



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. *Studies* refers to research where empirical data is systematically, critically and methodically gathered and analysed based on hypotheses and/or research questions. The 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 science of professions that deal with *language, relationships* and *actions* of professional practice. These three thematic areas form the scientific basis for the individual projects. 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, relationships and actions within Science of Professions

The three thematic areas – *language, relationships, 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 (relationships). In this way, language, relationships and actions together 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. Science of Professions is thus a framework for applied practice-centred professional research with an explicit focus on the thematic areas of language, relationships, and actions. 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 Science of Professions, 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 science of professions 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 a 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, relationships, 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 Science of Professions 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 science of professions, 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 sciences of professions

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- has extensive knowledge of relevant dissemination arenas for science of professions
- 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 science of professions
- 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 thesis, a trial lecture and a disputation. The training component will, along with the work on the thesis, provide necessary depth and breadth of knowledge of the field.

Candidates will attain knowledge, skills and a general overview over science of professions 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 upon the academic expertise that the Ph.D. candidate has acquired through previous studies. It is designed to provide knowledge, skills, and general competencies that support the development of the doctoral thesis and future research endeavours.

The Ph.D. programme includes a training component consisting of mandatory and elective courses, as well as compulsory activities. The total scope of the training component is 30 ECTS credits.

Requirements for the Training Component:

Composition requirements for the 30 ECTS credits in the training component:

- PRO9014 Science of professions, with a focus on language, relationships, and actions (7.5 ECTS), is mandatory.
- A minimum of 10 ECTS credits must be dedicated to training in scientific methods. The course PRO9020 Design and Method (5 ECTS), or equivalent, must be included.
- A minimum of 5 ECTS credits must be dedicated to training in philosophy of science and research ethics. The course PRO9015 Theory of Science and Research Ethics, or equivalent, must be included.
- Elective courses totalling 7.5 ECTS credits, which may include subject-specific courses relevant to the research project, or additional courses in research methodology or philosophy of science.

Mandatory Activities/Elements in the Training Component:

- Completion of start-up, mid-term, and final seminars (see separate section)
- Internationalisation (see separate section)
- Annual progress reporting

The programme offers the following courses developed specifically for inclusion in the mandatory part of the training component:

- PRO9014 Science of Professions, with a focus on language, relationships, and actions (7.5 ECTS)
- PRO9015 Theory of Science and Research Ethics (5 ECTS)
- PRO9020 Design and Method (5 ECTS)

The course PRO9014 Science of Professions must be completed at Nord University. Candidates may complete other mandatory and elective courses at other faculties or institutions, including international research courses. If mandatory courses (PRO9015 and PRO9020) are taken at other institutions, the candidate must ensure that the external Ph.D. course has equivalent content and learning outcomes. Pre-approval is recommended.

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The programme also offers the following courses, which may be included in either the mandatory or elective part of the training component:

- PRO9021 Qualitative Analysis (2.5 ECTS)
- PRO9022 Quantitative Analysis (2.5 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)

The courses in the training component are tailored to the Ph.D. programme, and candidates are therefore encouraged to complete the courses offered. An overview of available courses is provided on the programme's website. If any participants in a course do not speak a Scandinavian language, the course will be conducted in English.

In consultation with their supervisor, the candidate prepares a training plan specifying which courses will be included and in which semester they will be completed. The individual training plan is approved upon admission to the Ph.D. programme in Professional Science but may be amended upon application. All courses in the training component must be approved before the thesis can be submitted for evaluation.

Independent research

The research component consists of an academic thesis. The thesis 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 thesis 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 thesis may take the form either of an article-based work with a "kappe", or a monograph. The thesis must be written in English or a Scandinavian language. [Supplementary Guidelines for the PhD in Science of professions](#) 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 thesis
- Completion of the training component

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- Trial lecture on a given topic
- A public defence of the thesis (disputation)

The method of evaluation for the courses in the training component is outlined in the course description for the 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 Science of Professions. 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 thesis. 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 thesis 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
- [Start-up seminar](#)
- [Mid-term seminar](#)
- [Final seminar](#)
- [Internationalisation](#)

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](#)

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- [Supplementary Guidelines for the PhD in Science of Professions](#)
- 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.