



## Study plan – PhD in Science of Professions

### About

The PhD in Science of Professions is a three-year, full-time programme which includes a training component and a piece of research at a high scientific level. The programme examines current, societally relevant questions which put the field of professional practice at their centre, contributing to innovative processes in professions. This regionally anchored programme aims to be nationally prominent and internationally recognised. Its goal is to produce knowledge of relevance to national policy in the professional fields of healthcare, social work and education. This interdisciplinary programme is jointly managed by the Faculty of Nursing and Health Sciences (FSH) and the Faculty of Education and Arts (FLU) at Nord University.

### Description of the PhD programme

The area of study of this programme is *Science of Professions*. *Professions* are presumed to have their own scientific knowledge basis and an ethical code. They have a legitimate societal function and are organised in a way which looks after the interests of the profession. *Science* refers to research where empirical data is systematically, critically and methodically gathered and analysed based on hypotheses and/or research questions. Science builds on the knowledge attained through research and seeks to challenge existing knowledge and develop new understandings.

The PhD in Science of Professions is a *multi- and interdisciplinary* programme, where the aim is to develop knowledge in, about, and for professional practice. The programme encourages empirical research within the healthcare, social work and educational professions. This research should be closely tied to professional practice and carried out with scientific rigour, stringency and transparency. The programme serves a societal need for research-based knowledge about professions and the practice of professions, with relevance to national policy in the welfare state.

This PhD programme is characterised by an emphasis on the parts of professional studies that deal with the *language, relations and actions* of professional practice. These areas form the scientific area in which the individual projects are to be based. The research question of the candidate must be limited to one or more of these areas. The research projects may be descriptive, normatively explanatory and critically analytical, where the aim is to understand, explain, develop and/or challenge practice.

## **Language, relations and acts within professional studies**

The three thematic areas – *language, relations and actions* – within professional practice are understood as human activity in which the participants share an understanding of the practice. This includes a common understanding of activities (actions), the characteristic discourse, conversation and thoughts around the activity (language), as well as the relations between the people and objects involved in the practice (relations). In this way, language, relations and acts all form part of a general understanding of practice. Practitioners do not only reproduce earlier actions and understandings, but also develop new knowledge through the interplay of structures and actions. Professional studies is thus a framework for applied, practice-centred professional research with an explicit focus on the thematic areas of language, relations and acts. This framework allows for the study of the practice from interdisciplinary perspectives.

The practice is interwoven with and held together by external structures. These may be *culturally discursive aspects* which are imparted through the semantic dimension of language (e.g. language and discourses which allow and limit characteristic utterances in a practice); *material and economic aspects* which are imparted through actions in a physical dimension (e.g. buildings and items like books and digital aids which allow and limit the actions that characterise a practice); and *socio-political aspects* which are imparted through relations in a social dimension (e.g. hierarchies, solidarity and power which allow and limit practice). Through this approach to professional studies, it is possible to study the practice from different interdisciplinary perspectives.

## **Target demographic**

The target demographic for this PhD programme is national and international candidates who wish to carry out experience-based, empirical research in the field of professional studies and learn scientific craft as the basis for a further career.

## Admission requirements

For admission to the PhD programme, the applicant must have a 120 ECTS-credit master's degree or equivalent degree, as well as a professional bachelor's degree in healthcare, social work or education.

Applicants with an 120 ECTS-credit master's degree or similar without one of the previously mentioned bachelor's degrees may be evaluated individually, provided they present projects with significance for professional practice and that can be connected to practice.

All applicants must show in their application that their project is aimed at a particular profession and closely connected with practice. The project must also be centred on one or more of the areas of language, relations and actions, as they relate to professional practice.

Applicants without a weighted average of grade B or better in their master's degree may qualify for admission through, for example, having contributed to a scientific peer-reviewed article as a lead author, or having participated in research projects which are relevant for the field of study. Applicants must show basic scientific understanding and insight, independence and analytical thinking throughout their application.

