



Programme Description - PhD in Science of Professions

Approved by the deans at the Faculty of Education and Arts (FLU) and the Faculty of Nursing and Health Sciences (FSH) on 26 January 2022

About the PhD in Science of Professions

The PhD in Science of Professions is a three-year full-time programme consisting of a training component and research work of a high academic standard. The programme highlights topical, socially relevant issues in which the field of professional practice is the focus, and contributes to innovative processes in professions. The programme is regionally based, aims to be nationally preferred and internationally recognised. It will generate new knowledge with relevance to national policy in health, social care and education. The interdisciplinary study programme is organised jointly by the Faculty of Nursing and Health Sciences (FSH) and the Faculty of Education and Arts (FLU) at Nord University.

Description of programme

The PhD programme's academic discipline is *the science of professions*. *Professions* are assumed to have their own scientific knowledge base, an ethical code, an organisation that safeguards the interests of the profession, and legitimacy for a social mission. *Science* involves research where empirical data is systematically, critically and methodically collected and analysed in light of hypotheses and/or research questions. The science is built from a knowledge base generated through research, aims to challenge existing knowledge, as well as developing new understandings and explanations.

The PhD in Science of Professions is a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary programme aimed at developing knowledge in, about, and for the field of professional practice. The programme facilitates empirical research within professions in health, social care and education, where the core focus is on practical research through systematic, academic rigour and transparency. The programme meets society's need for research-based knowledge about professions and professional practice in relation to national policy development in the welfare state.

The PhD programme's profile focuses on the areas of the science of professions that deal with *language*, *relationships* and *actions* within professional practice. These areas constitute the academic discipline on which individual projects are to be based, and candidates' research questions must address one or more of these areas. Research projects can take the form of a descriptive, normative explanatory or critically analytical design, where the purpose is to understand, explain, develop and/or challenge practice.

Language, relationships and actions in the science of professions

The three thematic areas of *language*, *relationships* and *actions* in professional practice are understood as human activity, where the participants share a common understanding of practice. This includes a shared understanding of activities (actions), the characteristic discourse, conversation and thoughts about the activity (language), and the relations between people and objects involved in the practice (relationships). Language, relationships and actions

thereby form part of a holistic understanding of practice. Professionals not only reproduce previous actions and understandings, but also develop new knowledge through the interaction with structures and actions. The science of professions is thus an overarching framework for applied practical research on professions, with an explicit emphasis on the thematic areas of language, relationships and actions, which form a basis for the study of practice from different interdisciplinary perspectives.

Practice is shaped by external, interwoven structures that hold it together. These include *cultural discourse aspects* that are conveyed through the semantic dimension of language (e.g. language and discourse that enable and limit characteristic expressions in practice), *material aspects* that are conveyed through actions in a physical dimension (e.g. buildings and objects such as books and digital aids that enable and limit actions that characterise practice), and *socio-political aspects* that are conveyed through relationships in a social dimension (e.g. hierarchies, solidarity and power that enable and limit practice). This approach to the science of professions makes it possible to study practice from different interdisciplinary perspectives.

Target group

The target group for the PhD programme includes national and international candidates who wish to conduct practical, empirical research in the science of professions and learn the craft of science as a foundation for a future career.

Admission criteria

For admission to the PhD programme, applicants must hold a Master degree of 120 ECTS credits or equivalent, as well as basic professional training at Bachelor or Master level in health, social or educational studies.

Candidates with a Master degree of 120 ECTS credits but who do not have basic professional training at Bachelor or Master level in the aforementioned studies may be considered for admission following an individual assessment of whether their proposed project is relevant to professional practice and can be linked to practice.

Applicants must show in their project application that their project focuses on professions and entails research into practice. Projects must also address one or more of the areas of language, relationships and actions in light of professional practice.

Applicants whose weighted average in their Master's degree is lower than a 'B', may qualify for admission by virtue of, for example, their contribution to a peer-reviewed article as a first author or participation in a research project relevant to the subject area. Applications must document the applicant's basic scientific understanding and insight, reflection, independence and analytical thinking.

