationship between PhD student and the supervisor.

Possible topics to discuss with your supervisor throughout the PhD supervision process

Topic	Possible points	Comments
Supervision meetings	<p>→ Agree on the frequency of meetings and make a meeting calendar.</p> <p>→ Agree on formalities regarding notice of meetings, agenda, minutes and mailing of enclosures.</p>	<p>The main supervisor is obligated to have meetings with the student on a regular basis. In consideration for the overall relationship it is a good idea to make a meeting calendar with some fixed meetings.</p> <p>It will be suitable for the student to set the agenda and call the meetings, and that you agree on deadlines for the calling, so that the supervisors will have a chance to go through any enclosures that you may send (questions, results, manuscript, outline etc.)</p>
Supervision regarding text production (manuscripts)	<p>→ Agree on how the student and supervisor(s) is going to work with manuscripts and presentations.</p> <p>→ Arrange which areas the supervision should concern and deadlines for feedback</p>	<p>The need for feedback in manuscript preparation phases is individual and varies over time, and a continuous dialogue between student and supervisor is necessary. Every time a text is forwarded, it is important that the student informs the supervisor of what elements he/she needs feedback on. It is equally important that the supervisor(s) tells which areas he/she will give feedback on, and the level of detail.</p> <p>Always agree on realistic deadlines for feedback on forwarded texts.</p>
Supervisor and authorship	<p>→ Align the expectations for academic, professional and personal supervision</p> <p>→ Agree on the division of authorship between the PhD student and supervisor during</p>	<p>This is something to consider <i>if you co-author an article with your supervisor.</i></p> <p>Discuss the expectations from both parts to the supervision: the academic (subject knowledge in the project), the professional (project planning and working method) and the personal (level of ambition and working effort).</p>

	<p>and potentially after the project</p> <p>→ Agree on how conflicts in relation to the role of supervisor and authorship should be handled</p>	<p>Agree on and write down the principles of the division of and the succession in authorship, this will minimize the risk of conflicts.</p> <p>Also, you may want to keep in mind matters of co-authorship if you co-author with other scholars.</p>
Research environment & institutional activities	<p>→ Agree on which other internal activities the student is expected to take part in.</p>	<p>Each section has regular activities such as lunch seminars, retreats and professional development sessions which all members are invited to and expected to participate. You should talk to the supervisor about them and your possible role.</p> <p>Consider whether there is room for you to take an active role, for example, coordinating lunch seminars in the section or research group/center or organising an upcoming workshop.</p>
Working hours	<p>→ Align your expectations to presence in the research unit and the department</p>	<p>Be aware of the Departmental rules regarding presence, and try to follow them as close as possible. Discuss specific arrangements and information circulation regarding presence at the Department.</p>
Networking and participation in conferences	<p>→ Agree on what terms the student is involved in the supervisors' network.</p> <p>→ Align expectations and obligation of initiative concerning participation in conferences</p>	<p>Early on, the student should know which conferences that are pivotal for the project and necessary to take part in, and to what extent the student is expected him/herself to initiate the participation in conferences etc.</p> <p>Consider exchange of environment as part of the networking effort, and discuss how supervisor's connections can help.</p>
Evaluations	<p>→ There are 3 evaluations during your PhD. Be aware of the timing and</p>	<p>Your supervisor should be the main driver organizing these events (as per PhD school rules). Agree that as the time draws near you will send a reminder and cooperate in preparing them.</p>

		<p>Each evaluation requires the student to prepare some documents in advance (that are discussed during the evaluation) and afterwards the student and the supervisor have to fill some reports. Keep in mind and agree on a deadline for submitting the required documents.</p> <p>PhD Coordinator should be informed about the dates of evaluations.</p>
Career planning	→ Expectations/wishes for a future career - what are the possibilities?	<p>This is a topic of discussion mostly in the second half of your PhD. Nowadays, PhD students are employed in many different types of jobs - not exclusively as associate professors or post. docs at universities. Therefore, an ongoing dialogue about expectations and possibilities is very important in preparation for improving the research application, establish the proper networks and being attentive toward possible jobs on and outside the universities.</p>

Source: Faculty of Health Science [check list](#).

PhD Plan

The **PhD Plan** is the first document that you need to have in place right at the beginning of your PhD journey. It should be decided and approved within the first 3 months. In preparing the PhD plan you need to **talk to your supervisor and the Head of Section** – in relation to main work tasks and thesis-related activities. Additionally, the **PhD coordinator** should be involved in preparation phase, with the aim of providing feedback. The PhD plan shall be **approved** by the Vice-head of department before it is finally approved by Head of Department.

