



**Department of Business and Economics
Reykjavík University**

Rules for PhD Studies

(Revised 2024)

As advised in the Reykjavík University Rules for PhD Studies (approved by the RU Executive Committee on 13 June 2023), the present adaptation of the University Rules applies specifically to doctoral studies in the Department of Business and Economics.

1 Introduction

The aim of doctoral studies at Reykjavik University is to benefit society by strengthening research and knowledge generation in the University's academic fields and by providing advanced training in research and science.

The university rules consider the Bologna Process on cooperation in higher education in Europe as well as internationally recognised principles relating to the organisation and quality of doctoral studies. These rules are also set in accordance with rules no. 37/2007 on Rules for doctoral programmes in universities according to Article 7 of law no. 63/2006 (the Higher Education Act), issued by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture on 17th of January 2006.

The University rules apply to doctoral studies at RU, regarding both the organisational framework of the studies and their quality requirements. Within the framework of these rules, the university's departments have the freedom to organise their doctoral studies in light of the unique features and traditions of their respective fields of study.

2 Administrative arrangements of doctoral studies

The Department's Research Council (DBERC) is responsible for the supervision of the Department's PhD programme. The administrative arrangements are supported by the Department's PhD Programme Administrator. The DBERC shall make recommendations to the Chair of the Department concerning the admission of students to the PhD programme, as provided in Article 4 of these rules, and recommend the appointment of supervisors and thesis committees, as provided in Articles 5 and 6, and external examiners, as provided in Article 9. The DBERC and supervisors shall observe the development of doctoral studies at the international level and monitor the quality of the Department's PhD programme. The DBERC shall ensure that the quality of doctoral studies at the Department is comparable to the quality of similar PhD programmes in other countries.



3 Programme Structure

The PhD Programme offered by the Department of Business and Economics aims to graduate well-educated researchers and future leaders in the fields of PhD Studies accredited by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture.

The PhD programme comprises not less than 180 ECTS units, normally to be completed within 3 to 4 years for full-time PhD candidates and 5 to 6 years for part-time PhD candidates. In exceptional cases, PhD Studies may be completed in less than 3 years but not less than 2 years and only in instances where credit not exceeding one year (60 ECTS) has been granted for prior work. The time to completion may be extended beyond 4 years subject to approval following application to the DBERC, stating the length (not exceeding 12 months) of the extension requested and reasons for the extension. The need for an extension beyond the period initially requested is also subject to application and approval.

PhD candidates will take courses equivalent to a minimum of 30 ECTS. It is likely that some, and possibly most, of the coursework will be taken at universities and research institutions outside Iceland. The costs for these courses are borne by the students. If the student pays full tuition, then the cost is borne by the Department of Business and Economics subject to prior approval by the Chair of the department, and there might be a fund for conferences when the classes are finished. Students can apply for a conference fund once the courses have been finished. Courses are undertaken with the approval of the Primary Supervisor. Students may substitute ECTS credits for oral presentations at international scientific conferences (or similar activities as approved by the DBERC) up to a total of 4 ECTS units. Each such presentation will be deemed to be the equivalent of 1 or 2 ECTS units, as determined by the Primary Supervisor.

Doctoral studies at the Department of Business and Economics provide students with training in the application of advanced scientific research methods and skills in acquiring and communicating new knowledge. In order to complete the PhD programme students must as a minimum:

- Possess a range of general and specialised knowledge within the scientific field(s) of their studies (knowledge).
- Apply advanced scientific research methods and procedures to substantive research questions within their field(s) of studies (skills).
- Apply knowledge and skills acquired during their studies to advance the relevant profession and/or in the context of teaching or further studies (competencies).
- Make an original and substantial contribution to knowledge creation in their specific field(s) of study.



Further details regarding knowledge, skills, and competencies required of PhD students can be found in the National Qualification Framework for Higher Education available online, see: [Quality Board for Higher Education in Iceland | Quality Enhancement Framework \(qef.is\)](https://www.qef.is/).