When applying for admission, a description of the research project and documentation of full funding for the study period must be presented. Admission is granted by the Dean, at the recommendation of the Working committee. The final project description, developed in collaboration with the supervisor, must include a plan for the completion of the PhD programme (training component and independent research work).

See the supplementary description in §6(1) and §6(2) of the Regulations for the Degree of Philosophiae Doctor (PhD) at Nord University, as well as the Supplementary Guidelines for the PhD in Professional Studies for a more detailed description of the provisions for admission.

## Learning outcomes:

After an approved PhD in Science of Professions, the candidate must have the following overall learning outcomes, defined in knowledge, skills and general competence in professional studies, limited to one or more of the focus areas language, relationships and actions:

### Knowledge:

The candidate:

- will be at the forefront of science of professions at a high international level within one or more of the following focus areas: language, relationships and actions
- can contribute independently and innovatively to the development of new knowledge and theory in professional science
- has extensive knowledge of relevant dissemination arenas for professional science

Deans decision 26<sup>th</sup> of January 2022

- have a mastery of and can critically and independently reflect upon relevant theory, issues, scientific theory and methods
- have extensive knowledge of research ethics, including laws and regulations

#### **Skills:**

The candidate:

- can critically and independently manage complex academic issues and challenge established knowledge and practice within professional studies
- will be able to critically and independently assess and justify the appropriateness and application of various methods and processes in research projects, as well as taking account of the limitations of methodological choices will be able to conduct research at a high international level through independent research projects
- will be able to formulate issues and plan and implement research projects and innovation at a high academic level using relevant technology
- can initiate, conduct, evaluate and disseminate research in a critical and independent manner and discuss the implications of research for professions and society

#### **General competence:**

The candidate:

- will be able to identify, critically assess and discuss relevant academic and ethical issues in their own and others' research and conduct independent research with academic integrity
- can lead complex interdisciplinary tasks and projects independently and as part of a team
- will be able to disseminate research through recognised and preferably open national and international channels
- will be able to critically assess the need for and take the initiative to develop innovation and research with societal relevance
- will be able to actively participate in debates in national and international forums and contribute academic input to public discourse

## **The composition and contents of the PhD programme**

The PhD programme in Science of Professions consists of two parts, one training component (30 ECTS-credits) and an independent piece of research at a high, international level, completed by a doctoral dissertation, a trial lecture and a disputation. The training component will, along with the work on the dissertation, provide necessary depth and breadth of knowledge of the field.

Candidates will attain knowledge, skills and a general overview over professional studies by completing the mandatory course PRO9014 Science of Professions, Focusing on Language, Relationships and Actions. In addition, the research project will make use of complex and relevant methodological and methodical approaches.

The courses, seminars and other programme activities will provide candidates with tools to critically analyse, synthesise, systematise and plan research, as well as anchoring their own scientific contributions in a national and international context.

## Training component

The training component builds on the scientific knowledge that the PhD candidate has gained through previous studies. It will provide knowledge, skills and general abilities which will guide and support the dissertation work and further research.

The PhD programme has a training component which consists of mandatory and elective courses, as well as mandatory activities.

The coursework consists of PhD-level courses totalling 30 credits, 20 of which are mandatory courses, 10 of which are electives:

- The program offers this mandatory courses
  - PRO9014 Science of Professions, Focusing on Language, Relationships and Actions, 7,5 ECTS points
  - PRO9015 Philosophy of Science and Research Ethics, 5 ECTS points
  - PRO9013 Design and Methods, 7,5 ECTS points

The course PRO9014 **must** be completed at Nord University. Candidates may complete other mandatory and elective courses at different departments or institutions. International research courses may also form part of this.