The approval of the PhD plan is likely secured if the PhD plan specifies in sufficient detail the work tasks that you will undertake, covering as much as possible the 600 hours of work commitment, and as much as possible from the steps to be taken to fulfill the requirements within the PhD programme related to the research project and the thesis writing.

The **PhD plan should contain/specify the following**

- Planned teaching activities (indicate also the semester of the planned teaching)

- Planned work tasks for the department/section/research center
- Planned PhD course work for PhD courses – including possible summer courses (ideally, indicate also the approximate time when such activities would occur)
 - Here include also courses for professional development (they will not give you ECTS, but you need them for teaching skills and related). For inspiration, see [next section](#).
- Planned exchange of research environment (give an indication of duration, approximate semester placement, and possible places you consider)
- Targeted conferences & other dissemination venues

Submission: The PhD plan is to be submitted online at [PhDWeb](#). Please see the following guide for [PhD students](#). **Please Note:** the **approval by Head of Studies** should be obtained **before online submission** (in case changes need to be made).

PhD courses

In order to graduate the PhD Programme, you will have to obtain 30 ECTS points through PhD courses and other relevant activities. The PhD School has a page with information on [PhD courses](#).

The course “Responsible Conduct of Research” (3 ECTS), which is arranged by the library at SDU, is **mandatory** for all PhD students at our Faculty. This course is offered in the Fall semester at the Faculty of Social Science. However, if a student wants to take a functionally equivalent course at a different timepoint (ex. in Spring semesters) they can choose from courses offered at other SDU PhD schools/Faculties (see for ex [here](#)), or other Danish Universities. **The PhD school must be informed in advance, as they have to approve the choice.** → in general this is a formality, as PhD School aims to be as accommodating as possible, as long as the equivalent course has roughly the same number of ECTS.

The remaining 27 ECTS points can be obtained through participation in PhD courses arranged by, for example, the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR Summer and Winter Schools), Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR Summer Program), University of Essex (Summer School in Social Science Data Analysis), or Syracuse University (The Consortium on Qualitative Research Methods, CQRM). There are also frequently courses arranged ad hoc, so stay tuned, for example by keeping an eye on <https://phdcourses.dk/>. Be aware that it is also possible to get ECTS points for conference attendance and presentations.⁴

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See https://www.sdu.dk/en/forskning/phd/phduddannelsen_under_samfundsvidenskab/erdustuderende/kurser_gammel/sammensaetningafkursusprogramstuderende See section “Do workshops, conferences and seminars count?”

For a **general course on research design in political science**, you can attend [Social Research as a Craft](#) (10 ECTS, offered in the Fall semester) and there is also a similar PhD course offered in Lund [Political Science Research – Problems and Perspectives](#) (15 ECTS, payment may be required, offered in Spring semester). For more information, ask the PhD coordinator or one of the senior PhDs. Please note that the institutions organising these courses may not guarantee a place. So you need to contact them in advance. The PhD coordinator will provide information. PhD School should be informed in advance, as it is good to know that your choice can be approved. → in general this is a formality, as PhD School aims to be as accommodating as possible, as long as the courses chosen make sense for the project and the PhD plan.

It is the responsibility of your Main Supervisor to provide guidance on which courses to attend. You are also very welcome to talk to your mentor, other PhD's or senior colleagues etc. and ask for possibilities and suggestions. Why not attend a Summer or Winter School together with some of your colleagues from the department? What is **important when looking for courses** is to check whether they grant ECTS (because not all of them do) and to check with the PhD school if they are acceptable and can count towards your ECTS total.

It is also possible to **develop your own independent study**.⁵

→For details, see the PhD school [Courses webpage](#). See the relevant sections, and for more information and options, **scroll all the way down**.

Professional Development Courses

→These are courses offered by the **Pedagogical Unit of SDU** [SDU UP Courses Pedagogical Development](#). A few of them are specific for PhD students (PhD course for new teachers at SDU) or for students who have TA (instructor) classes (Instructors' course). Others are general courses around different teaching tools and techniques.

→**SDU Library** offers additional resources for research & researchers.

- There is [guidance for researchers](#) on different topics.
- They also offer courses on a variety of topics and research tools. Here is the [calendar of these courses](#), usually they are repeated during the semester, so you can attend them when is convenient to you. Some are in Danish, but many are in English, and many take place online. Consider booking a course on Scite-AI, which is an AI tool for dealing with literature reviews.

