

# PhD Manual

*Political Science PhD Programme, University of Copenhagen*

Revised June 2025

## **Aim**

This PhD manual provides a brief introduction to the practices and administration of the PHD programme at the Department of Political Science, University of Copenhagen. For general rules and procedures at the PhD School in the Social Sciences, please see <https://socialsciences.ku.dk/phd/> For the formal rules applying specifically to the Political Science PhD Programme, please see the current statute of the programme <https://polsci.ku.dk/uddannelser/phd/the-phd-statute-for-political-science-university-of-copenhagen.pdf>

## **PhD supervision**

All PhD students have two supervisors. The principal supervisor is responsible for supporting the overall development and progress of the PhD project as outlined in the general guidelines and must be an associate professor or full professor in the Department of Political Science. The secondary supervisor will have complementary skills and competencies. The secondary supervisor will most often be employed at the Department of Political Science, but may also come from another research institution, which finances or employs the PhD student or from another field in case of cross-disciplinary projects. The secondary supervisor may be an assistant professor or associate or full professor. The secondary supervisor is usually assigned within three months of the start date for the PhD.

## **PhD plan and regular assessments**

### *PhD plan*

The PhD plan is the central document that outlines and directs the entire trajectory of an individual's PhD programme. The plan schedules core elements in the individual PhD such as work obligations (typically teaching, supervision and grading), courses, fieldwork, and change of research environment. It also sets preliminary deadlines for draft chapters/articles in the dissertation.

The PhD plan serves as an agreement between the PhD student and all the stakeholders involved in the PhD programme. Therefore, it needs to be agreed upon and approved by the principal supervisor, the Head of PhD Programme, the hiring manager (usually the Head of Department), the PhD Administration and the Head of the PhD School.

The PhD plan is developed in collaboration between the PhD student and the supervisor. To draft the initial version of the plan, the PhD student should contact the Head of Studies to discuss teaching, supervision and grading work during the PhD period. It is also a good idea to seek advice from the Head of PhD Programme and more experienced PhD students.

The PhD plan must be updated continuously. Think of it as a project management tool that you regularly revise in collaboration with your principal supervisor. Major changes to the plan require approval from relevant parties such as the Head of PhD Programme or Head of Department. Usually, these approvals are made by submitting an amended PhD plan through PhD Planner in connection with the regular yearly evaluation reports.

The first version of the plan should be submitted for approval within 3 months of starting your PhD programme. An amended version may be submitted for approval with the regular assessment reports.

### *Regular assessments*

Mandatory regular assessment reports are submitted via PhD Planner (three-year programmes: 26, 14, 6; four-year programmes: 38, 26, 14, 6 months before the individual end date of the PhD programme). PhD students will receive an automated reminder in due time.

The submission of the assessment report is contingent upon a prior meeting between the PhD student and the primary supervisor. The aim of the meeting is to discuss the progress of the PhD project, review all components of the PhD programme, and make necessary adjustments to the PhD plan. After the meeting, an assessment report, and an adjusted PhD plan (if applicable) will be submitted by the PhD student in PhD Planner, commented on by the principal supervisor, and approved by the Head of PhD Programme.

It is highly likely that a PhD project will evolve during the research process, leading to changes in the various planned parts. Please submit an adjusted PhD plan to reflect the agreements between the PhD student and the supervisor and have it approved by the Head of PhD Programme. Major changes to the PhD plan should be approved by the Head of the PhD School at the request of the Head of PhD Programme.

### **PhD courses**

All PhD students must complete 30 ECTS as part of the fulfillment of requirements for submitting the PhD thesis.

It is mandatory for all Political Science PhD students to participate in all the PhD Programme's PhD work-in-progress seminars unless they have written permission from the Head of the PhD Programme to be excused. All PhD students must do three presentations at the seminar during their enrollment in the programme. The first presentation is typically oral and based on the PhD application. This presentation takes place during the first semester of enrollment. The two other presentations are based on papers, which must be submitted to all

participants one week in advance of the seminar. It is the PhD student's own obligation to find discussants for their paper. For each presentation you will need a discussant from the Department of Political Science, a researcher from outside the Department of Political Science (and preferably outside the University of Copenhagen), and one of your PhD student colleagues. The seminars take up approximately three to four days per semester. PhD students are awarded 5 ECTS by the end of their enrolment. They must submit documentation in the form of programmes from the individual seminar, when they presented their work, alternatively a signed statement that they have made all three presentations.

It is mandatory for all Political Science PhD Students to complete the 5 ECTS course 'Research Design in Political Science' offered by the Department of Political Science.

All PhD students must complete at least 5 ECTS of methods courses.

Political Science PhD students may receive up to 4 ECTS for participating in international conferences when presenting a paper. For the specific requirements, please see the PhD statute.