PhD students are required to submit for approval to the Thesis Committee a Research Proposal (see Article 7 herein). In addition, an annual progress report is required for each year of study, detailing the progress to date and plans for subsequent steps.

PhD candidates are expected to regularly attend all research seminars held by Department of Business and Economics and to be active participants. They are also required to make at least two presentations to the department prior to the PhD examination. The first presentation should be made no later than three months after the approval of the Research Proposal.

PhD candidates may apply for intermission (authorised absence) from their studies for specified medical or non-medical reasons (e.g., parental leave, challenging domestic circumstances, or caring for a sick relative). There is no specified permitted maximum term for authorised absence, although the period should not be such as to undermine the viability and integrity of the PhD studies.

4 Application and Contract

Applications for admission to the PhD programme require the agreement of a proposed Primary Supervisor and may be submitted from February 5th to April 30th for the Fall Semester and September 15th to November 5th for the Spring Semester. The following documents shall accompany the application:

- Transcripts of the applicant's university degrees and diplomas.
- A curriculum vitae including a list of publications.
- Three names who may be contacted for reference.
- A brief description of the subject of the proposed doctoral research.
- A letter of support (an e-mail would be sufficient) from a proposed supervisor.

Only candidates who have completed master's studies at the university level or equivalent studies may enrol in PhD Studies offered by the Department of Business and Economics. All applications are reviewed by the DBERC, which makes a recommendation to the Chair of the Department of Business and Economics.

If accepted into the PhD programme, the Chair of the Department of Business and Economics shall arrange for a Doctoral Student Contract between the PhD candidate and the Department of Business and



Economics. Prospective candidates may register for PhD Studies offered by the Department of Business and Economics only after having their eligibility and Contract approved by the Chair of the Department of Business and Economics or nominee. This also makes the payment of a tuition fee for one academic semester due (total costs excluding costs for courses and conferences and living expenses).

5 Supervisor/s

The Chair of the Department of Business and Economics shall appoint a Primary Supervisor for each PhD candidate. Appointment of a Secondary Supervisor is optional. The role of supervisors is to advise PhD candidates in their studies and research, track their progress, and monitor the quality of all aspects of the work. Supervisors are responsible to the Department of Business and Economics for compliance with the Rules for PhD Studies. The Primary Supervisor is a member of the Thesis Committee and usually acts in the role of Chair at meetings of the Thesis Committee (see Article 6).

Primary supervisors shall meet the following academic requirements:

- Have a PhD degree.
- Be a permanent Reykjavik University Department of Business and Economics faculty member with a substantial research record and experience of publication in internationally recognised outlets.
- Have specialist knowledge in the subject field(s) of the PhD candidate's research topic.
- Be an active participant in the research community and a recognised expert in his or her field(s). Assessment of this qualification shall consider published articles in peer-reviewed journals, experience of international research cooperation, and funding for research projects.

A Secondary Supervisor may be appointed and shall have a PhD degree but need not fulfil other requirements listed above.

At least one of the appointed supervisors must have previous experience in supervision of PhD candidates, normally until completion of the doctoral degree.

In the event that the Primary Supervisor ceases to be a permanent employee of Reykjavik University, a replacement must be appointed from among the permanent faculty.



6 Thesis Committee

A Thesis Committee shall be appointed no later than one month before the PhD student's Research Proposal is due (see Article 7). The Thesis Committee shall consist of at least 3 persons. If there is a Secondary Supervisor, the Thesis Committee shall be made up of the Primary Supervisor, the Secondary Supervisor, and at least one additional member. If there is no Secondary Supervisor, the Thesis Committee shall be made up of the Primary Supervisor and at least two additional members. At least one of the Thesis Committee members shall not be a member of the RU faculty. Thesis Committee members shall review the PhD Research Proposal and must give separate written approval (which may take the form of email) before the proposed research begins. The Thesis Committee shall track the progress of the PhD studies, and review and approve annual progress reports. The Thesis Committee shall determine when the PhD thesis is ready for examination.