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https://www.sdu.dk/en/forskning/phd/phduddannelsen_under_samfundsvidenskab/erdustuderende/kurser_gammel/sammensaetningafkursusprogramstuderende - 'How do I plan an independent study'

Exchange of research environment

The PhD programme involves a temporary stay at a different research institution than our department, usually referred to as “[change of environment](#)”. **The PhD school recommends a continuous stay of 3-6 months, and the Department strongly encourages PhD students to do so.** Typically, PhD students go abroad for one semester to visit a professor or research group who/which are particularly relevant in connection to their project. However, PhD students who for other reasons cannot go away for a longer period sometimes plan shorter stays at universities in nearby countries or at other universities/research institutions in Denmark. A continuous longer stay is highly advisable, because it allows you to immerse yourself in a different research environment and forge new connections. However, several stays of shorter duration can also be thought of. Talk to your supervisor about options. Possible plans/ideas about exchange of environment should be announced in the PhD Plan.

Start planning early when and where you would like to go. When planning where to go, it is important to discuss with your main Supervisor what it is you hope to gain from the stay: Is it time to write? Is it to build a network in a certain research community? Is it to follow specific PhD courses? This will be important to consider in order to determine where to go as well as the timing of your stay. For example, you can take the stay abroad as an opportunity to focus on writing an article, co-authoring with a colleague or finalising the thesis; in such cases, planning the exchange in your last year/even last semester can be a meaningful option.

Where to? To find a relevant researcher, research group or PhD school to visit, it could be a good idea to **utilize your supervisors’ and other colleagues’ networks**. Finding a place where they are interested in your research and will involve you in the daily life of the research group is typically important for having a successful stay abroad.

Going abroad can be relatively costly—especially if you bring family. **Be aware that your [PhD-budget](#) covers travel expenses for you but not your family**, costs for shipment of book etc. and gives a monthly supplement for housing and living expenses (see below). In case you require a bigger budget for your environment exchange, there are a number of foundations that support activities like this. In particular, Knud Højgaards Fond and Aage & Yelda Nimbs Fond have supported PhD students from our department. For more information about funding you are welcome to contact Kristina Bøhnke (isti@sam.sdu.dk). Be aware that such **funding requests need time for processing**, so they must be done well in advance of the actual planned trip.

Conferences and networking

Attending and presenting at conferences is a good way to get feedback on work in progress and to build an (international) network. You need to plan ahead which conferences you would like to attend. As a general rule, the call for papers is six to eight months ahead of the actual conference.

Note that some conferences ask for full paper submissions (e.g., the International Communication Association), others ask for shorter abstracts (e.g., Midwest Political Science Association), and yet others ask for so-called extended abstracts (e.g., European Communication Research and Education Association). Ensure that you fulfil the conditions when you apply, in order to increase your chances of participation.

In addition to paper presentations, there are conferences which have poster sessions. If part of your project can be presented as a poster, consider this format. Can be a fun experience!

ECTS from Conferences: The PhD school has clarified that you can attend up to 4 conferences, which means that you can get up to 8 ECTS from these events. Please note that you can get 2 ECTS for conferences where you present your work; and 1 ECTS for conferences which you only attend without presenting.

It is the responsibility of your Main Supervisor to introduce you to relevant conferences and to help you build a professional network. You are also welcome to ask senior colleagues, and fellow PhD students for tips on where to present your work. A good place to start your conference career is the Annual Meeting of the Danish Political Science Association (typically held in the Fall, with a deadline for submissions in Summer). Also, several colleagues from the department attend the Annual Meeting of the (US) Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA) in Chicago each year in April, while members of the journalism research group tend to focus on the International Communication Association each year in late May/early June. European Political Science Association (EPSA) and European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) have both big events in Europe, as it does European Sociological Association (ESA).

→ You can read more about funding for conference visits below [‘Budget’](#).

Research ethics, legal and GDPR issues

Talk to your supervisor about such matters. If important/relevant for the field work and data gathering for your project, you may need to **obtain approvals**, which need to be done **before data collection** begins. This may **take time**, so take that into account. **SDU RIO** is the unit that has the expertise related to legal issues regarding GDPR, and you will need to register with them your data collection process. **Contact RIO in advance so you know what to do in your specific case.** Please note that SDU has also an [Research Ethics Committee](#), and that increasingly ethics approvals are important when you want to publish your research, if involves primary data collection from individuals.