The Political Science programme occasionally organizes courses at the initiative of the PhD students if at least 5 PhD students in the programme sign up to participate. Please contact the Head of PhD Programme, if you have an idea for a course.

All courses should be written into PhD Planner as early as possible, and all elective courses chosen in dialogue with the principal supervisor. Course certificates should be uploaded in PhD Planner for approval by principal supervisor and Head of PhD programme as soon as the PhD Student receives the course certificate. The programme accepts ECTS calculations stated on courses certificates from Danish and EU member state universities.

Please note that specific rules apply to fulfilment of the 4+4 programme. Please consult the webpage of the PhD School in the Social Sciences <https://socialsciences.ku.dk/phd/> and consult the Political Science Head of PhD Programme, when in doubt about requirements.

## **Teaching and knowledge dissemination**

PhD students funded by the Department of Political Science and research projects located at the department typically teach four courses. Part of the obligation can be fulfilled by supervision and grading. The PhD student should contact the Head of Studies during the first three months of enrollment to make a plan for fulfilling the obligation. PhD students enrolled in the 4+4 program will receive payment for teaching during the first two years of the program. Work obligations for PhD students funded by external funders are subject to a cooperation agreement between the department and the funder.

Knowledge dissemination beyond academia is a mandatory part of the PhD programme. The requirement to disseminate research can be fulfilled in various ways, since knowledge dissemination can take many forms. The PhD student may write feature articles or analytical articles for newspapers, short articles, texts for relevant homepages or participate in a professional capacity on TV or on the radio or in other media. The knowledge dissemination

can take place through Danish or international media. PhD students who do not disseminate their research must take a course in knowledge dissemination.

### **Allowance and Grant application for conferences and PhD courses**

Each PhD student receives an allowance of 30,000 DKK for the duration of their studies that can be used for expenses such as conferences, PhD courses and fieldwork without a formal application. However, the actual activities and their rationale should always be discussed with the principal supervisor before booking. It is the PhD student's responsibility to make sure not to exceed this amount. You can check the status of your account by sending an e-mail to [ifs-okonomi@samf.ku.dk](mailto:ifs-okonomi@samf.ku.dk). The money can be spent on conferences (travel and board), course and conference fees, fieldwork, language revision, software, books and other essential work related purchases. Please contact the Head of PhD Programme, if you have doubts about whether an expense can be covered by the 30,000 DKK. Expenses must be settled in Rejsud and IndFak within two weeks. In addition to this allowance, the department supports change of research environment (see below).

PhD students are encouraged to apply for external grants to cover expenses. PhD students hired on externally funded projects (DR50) should consult with their main supervisor if there is travel funding available instead of or in addition to funds allocated by the Department of Political Science PhD Programme. In general, external funds must be used before funds from the PhD programme.

It is the obligation of the PhD student to comply with the general rules for University of Copenhagen employees. Please keep a record of all expenses covered by the department. Please contact [phdcourses@ifs.ku.dk](mailto:phdcourses@ifs.ku.dk) if you need administrative assistance to navigate Rejsud etc. and they will seek to point you in the direction of someone who can help.

For more information, see

*Overview of rules and procedures:*

<https://kunet.ku.dk/employee-guide/Pages/Finance/Travel-and-transportation.aspx>

*Short summary of rules and procedures for travel etc.:*

[https://kunet.ku.dk/arbejdsomraader/oekonomi/alledokumenter/KUs%20rejseregler/Rules%20for%20travel%20\(pixi\).pdf](https://kunet.ku.dk/arbejdsomraader/oekonomi/alledokumenter/KUs%20rejseregler/Rules%20for%20travel%20(pixi).pdf)

*Full guide for travel etc.:*

<https://kunet.ku.dk/arbejdsomraader/oekonomi/alledokumenter/KUs%20rejseregler/Rules%20for%20travel,%20representation%20etc.pdf>

### **Change of research environment**

All PhD students are required to do a 'change of research environment' lasting approximately between 3 and 6 months during the course of their PhD enrollment. We encourage PhD students to seek out internationally recognized research environments that are relevant to the thematic of their dissertation. The choice of research environment is decided in dialogue with the supervisors and the Head of PhD Programme and should be planned well in advance.

The PhD programme allocates up to 20,000 Danish kroner for expenses related to change of research environment. The funds can cover one return trip to the external research environment (e.g., plane or train tickets), visa, mandatory fees at your host university, up to 2500 Danish kroner monthly for housing expenses. Please contact the Head of Secretariat in the Department of Political Science well advance of the change of environment to clarify any formal requirements related to covering expenses. Expenses must be settled in Rejsud and IndFak based on documented expenses. To settle expenses, use your Stedkode and alias, but do not your KU specification for this type of expenses.

## **The dissertation**

Dissertations may be either monographs or article based. PhD students should discuss which model has the best fit with their project with supervisors and Head of PhD programme.