Applications for admission to the PhD in Science of Professions must include a project description and documentation of full funding for the entire study period. The Dean is responsible for approving admissions, following a recommendation from the Working Committee. Project descriptions, developed in collaboration with the supervisor, must include a plan for the candidate's work in the PhD programme (training component and independent research).

Confer the PhD regulations and [supplementary guidelines for the PhD in Science of Professions](#) for further information.

Learning outcomes:

On completion of the PhD in Science of Professions, the candidate should have achieved the following learning outcomes, defined as knowledge, skills and general competence, within the

Decision by the Dean 26th of Jan 2022

science of professions, limited to one or more of the focus areas of language, relationships and actions:

Knowledge:

The candidate:

- is at the forefront of knowledge in the science of professions at a high international level, within one or more of the focus areas of language, relationships and actions
- is able to make independent and innovative contributions to the development of new knowledge and theory within the science of professions
- has extensive knowledge of relevant dissemination channels for the science of professions
- has mastered critical and independent reflection on relevant theory, issues, the philosophy of science and methods
- has in-depth knowledge of research ethics, including legislation and regulations

Skills:

The candidate:

- is able to critically and independently address complex questions relating to the science of professions and challenge established knowledge and practices in this field
- is able to critically and independently assess and explain the appropriateness and application of various methods and processes in research projects, as well as explain the limitations of methodologies used
- is able to conduct research at a high international level through own research project
- is able to formulate research questions, and plan and execute research projects and innovation processes of a high academic standard, using relevant technology
- is able to critically and independently initiate, conduct, evaluate and disseminate research, and discuss the implications of the research for professions and society

General competence:

The candidate:

- is able to identify, critically assess and discuss relevant academic and ethical issues in their own and others' research, and conduct their own research with academic integrity
- is able to lead complex interdisciplinary work and projects in an independent manner and in collaboration with others
- is able to disseminate research through recognised, and preferably open access, national and international channels
- is able to critically assess the need for innovation and research with societal relevance and initiate this
- is able to actively participate in discussions in national and international forums, and contribute expert input to the public discourse

Structure and content of the PhD programme

The PhD in Science of Professions consists of two parts: a training component (30 ECTS credits) and an independent research project of a high international standard, which is concluded with a PhD thesis, trial lecture and public defence of the thesis. Together with the work on the thesis, the training component shall provide the necessary professional specialisation and breadth.

Through the mandatory course in 'Science of Professions, with a focus on language, relationships and actions', candidates will acquire knowledge, skills and general competence

Decision by the Dean 26th of Jan 2022

within the discipline of the science of professions. In addition, complex and relevant methodologies and methodological approaches must be used in the research project.

The courses, seminars and other activities in the programme will develop students' competence to critically analyse, synthesise, systematise and plan research, and support placing their research in a national and international context.

Training component

The training component builds on the academic competence that the PhD candidate has acquired through previous studies and provides candidates with knowledge, skills and general competence to support their thesis work and further research. The PhD programme's training component consists of mandatory and elective courses, as well as mandatory activities.

This part of the programme should include minimum 30 ECTS, made up of courses at PhD level: 20 ECTS of courses with mandatory content and 10 ECTS elective courses:

- Mandatory courses – 20 ECTS:
 - PRO9014 Science of Professions, with a focus on language, relationships and actions (7.5 ECTS).
 - PRO9015 Philosophy of science and research ethics (5 ECTS)
 - PRO9013 Design and methods – methodological approaches (7.5 ECTS)

The course PRO9014 Science of Professions, with a focus on language, relationships and actions (7.5 ECTS) **must** be taken at Nord University. Candidates can complete other mandatory and elective courses at another faculty or institution, including international research courses.