Knowledge dissemination and work duties

As a PhD student, you are expected to perform departmental work duties corresponding to up to 840 hours of work. Predominantly, the work duties consist of teaching responsibilities. But they can also be administrative tasks or research assistant work. An outline of the work duties you will undertake must be included in your PhD plan. This work is planned in cooperation with your main Supervisor, who will coordinate with the Head of Studies and Head of Section which teaching responsibilities you can undertake and when.

The following documents give information about your work duties and will help when calculating the number of norm hours you will receive for the courses you teach:

- [The Department's Norm System](#)
- The Department's guidelines for PhD students's Work Duties – see at the end of this document.

Please note that this information is relevant only for the PhD students who are employed at the Political Science Department (either directly or on a project conducted at the department.) PhD students hired at other departments/institutions, who are also associated to the Political Science department, must ensure that they fulfill the **work duties set up by their employer.**

Please also note the minimum number of work hours required by the PhD School of Business and Social Sciences (300 hours – knowledge dissemination) must be fulfilled by all students enrolled in the PhD school. Contact the PhD Coordinator for any questions on the matter.

The work duties can consist of work as a teaching assistant (instructor), teaching a master-level course in relation to their dissertation topic or co-teach an existing course, and some smaller tasks (e.g., grading term papers and assignments). Some PhDs also have work duties in relation to a research project (e.g., assisting in the collection and configuration of data) – this is the case of PhDs hired in a research project. Typically, there will be an amount of work duties which are not assigned to specific tasks in the PhD plan. These are assigned in agreement with the Head of Studies and generally are tasks that benefit the department in general or the research group/the section.

If you are given the opportunity to design a master-level course that relates to your own project, it is a good idea to think about how specialized/general the subject of the course should be. Usually, a very narrow focus on your dissertation topic makes it more difficult to attract students. A broader focus also including related themes is, typically, more popular with the students. To give you an idea about the balance between your interest and what may be interesting for students at our department: If your PhD project is on local taxation, you could offer a course on impact of lobbying on local level decision making in different fields (one being taxation, but others too). Of course, this may be more demanding, but remember that a course must cater to a larger group of students who might be interested in, and plan to use the knowledge from that course, in other ways than you do. It is also a

way to challenge yourself to read some of the related literature which you, perhaps, would not have done otherwise. Additionally, remember that when you are done with your PhD, it will be an advantage to be able to prove that you have done something that has moved you a bit further than the topic of your PhD project.

PhD Budget

You have the possibility to claim expenses in relation to your PhD up to DKK 100,000 to cover books purchases, PhD courses, conferences, field-work for the thesis and expenses in relation to stay at other institutions, including the exchange of environment.

Think in advance (in relation to your PhD plan and project what categories of expense you foresee. For example, conferences, exchange of environment, fieldwork...and discuss this with your supervisor. Any expenses must be pre-approved by the PhD supervisor and the Head of Department. You can spend your PhD budget on activities which are **in line with your PhD plan**, and you are expected to **keep your expenses within the sum allotted to you**. To this aim, it is highly advisable that you maintain a sheet with all your PhD-related expenditures.

When think of the use of your budget, you should be aware that you can use up to 6.000 DKK a month to subsidize your stay abroad for up to six months (36.000 DKK). This can for example cover travel expenses for you (but not your family), costs for shipment of book, and give a monthly supplement for housing and living expenses. If you decide to stay abroad for longer than six months (up to a year), you can apply the Head of Section for up to 6.000 DKK extra per month. You should be aware that these funds will be used from your PhD-budget, which means that you will have less to spend on other PhD-related activities.

Guidelines for using the budget and claiming expenses

When you use funds from your PhD-budget that exceeds 1.000 DKK, the expense must be approved by your main PhD-supervisor and the Head of Section. If the cost is below this, you can contact Ann Skovly (ann@sam.sdu.dk) directly to approve the expense.

- When you want to **purchase printed books**, you should use **Academic Books**. You can find a guide on how to order books through Academic Books [here](#).
- If you need to order and buy books abroad, you should **use a credit card with corporate liability**. You **order a credit card** with corporate liability by filling out an application form, which must be signed by the Head of Department, and then handed to Ann Skovly. Ann will

then forward the form to the Travel Office. You can find the application form as well as the rules for using the credit card [here](#). For questions, ask Ann!