- The program offers this elective courses - 10 ECTS points
  - PRO9002 Practical knowledge and professional praxis
  - PRO9011 Mixed methods
  - PRO9016 Video Observation and Analysis
  - PRO9017 Research methodology for secondary analysis, systematic/scoping review, meta- analysis/ meta synthesis
  - PRO9019 Development and innovation within professions

Mandatory activities/elements of the training component include:

- Completed Start-up, Mid-term and Final seminars (see below)
- Internationalisation (see below)
- Yearly reports

Deans decision 26<sup>th</sup> of January 2022

All PhD-level courses which are offered through the programme are evaluated by the doctoral committee and approved by the deans. Quality control is carried out by the central education committee.

Research methodology courses must make up at least 10 credits, and philosophy of science courses must make up at least 5 credits.

Up to 10 credits can be elective courses, where the candidate is free to choose between courses that are relevant to their research project, or more courses in the areas of research methodology or the philosophy of science.

The courses in the training component are suitable for the PhD programme, and candidates are therefore encouraged to complete the courses on offer. An overview of the courses can be found on the programme website. If there are participants on a course who do not speak a Scandinavian language, the course will be taught in English.

Together with their supervisor, the candidate will make a plan for the training component which will state which courses are included and in which terms the courses are to be completed. The individual course plan will be approved upon admission to the PhD programme in Professional Studies, but this can be changed upon application. The candidate must pass all courses in the training component in order for their dissertation to be evaluated.

## **Independent research**

The research component consists of an academic dissertation. The dissertation is an independent piece of research which complies with international standards regarding academic quality, methodology and code of ethics. Technology and innovative approaches may be drawn upon where relevant. The dissertation will contribute new scientific knowledge of a level where it can be published as part of the literature of the field, cf. the Regulations for the Degree of Philosophiae Doctor (PhD) at Nord University.

The dissertation may take the form either of an article-based work with an introduction, or a monograph. The thesis must be written in English or a Scandinavian language. Supplementary Guidelines for the PhD in Professional Studies are available.

Upon admission to the PhD programme, candidates will be linked to a research group, which will provide access to a research community. The research groups and the PhD programme organise inter- and mono-disciplinary seminars that allow for network building. Participation in a research group and in seminars is meant to develop candidates' ability to critically reflect both on their own research and the research of others, and give opportunities to present and discuss their own work and research.

## Exams and evaluations

The degree of PhD is assessed on the basis of:

- Academic dissertation
- Completion of the training component
- Trial lecture on a given topic
- A public defence of the dissertation (disputation)

The method of evaluation for the courses in the training component is outlined in the course plan for individual courses.

Evaluation procedures are stipulated by the Regulations for the Degree of Philosophiae Doctor (PhD) at Nord University §19, as well as the Supplementary Guidelines for the PhD in Professional Studies. Exam guidelines and regulations are found in the [Regulations relating to Studies and Examinations at Nord University](#), (The regulations and accompanying guidelines are valid to the extent that they are suitable for exams in the training component of doctoral programmes.)

## Internationalisation

The faculties offer candidates administrative support and the possibility to apply for economic support for a period of study abroad. This period is to be spent at a recognised educational or research institution, alternatively in another, relevant academic environment where it is possible to work on problems and questions related to candidates' research and/or dissertation. If this is not possible, a period at another Norwegian educational institution may be granted. Other arrangements which provide candidates with insight into other academic and research traditions related to their dissertation can also be considered by the Working committee of the PhD programme. In addition to the possibility of studying elsewhere, the faculty also invite guest lecturers to speak, and provide opportunities for candidates to be included in international academic networks.

## Other mandatory activities

To be allowed to deliver their thesis, the candidate must have completed the following mandatory activities:

- Yearly reports [link](#)
- Start-up seminar [link](#)
- Mid-term seminar [link](#)
- Final seminar [link](#)
- Internationalisation [link](#)

## Relevant regulations and central provisions

- [Regulations for the Degree of Philosophiae Doctor \(PhD\) at Nord University](#)
- [Regulations relating to Studies and Examinations at Nord University](#)
- Supplementary Guidelines for the PhD in Professional Studies
- Local rules and guidelines

## Programme evaluation

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