7 Research Proposal

By no later than the end of the first year of study (end of the second year for part-time PhD candidates), the doctoral candidate shall submit a completed Research Proposal to the Thesis Committee. The Research Proposal serves as the foundation for the doctoral work. It shall include:

- Delineation of the subject.
- An overview of the state of the art in the field(s) of study.
- Research objective(s) and research questions that the proposed research will examine.
- A proposal of the positioning of the planned doctoral studies in the specific field(s) of study.
- A proposed research methodology in response to the research objective(s) and questions.
- An overview of any planned courses as well as courses already completed.
- A proposed time schedule for the progress of studies.

After the Research Proposal has been approved by the Thesis Committee, final approval must be obtained from the DBERC (see article 12).

8 Thesis and Academic Papers

A PhD candidate's research is completed with a doctoral thesis, which constitutes independent scientific work of a high academic order such that it meets international publication standards within the subject



area with respect to the formulation of the issues raised, definitions of main concepts, theoretical and methodological bases, documentation, and form of presentation. The thesis in its entirety must be written in English.

The recommendation is that the doctoral thesis includes at least three scientific contributions – typically as collection of three papers – all of which have been accepted by the thesis committee and examiners. Preferably each of the papers should be accepted in an ISI-accredited journal (or in an international peer-reviewed book published by a respectable publisher).

Declarations shall be obtained from all co-authors of papers included in the thesis to confirm the contribution of the doctoral candidate. Under normal circumstances, only work published during the past five years prior to submission of a thesis may be included as part of the thesis.

The thesis is accompanied by an abstract of no more than 500 words. In addition to the papers, the thesis includes at least one introductory chapter and at least one concluding discussion chapter. The introductory chapter (or chapters) shall include a substantive review of the relevant literature, and the discussion chapter (or chapters) shall provide a coherent account of the overall body of work leading to a summary of findings. Collectively, the chapters comprising the thesis represent an integrated treatment of the research work submitted for examination.

Following the granting of the PhD degree, a digital version of the thesis is made available electronically through the library. The public shall have access to the thesis.

9 External Examiners

About six months prior to the planned examination date, two External Examiners shall be appointed. External Examiners shall meet the following academic requirements:

- Have a PhD degree.
- Have specialist knowledge in the subject field of the PhD student's research topic.
- Be an active participant in the research community and a recognised expert in the relevant field. The assessment of this qualification shall take into account published articles in peer-reviewed journals, experience in international research cooperation and funding of research projects.

Thesis Committee members cannot serve as External Examiners. External Examiners shall not have been involved in any research collaboration with Thesis Committee members or the PhD candidate in the preceding five years, including, but not limited to co-authorship of conference/journal papers, collaboration on research projects or applications for research grants. The selection process for External Examiners shall involve the details of two or more prospective examiners being submitted to the DBERC



for consideration. The final appointment of the External Examiners is made by approval of the Chair of the Department of Business and Economics.

10 Thesis Examination and Defence

The Thesis Committee shall review the thesis and form an opinion regarding its suitability for examination no more than 2 months after submission. The Thesis Committee shall return a consensus opinion that the thesis is ready for examination, requires minor revisions before being ready for examination, requires major revisions before being ready for examination, or is not suitable for examination. In any case, the Thesis Committee shall submit written feedback to the PhD candidate. The PhD student can submit a thesis for review by the Thesis Committee no more than twice.

When the Thesis Committee has deemed that the thesis is ready for examination, the thesis shall be sent to the External Examiners and a date shall be set for the examination about two months later. After the thesis has been sent to the External Examiners, there shall be no communication between the Thesis Committee and the External Examiners up to the time of the examination.

If the External Examiners consider the thesis in its current form to be unfit for examination, they are asked to record in writing what the doctoral candidate must do to bring the thesis into a state worthy of defence and by when this should be done.

The External Examiners and the Thesis Committee shall conduct the examination and decide regarding the granting of the PhD degree. In case one of these persons is not able to attend the examination in person, he or she may participate via teleconference.