→ **Payments:** in addition to your own card and the Institute Credit Card, you can make payments by EAN number. EAN number is 5798000423312. **It is strongly recommended to use the EAN number to pay for Danish suppliers** (hotels in DK, books in bookstore, CWT etc), because **payments via EAN number do not include VAT (MOMS)**.

- **travel:** SDU has a contract with Carlson Wagon Lit (CWT), which means that → **all plane tickets** must be ordered through them. You can read the details of the agreement [here](#), where you should pay particular attention to following points:
 - A: Booking
 - B: Creating new travel profiles in the booking system myCWT – Please remember to register our account number: 83027 – 423312
 - C: Activating your account with CWT
 - D: Filling in information in 'My travel profile'
 - F: Payment of hotel stays
 - H: Price guarantee
 - J: Accompanying spouse etc.
 - Q: Questions

→ **Train tickets** can be purchased in a number of ways, for example through www.dsb.dk, DSB's app or at the train station. You can claim reimbursement for them via Z-Expense (see below, end of this section). You can use your own card for this.

→ **hotels:** In case that you need to **book a hotel in Denmark**, it is most economically to do so through SDU's Accommodation Office ([Boligformidlingen](#)). For **hotels abroad**, use the corporate credit card and you can use the CWT site to book. If CWT does not offer something you want, you can use booking.com or other booking sites. In this case, make reimbursement claims via Z-expense (see below).

You can find the general rules for work-related trips [here](#), incl. rules on transport costs, accommodation etc.

Guidelines on **hourly and daily allowance** for meals during travel / expenses for meals on travel can be found [here](#). It is important to stress that these allowances cover reasonable additional costs for meals and should not be seen as additional salary. Therefore, the PhD student is expected to keep the allowance applied for within reasons. For example, when a PhD student attends a PhD course for several weeks and stays in accommodation with cooking facilities, the PhD is not expected to apply for hourly and daily allowance for each day of the whole period. The PhD student can instead opt for reimbursement of documented expenses for meals, rather than hourly and daily allowance. Alternatively, the PhD can apply for hourly and daily allowance for a shorter period than all the weeks of the PhD course.

All the expenses listed above will be paid from the PhD student's budget unless otherwise agreed upon.

If you are in doubt about travel or purchase and cannot find the answer above, it is always good to ask your PhD Supervisor, and/or Ann Skovly.

→ **Reimbursement requests** are processed via SDU system **zExpense**. A **guide to zExpense** can be found [here](#).

Practicalities at the Department

INDEX

On this page you find **an [INDEX](#) of all important topics** that you may encounter in your research and admin work at SDU. Strongly recommended to **save it and use it**.

Employee ID, library card, and student card

When you arrive, you will receive an **employee ID card**. The employee ID is your key to the department outside normal working hours. You can also use your employee ID for collecting print jobs at the printers. If you experience any troubles, please contact Tina Guldbrandt Jakobsen (tja@sam.sdu.dk). Together with your employee ID, you will also receive instructions about how to activate the ID card by making a four-digit code at the card reader by any of the university entrances. You can also use your employee ID card to borrow books from the university library, and you can access the library's digital sources by using your SDU login information. This can be done at the library or [online](#).⁶ Note, that using your employee ID card at the library works after the first salary is paid, only. That is, after the first month has passed. You can, however, contact the library directly if you need access to during the first month.

As a more recent service, you can now also order a student card, which may provide you with access to student discounts. You can apply for the card [here](#).⁷

Within the Department and your Section

⁶<https://www.sdu.dk/en/bibliotek>

⁷<https://studiekort.sdu.dk/Login>

PhD students are expected to engage in all aspects of the work and research at the Department. At the Department level there are monthly lunches (announced by Outlook invitation) and once per semester general gatherings, which often have a pre-announced topic. Moreover, you will see that everyday people eat together – and you are welcome to join the people in the lunch room and have a chat.

Most of the work tasks and research-related activity takes place in **sections and research groups (Centers)**. At these levels there are many opportunities to engage with your colleagues, exchange ideas and cooperate on tasks. Be active, do not hesitate to give your input and ask for feedback. For the development of your ideas and research, it is especially important to present your project and draft papers at meetings within your Section or research group. Your supervisor is responsible for ensuring that you have opportunities to present your work. Please discuss this with your supervisor, for example in relation to the **regular events of the research group or Section (such as lunch seminars or similar formats)**. If you for some reason experience that such opportunities are not provided for, do not hesitate to talk to the PhD coordinator about it.