### *The monograph dissertation*

The monograph is assessed as a coherent work, thus much effort must be put into providing a natural flow and structure to the dissertation. A strong literature review, strong theoretical chapters, a methodology chapter, and analytic chapters are natural elements of any monograph. The length varies between approximately 200 pages to 400 pages, but remember it is quality not length that really matters. One of the advantages of the monograph is that it is one coherent research project with space for a detailed literature review and for developing a systematic theoretical framework, consistent methodological reflections and in-depth empirical analyses which can be hard to achieve within the word limits for articles (often 8,000-12.000 words).

### *Article based dissertation*

An article-based dissertation consists of a number of publishable papers and a frame. The number of papers will depend on a number of factors, including the tradition of the relevant subfields, how substantive the respective articles are in terms of required research time, and whether they are single authored or co-authored. In general, we encourage students and supervisors to focus on the quality of the papers rather than producing as many papers as possible. Still, the equivalent of a minimum of three single-authored articles is expected. If one or more articles are co-authored, the number of articles increases proportionally. PhD students are encouraged to discuss the number of articles with supervisors and the Head of PhD Programme. Determining what counts as a publishable paper is not easy, but it is

expected that a paper can be published in an international peer-reviewed journal, when it is submitted as part of a dissertation.

The papers comprising the dissertation should be clearly connected and centered around a common research question. Thus, the papers should be thematically connected, complement each other, and show theoretical and methodological progress. On the other hand, they should not be too overlapping and repetitive.

The frame has two main purposes. First, it must provide coherence to the dissertation as a whole. That is, it must unpack the motivation for the project, explain its overall empirical and theoretical relevance, and show the connections between the different papers. Second, the frame is the place for deeper reflections on important issues that are treated only briefly in the papers. These include discussion and justification of the methodological and theoretical choices made. Thus, the frame should go more into depth with methods and theory than is possible in the papers. The frame should also include a literature review and highlight the contribution of the dissertation to the field.

It is important that the frame is not a mere last-minute summary of or addition to the substantive work put into the papers. The frame and the articles will be assessed as equally important parts of the dissertation. For this reason, we encourage the PhD student to work on the frame from the beginning of their PhD education, alongside the papers. There is no minimum length of the frame, but it is important that it is sufficiently substantive to provide the depth to communicate and justify the methods and theories used in the papers. The frame can also be used to give empirical and historical background to the papers. Most frames are between 40 and 70 pages, but some are longer.

We encourage students to explore the possibilities of co-authoring articles with faculty members or other PhD students during their studies. If these articles are part of the dissertation, a co-author declaration must be attached to the dissertation. If co-authored articles are included, the number of articles to include in a dissertation typically increases proportionally. Remember again that assessment committees usually focus on quality and less on the number of articles. At least one significant article in an article-based dissertation should be single-authored. The frame must be single-authored.

### **Predefence/"slutseminar"**

All PhD students must present a draft dissertation at a predefence ("Slutseminar") approximately 3 months before submission. The seminar typically lasts for approximately 3 hours. At the pre-defence supervisors and two discussants will give the PhD student feedback on the manuscript and what needs to be done before submission. Discussants at the predefence cannot be members of the final dissertation committee when the thesis is submitted. One discussant will be from the Department of Political Science, University of Copenhagen, the other from another university or research institution.

Discussants are agreed between PhD student and supervisors. PhD students should contact external discussants in consultation with supervisors well in time of seminar. The manuscript

is submitted to participants at least two weeks before the seminar unless a different deadline is agreed upon by all participants. The predefence has no formal role in regard to the submission of the thesis. Discussants and supervisors will offer constructive feedback but do not decide if the PhD student can submit the thesis. The PhD programme will pay a fee and train ticket from Denmark or Southern Sweden for the external discussant and provide a sandwich and water for participants (please reach out to [phdcourses@ifs.ku.dk](mailto:phdcourses@ifs.ku.dk) for information and help on this). If the discussant comes from outside Denmark/Southern Sweden, participation via Zoom is an option. In that case the PhD student sets up the Zoom meeting. The PhD student books the meeting room for the seminar and the PhD student and primary supervisor reaches out to potential discussants.

### **Submission and assessment**

A couple of weeks before your official end date you will receive an email on practicalities from the administration.

The Assessment Committee consists of three members who must hold the rank of associate professor/senior researcher or higher in a relevant field. The committee chair is a faculty member at the Department of Political Science, University of Copenhagen. The two remaining members must be employed outside of the University of Copenhagen. Both, or at least one member, must be from abroad unless academic reasons justify deviation from this requirement. Predefence/slutseminar discussants are not allowed to serve on the committee. The Assessment Committee must be gender-balanced, with at least one woman and one man among the members. The primary supervisor typically contacts potential assessment members informally at least three months prior to submission to check their willingness and availability serving at the committee. The Assessment Committee will produce a thorough written assessment of the thesis and determine whether they find the thesis suitable for defence.