- Elective courses – 10 ECTS:
 - PRO9002 Practical knowledge and professional practice, 5 ECTS
 - PRO9011 Mixed methods, 5 ECTS
 - PRO9016 Video observation and analysis, 5 ECTS
 - PRO9017 Secondary analysis; systematic/scoping literature review, 5 ECTS
 - PRO9019 Professional development and innovation, 5 ECTS

Mandatory activities/elements in the training component consist of:

- Completed start-up, midway and final seminars (see separate section)
- Internationalisation (see separate section)
- Annual reporting

All PhD courses offered as part of the study programme are evaluated by the Doctoral Committee, approved by the deans and quality assured by the Central Education Committee. Candidates must complete a minimum of 10 ECTS in research methodology courses and 5 ECTS in philosophy of science courses.

Elective courses can amount to a maximum of 10 ECTS, and candidates are free to choose between substantive courses of relevance to the research project and additional courses in research methodology or philosophy of science.

The courses in the training component are tailored to the PhD programme, and candidates are therefore encouraged to take the courses on offer. An overview of the courses can be found on the programme's home page. Where a course has participants who do not speak a Scandinavian language, the language of instruction will be English.

In consultation with the supervisor, the candidate prepares a plan for the training component, indicating which courses will be taken and in which semesters. The individual training plan will be approved upon admission to the PhD in Science of Professions, but can be changed upon application. The candidates must pass all the courses in the training component in order to have their thesis assessed.

Independent research work

The research component consists of work on an academic thesis. The thesis must be an independent scientific work that meets international academic standards, methods and ethical requirements, with the inclusion of technology and innovative approaches where relevant. The research must generate new academic knowledge and be of a standard that merits publication as part of the body of specialist literature in the field, see the Regulations relating to the Degree of Philosophiae Doctor (PhD) at Nord University.

The thesis can either take the form of an extended abstract including a minimum of three scientific articles (article-based thesis) or a monograph. The thesis must be written in English or a Scandinavian language. See the [supplementary guidelines for the PhD in Science of Professions](#).

Upon admission to the PhD programme, candidates will join a research group that gives them access to a research community. The research groups associated with the PhD programme organise interdisciplinary and monodisciplinary seminars that provide opportunities for networking. Participation in a research group and at seminars will help candidates develop the ability to critically reflect on their own and others' research, and will provide a platform for presenting and discussing their own research work, and for the dissemination of their own research.

Examinations and assessment methods

The PhD degree is assessed on the basis of:

- the academic thesis
- completion of the training component
- a trial lecture on an assigned topic
- public defence of the thesis

For courses in the training component, the assessment methods are stated in the individual course plans.

Assessment is regulated under Section 19 of the Regulations relating to the Degree of Philosophiae Doctor (PhD) at Nord University, as well as supplementary guidelines for the PhD in Science of Professions. Examination regulations for PhD courses are regulated in the [Regulations relating to Studies and Examinations at Nord University](#), as well as the [supplementary guidelines for the PhD in Science of Professions](#). (The regulations and associated guidelines apply to the extent that they are also relevant to exams in the training component of PhD programmes.)

Internationalisation

The faculties provide administrative support and the opportunity to apply for funding for international mobility. The mobility period must be spent at a recognised education or research institution, or some other relevant organisation, where it is possible to work with the subject areas in the research work/thesis. If international mobility is not possible, candidates can stay at another educational institution in Norway. The Working Committee can also consider other arrangements that enable candidates to gain insight into alternative academic and research traditions related to the topic of the thesis. In addition to the candidates' international mobility, the faculties also invite guest researchers and facilitate the candidate's inclusion into international networks.

Other mandatory activities

Candidates must complete the following mandatory activities before submitting their thesis for assessment:

- Annual report (online form)
- [Start-up seminar](#)
- [Midway seminar](#)
- [Final seminar](#)
- [Internationalisation](#)

Relevant regulations etc.

- [Regulations relating to the Degree of Philosophiae Doctor \(PhD\) at Nord University](#)
- [Supplementary guidelines for the PhD in Science of Professions](#)
- [Regulations relating to Studies and Examinations at Nord University](#)
- [PhD Handbook – Nord University](#)

Programme evaluation

The courses are evaluated by the candidates through course surveys. The evaluation forms part of the university's quality assurance system. The entire programme is evaluated every four years as part of the quality assurance of the PhD programmes at Nord University.