Employee development dialogue (MUS)

Once a year, you should expect an **employee development dialogue** (in Danish often simply called “**MUS**”) with your Head of Section. Before the interview you will get an email with the topics and a list on optional topics that you might want to put on the agenda. The interview is a *formal* conversation between you and the Head of Section to evaluate your progress and plan the development of your skills, while you are a PhD student at the Department of Political Science and Public Management. The interview is strictly confidential and is designed as an opportunity for you to voice concerns of any kind, be they social or professional. The last of these interviews has an additional focus on your career opportunities upon completing your dissertation.

PhD group and events

As a PhD student, you will be part of the PhD group together with the other PhD students at the department. The PhD group has two fixed events during each semester—a “semester start meeting” and one additional event. In the Fall semester, the additional event is the **PhD Colloquium** an in-house meeting where all PhD students present (parts of) their PhD projects for the whole department. In the Spring semester, the **PhD retreat** is an out-of-the-house event, where the PhD group and PhD coordinator have an overnight stay somewhere in Denmark. This latter event will focus on specific topic relevant for all PhD students – and you are most welcome to suggest which topic this may be to the PhD coordinator. You are expected to attend and present at the two semester start meetings as well as the in- and out-house meeting.

In addition, the PhDs themselves have the opportunity to organize monthly meetings to present work or discuss issues with relevance for the whole PhD group, for example how to network. You are encouraged to attend these meetings when it fits with your schedule. One of the PhDs is in charge of organizing these meetings, on a voluntary basis, and rotating each semester.

The purpose of these meetings is to create a platform for discussions among the PhD students at the department. By meeting and discussing your work, work conditions, future career opportunities and the like, you not only get a chance to get to know each other and your projects but also to learn and be inspired by the different approaches you each apply, or plans for the future you might have. But of course, there is also a strong social component to these events, since all of them have an informal component.

At the PhD events, it is important to give and receive feedback in a constructive manner, whether this is related to others' projects or other departmental issues. Good feedback to your colleagues is given with both "the heart and the mind". A rule of thumb is that while general praise is all right, criticisms should be specific enough to help identify the specific issue, and preferably coupled with some suggestions on how to proceed.

If you have any good ideas for additional events, please share them with your fellow PhD colleagues or the PhD coordinator.

Social activities & work/life balance

As a new PhD student—especially if you have not been affiliated with the department beforehand—it can be difficult to decode which social activities you are expected to participate in (though they are voluntary) and what the norms are for how many work hours you put in. These issues are quite important for establishing and maintaining a good relationship to your workplace and your colleagues. **Therefore it is important to familiarize yourself with the [Department's Staff Policy](#).** This document contains important information regarding **leave, rights, rules**.

This section is not meant to be a checklist of things you must do, but, rather, it is a collection of things that fellow PhD students want to remind you of.

Social activities and presence

Starting with **social activities**, there are quite a few of these during the year; some of them are arranged by the department; some by the PhD students and some by other groups you may be affiliated with. You are of course free to choose which (if any) of these you wish to participate in, but we encourage you to attend at least the Christmas party arranged by the department and the social activities after the PhD seminars. Aside from being great ways to get to know your colleagues in an informal setting, these events also serve to bolster a sense of belonging—it may seem trivial,

but nevertheless important. And if you are local, please do make an extra effort in guiding our non-Danish PhD students through the peculiarities of Danish social life.

Please refer to the department's staff policy for the specific **policy on presence** and working hours.

Work-life balance

At the department we believe that employees work best when there is a healthy work/life balance. Remember, you are employed to work an average of 37 hours every week and you have 5 weeks of holidays to spend as you please. This is what your contract states, so you are well within your rights to work no more than this. We do not expect you to check your email after working hours, during the weekend or during holidays unless in exceptional cases when explicit agreements have been made about this. The flexibility which our job offers may also mean that you at times chose to work in evenings or during the weekend and hold free at other times. That is possible, but we expect you to respect that this does not apply to others. So, try to keep emailing with your colleagues outside of work hours to a minimum. Also, during working hours, please be considerate about the different working preferences which others might have. Our work often requires deep concentration. Think what way of organizing the work works best for you and talk with your close colleagues about their work preferences.

