

# Handbook for Doctoral Studies

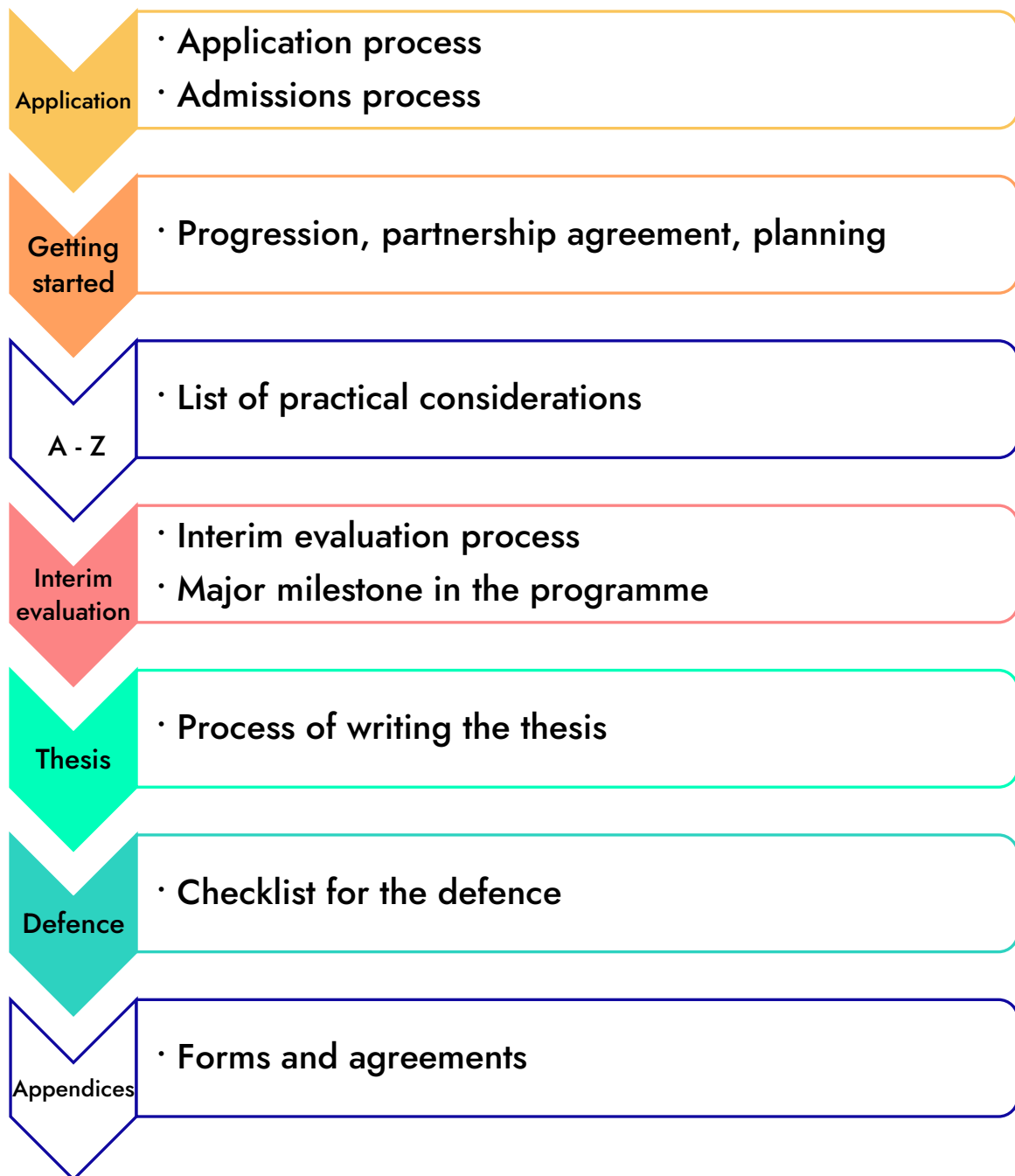
at the University of Iceland School of Education



SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

## Timeline of the doctoral programme

Overview of the doctoral programme and colour coding for this handbook



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This handbook is intended for doctoral students and supervisors at the University of Iceland School of Education, as well as others with an interest or involvement in the programme. The handbook has been compiled by the School's [Doctoral studies committee](#) and is updated twice a year. Doctoral students are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the rules and standards for doctoral studies at the University of Iceland. See the [Standards and requirements for the quality of doctoral studies at UI](#). Doctoral studies at UI are discussed in Section VI of the [Regulation for the University of Iceland no. 569/2009](#).

Like other schools, the School of Education has a specific [Regulation on doctoral study](#).

Information about [doctoral studies at the School of Education](#) is available on the main University of Iceland website.

Steingerður Ólafsdóttir ([steingeo@hi.is](mailto:steingeo@hi.is)) is the coordinator for doctoral studies at the School of Education and should be the first port of call for doctoral students who have any questions or problems. She sits on the doctoral studies committee and is based in the [Educational Research Institute](#).

## From application to admission

A well-written [Research plan](#) is the key to a successful PhD application. Ideally, applicants should be able to name or have been in touch with potential supervisors before submitting the application. Doctoral students do not need to be funded at the School of Education, but applicants should consider how they intend to support themselves.