The thesis examination starts with a 20-minute presentation of the research by the PhD student. This is followed by the External Examiners separately and jointly conducting the examination. The examination shall be chaired by the Chair of the Department of Business and Economics (or nominee, who may be a member of the DBERC) serving in an administrative capacity without participating as an examiner.

The Thesis Committee and the External Examiners shall endeavour to reach a consensus agreement, including an opinion about whether the thesis includes work suitable for publication in internationally recognised peer-reviewed journals. As joint signatories, the External Examiners and Thesis Committee members forward their opinion to the Chair of the Department of Business and Economics, recommending as follows:

- Pass without revision.
- Pass contingent on satisfying stated revisions, which may be minor (requiring up to 2 months to complete).
- Pass contingent on satisfying stated major revisions (requiring more than 2 months but no more than 12 months to complete).



- Fail.

The PhD candidate is not present for the joint External Examiner and Thesis Committee deliberations. If revisions are required, these are reviewed by the External Examiners within two months, after which a final written recommendation is submitted to the Chair of the Department of Business and Economics.

If disagreement prevents a consensus from being reached during any stage of the examination of a PhD thesis, or if any individual among the relevant parties (the Thesis Committee, External Examiners, and PhD student) feels unable to accept the consensus opinion, Article 11 applies.

When a decision has been made to grant the degree, a public defence takes place in which the PhD student presents the research. The presentation provides an overview as well as coverage of particular highlights. The defence is scheduled to last approximately 60 minutes, inclusive of approximately 40 minutes for the presentation and 20 minutes for questions and answers. Advance notice of the defence is circulated within the University and posted on the University's Website. The defence is open to the general public. The public defence is a necessary requirement for the award of the PhD degree.

11 Resolution of Disagreements

It is acknowledged that differences of opinion and disagreements are inherent to scholarship and may occur in the context of PhD studies between members of the Thesis Committee, between the External Examiners and the Thesis Committee collectively and individually, between External Examiners, and between the PhD candidate and Thesis Committee members and External Examiners. It is acknowledged that disagreements may occur at any time during the tenure of an individual PhD student.

In general, disagreements are likely to be satisfactorily resolved following detailed discussion, deliberation, and analysis amongst the parties concerned. When such actions do not succeed in producing a timely resolution, the disagreement shall be brought to the attention of the Chair of the Department of Business and Economics.

When notified of a disagreement, the Chair may refer the matter to the DBERC, which shall provide a recommendation within one month. The DBERC may seek further clarification from any of the relevant parties. When disagreements occur as part of the examination of the PhD thesis, the Chair may appoint one or more additional External Examiners to provide independent evaluations of the thesis. Irrespective of the nature of the disagreement, the final decision shall reside with the Chair of the Department of Business and Economics.



12 Role of the Department of Business and Economics Research Council

The DBERC shall be responsible for the following:

- **Review applications to the PhD programme and make recommendations for acceptance or rejection.** The DBERC will only review applications from students who have already identified a willing Primary Supervisor. Final decisions for acceptance or rejection shall be made by the Chair of the Department of Business and Economics.
- **Review Research Proposals.** After a Thesis Committee has approved a Research Proposal, the Thesis Committee will sign-off on it and send it to the DBERC for review. This review will focus on the Research Proposal's adherence to the Department of Business and Economics' rules for PhD Studies. If the DBERC finds what it deems to be serious weaknesses in a Research Proposal, the Thesis Committee shall be advised in order that the Research Proposal can be revised accordingly.
- **Review annual progress reports after they have been approved by the Thesis Committee.** The DBERC's focus here will be similar to that relating to Research Proposals. Furthermore, the DBERC will give particular attention to factors that have or may delay progress.
- **Review the suitability of proposed External Examiners with reference to criteria specified in Article 9.** If a proposed External Examiner is considered by the DBERC not to satisfy the requirements of Article 9, the Thesis Committee will be requested to propose a replacement.

The DBERC has a role in resolving disagreements as described in Article 11.