As a PhD student, you might at times be very busy. What is important to keep in mind is this: Every PhD project is different, and the process and the deadlines are equally unique to every project. That means that if you see your fellow PhD students working much longer hours than yourself, this does not mean that they are more ambitious or better PhD students. It means that they are at a different stage in their process. Do not feel pressured to work more because you see others burning midnight oil. If you are in doubt whether you are progressing as you should (and we all have these doubts), check your PhD plan or discuss your concerns with your supervisor. These are much more reliable measures than the work hours put in by others.

Offensive behaviours

It is important that you know what to do in case you are confronted with unwanted sexual attention or other forms of offensive behaviour. Please familiarize yourself with point 6.2 in our [department's staff policy](#). Further information provided by the University about preventing unwanted sexual attention, follow this link: [Guide to prevention and handling of unwanted sexual attention](#). There may be different views regarding when behavior is perceived to be offensive. Most importantly, remember that it is always ok to say no yourself and that you are expected to respect others when they say no. When confronted with unwanted sexual attention or other forms of offensive behaviour, you are strongly encouraged to talk to someone you trust.

Parental leave

As a PhD student, you are entitled to parental leave under the prevailing terms and conditions. You are not expected to partake in the working life at the department during parental leave. Obviously, it can be difficult to leave your project for a longer period, and therefore the department has implemented a set of options for fixed-term employees, including PhD students. The details of this option are outlined in the [department's staff policy](#).

Adapting to your new role

Some of you have been a student at the department and are now enrolled as PhD students, either on a 5+3 or 4+4 program. From one day to the next your professors are suddenly your colleagues and you are no longer just “one of the students”. This might take some getting used to. It can be good to remember in your contact with your former teachers that they now see you as a colleague, that many have been in a similar situation before and that with time you will get used to this new situation.

For your contact with the students, it is important that you are aware of your new role. This does not mean that you have to give up old friendships or can no longer hang out with your peers. But it is important to avoid dual relationships. For example, **you should not grade exams written by your friends. If this is a possibility, make sure you inform course responsible, co-teachers and/or head of section so a solution can be found.**

It is also good to take a moment and reflect on how you will **interact with new students** who you will meet. Many of us for example do not communicate with the students over Facebook Messenger, but only over SDU email or the messaging system embedded in IITL. Do not accept them calling you in the weekends or evenings. When students come to you with their personal problems, hear them out but recognize that you may not have the expertise to help. It is best to pass them on to the professionals at SDU: See the [Counselling services](#) or the SPS ([Special Pedagogic Support](#)). If they raise health issues that may be relevant for exams (for example, special exam conditions) recommend them to contact the Study Board – which is the only body that can grant requests regarding exams. Your relationship with the students will function best within clear boundaries. Make your expectations explicit and the students will respect you for that. When in doubt, you can always ask one of the senior colleagues how to handle the situation.

Miscellaneous

On the more technical side of things, there is of course a plethora of different data management programs, reference managers and others that may come in handy. If you are not used to use a reference manager, we **strongly** advise you to start building a database of your references as soon as

you start your PhD (the department has a licence for Endnote, there are also popular free alternatives such as Zotero). It will spare you tremendous amounts of time and hassle. Do not feel guilty for spending some time in your first months of employment getting to know different text and data software packages, or other software packages that may be useful in the process of writing your thesis. Getting to know these packages is also part of your work as a PhD student. Check out SDU Library courses.

A final note

Relax! Things may be quite confusing in the beginning—and even later. You may find out that this document is not sufficient to navigate your way around (then please let us know!). Remember that you can always knock on the door of the PhD Coordinator, your colleagues, contact your mentor, in addition to going to the nearest vending machine and buying a bar of chocolate. **In the PhD group we are in this together!**

Model for PhD student's work duties at the Department of Political Science and Public Management, SDU.

This model clarifies the PhD student's work duties at the department in addition to their PhD project-related work. **The model applies to all PhD students employed at the Department who start from 1 February 2024.**⁸

PhD students are obliged to 'undertake work duties for and as directed by the employing institution, up to an extent which for a three-year term of employment will correspond to a total of 840 working hours' (Protocol on PhD fellows §7, appendix 5 Circular on the collective agreement for academic staff employed by the State Sector)⁹.

The work duties will be registered in the PhD student's individual norm account in the following way:

	Department funded PhD	Externally funded PhD (project)
Academic and pedagogical development and miscellaneous departmental activities (registered by default) total/ per semester	240/40	240/40
Teaching and supervision* In total	Minimum 400	Minimum 400
Project related work in total		Up to 200
Specified department tasks In total	Up to 200	Up to 200
Norm hours in total/ per semester	840/140	840/140

* Teaching activities should be a minimum of 400 hours, while the remaining 200 hours may be allocated to teaching, tasks related to third party funded projects and other specified department tasks

Norms for supervision and teaching activities by PhD students are calculated in the same way as for other employees at the department (see [Norm system at the department of Political Science and Public Management](#)¹⁰).

⁸ The document has been subject to alterations in Aug. 2025, but only to clarify existing practice and include guidelines for planning teaching and supervision.

⁹ [Protocol on PhD fellows §7, appendix 5 Circular on the collective agreement for academic staff employed by the State Sector](#) p. 79.

¹⁰ <https://syddanskuni.sharepoint.com/Sites/statskundskab/SitePages/Home.aspx>

The department recognizes that PhD students typically are less experienced in a research and teaching environment. Therefore, PhD students will be allocated norms by default to their norm accounts for both pedagogical development and departmental activities, in **total 240 norm hours. This is to cover for the extra time spent on pedagogical development, incl. first-time teaching and miscellaneous department-related activities.**

An overall plan for the 600 hours of work duties must be included in the PhD plan. Teaching assignments and other specified department tasks are assigned by the Head of Section in dialogue with the main Supervisor and PhD student. After agreement with the supervisor, PhD students whose position is fully externally funded can be assigned concrete project-related tasks up to 200 hours of work. The allocation of the amount of norm hours to teaching, tasks related to third party funded projects and other specified department tasks shall be approved before the finalizing of the PhD plan by the Vice-head of department before it is finally approved by Head of Department. A smaller number of hours (up to 100 hours) may be kept open in the PhD-plan to secure flexibility for the PhD student and the Department regarding new teaching or supervision duties or other departmental assignments. These tasks will be agreed on with the head of section and coordinated with the supervisor throughout the employment period. The same applies to deviations from the initial PhD plan due to changes in the teaching plan or PhD project.

Guidelines for planning teaching and supervision in the PhD plan

When planning teaching and supervision for a PhD student, the following should be taken into consideration (not prioritized in order):

- Teaching and supervision responsibilities are aimed to fall within the PhDs research discipline.
- The placement of teaching and supervision responsibilities should be coordinated with other elements of the PhD plan, such as change of environment and the final semester of the PhD.
- The plan should strive to ensure PhD students gain experience with different types of teaching and supervision to develop a varied teaching portfolio
- PhD students are generally not permitted to supervise master's theses and professional mater's theses.
- Encourage repeat teaching of the same teaching element to increase experience within the same subject and reduce workload.

PhD students employed prior to Feb. 1. 2024

For PhD students employed prior to Feb1, 2024, the work duties are allocated in the norm system in the following way:

The work duties will be registered in the Departments norm system in the following way:

Norm hours for 3 years in total/per semester	Duties
600/100	Teaching and Departmental assignments (individually registered in the norm system) *
120/20	Other departmental activities (automatically registered in the norm system)
120/20	Academic and pedagogical development (automatically registered in the norm system)

* Teaching activities should be a minimum of 300 hours, while the remaining 300 hours may be allocated to teaching or other department-related tasks (e.g., help with coordination and events in the PhD group or at the department, help with specific projects, help with administrative or dissemination tasks at the department).

Norm hours for teaching activities by PhD students are calculated in the same way as for other employees at the department (see [Norm system at the department of Political Science and Public Management¹¹](#)). PhD students will automatically be allocated 240 hours in their norm accounts for other departmental activities, pedagogical development and first-time lecturer (hence, they will not receive additional hours in the norm system for pedagogical development and first-time lecturer).

An overall plan for the 600 hours of work duties must be included in the PhD plan. These work duties are planned by the PhD students and main Supervisor, who will coordinate with the Head of Section which teaching responsibilities are agreed on. After agreement with the supervisor, PhD students whose position is fully externally funded can be assigned concrete project-related tasks up to 200 hours of work. The allocation of the amount of norm hours to teaching and other departmental assignments shall be approved before the finalizing of the Phd plan by the Vice-head of department (hours related to teaching) and Head of section (hours related to other departmental assignments). A smaller number of hours (between 100-200 hours) may be kept open in the PhD-plan to secure flexibility for the PhD student and the Department regarding new teaching or supervision duties or other departmental assignments. These tasks will be agreed on with the supervisor and coordinated with the head of section throughout the employment period.

¹¹ <https://syddanskuni.sharepoint.com/Sites/statskundskab/SitePages/Home.aspx>