Guidelines for writing an application and what to include are available on the [doctoral studies web page](#) under **+Application for a doctoral programme**. All supporting documents must be submitted before the School's [Doctoral studies committee](#) can process the application.

Doctoral students may be admitted to the School of Education after submitting a general application for a doctoral programme, or being hired to a funded research project at the School, or submitting an application alongside a grant application.

### Admissions procedures for doctoral programmes at SE

Doctoral programmes at the School of Education are advertised on the UI website. Those who have completed a Master's degree or equivalent qualification from a recognised university meet the requirements to apply for a doctoral programme. Applicants shall generally have completed a 30 ECTS Master's thesis. Academic performance and work experience will be taken into account in the admissions procedure. Applicants wishing to start a doctoral programme directly after completing a Master's degree may apply before they graduate, if it can be confirmed that they will complete the Master's programme with a satisfactory final grade before the doctoral programme begins.

In accordance with item 4, Article 69 of the Regulation for the University of Iceland no. 569/2009, a member of academic staff at a faculty may not be admitted to doctoral studies at that faculty. In light of the fact that doctoral programmes at the School of Education span all faculties at the School, a member of academic staff at the School of Education may generally not be admitted to doctoral studies at the School.

Applications for doctoral programmes shall be submitted using a specific online form. See the guidelines published on the [School of Education website](#). An application must be accompanied by copies of degree certificates, a draft study plan, a statement describing the applicant's academic goals and a draft research plan. Applicants must also submit reference letters from two independent parties who are familiar with the applicant's academic or research abilities. The reference letters should be submitted directly to the School of Education using a specific form.

UI Student Registration reviews and registers applications and ensures that the required supporting documents are included.

The doctoral studies committee then considers and evaluates the applications and invites applicants to an interview if their applications meet requirements. The committee seeks the opinion of specialists at the School where appropriate.

The doctoral studies committee then sends the School of Education board a statement recommending admission. Admission will be recommended if the following criteria are met:

- The applicant is deemed competent to undertake doctoral studies and carry out demanding research work.
- Experts in the proposed area of research are available to supervise the applicant and evaluate the research project.
- The School has enough funding to accommodate the doctoral student and suitable study facilities are available.

The recommendation is discussed by the School of Education board. After the School of Education board has processed the application, the coordinator for doctoral studies shall send a written response to the applicant on behalf of the Dean of the School. Applicants will receive a written response no later than two months after the application deadline.

Doctoral students are generally admitted twice a year, in accordance with the process described above. Further details can be found in the [Regulation on doctoral study at the University of Iceland School of Education, no. 440/2018](#). Exceptions may be made to this rule in the case of funded doctoral students. Successful grant applicants are hired and then required to formally apply for the doctoral programme as soon as possible, certainly not later than three months after signing the contract of employment. The doctoral studies committee will then process the application. A representative from the doctoral studies committee is involved in the hiring process.

## Getting started on the doctoral programme

Every autumn there is an orientation for new doctoral students to introduce them to the School of Education and go over all the most important things that new doctoral students need to know.

### Progression of the doctoral programme

1. **Admission** (following an independent application or being hired for a funded project).

Early stages:

2. Appointment of the main supervisor and, as appropriate, other members of the doctoral committee. Approved letter of intent in the PhD Portal.
3. **Written partnership agreement at the start of the doctoral programme** between the student and academic supervisor.
4. **Research plan** and **Study plan** (course selection).

After 12 to 24 months (based on full-time study):

5. Preparation for the interim evaluation
6. **Interim evaluation** (within two years of admission)
7. **Doctoral committee** fully appointed (3 to 5 members)

Final stages:

8. Around 6 months before the defence, the doctoral committee must submit a statement to the doctoral studies committee requesting permission to hold the defence, along with a reasoned argument nominating opponents for the defence. At least four months before the defence, the thesis must be finalised and approved by the doctoral committee. The coordinator for doctoral studies will then send the thesis to the opponents.
9. **Doctoral defence.**

### Registration on the doctoral programme

Doctoral students are responsible for registering for the programme and paying the annual registration fee. Failure to pay the registration fee amounts to withdrawing from the programme. Students may apply to take up a year's leave from the doctoral programme, in which case they shall pay a reduced registration fee, see Article 48 of the [Regulation for the University of Iceland](#).

The online learning management system for doctoral studies is called the **PhD Portal**. Students use the PhD Portal to submit progress reports and applications to change study rates or take study leave.

### Doctoral committee

Each doctoral student is assigned a doctoral committee, comprising the main supervisor and co-supervisor as well as one or more experts (up to three) in the relevant field. The role of the doctoral committee is to:



- assist the doctoral candidate with writing the research plan and ensure that progression is in line with regulation at the School. The committee will evaluate the research plan and ensure that the quality of the research meets expected standards.
- monitor the doctoral student and encourage them to actively participate in the academic community within the School and internationally.
- take part in a formal interim evaluation of the student's research project. The interim evaluation shall take place no later than two years after the start of the programme.
- submit a reasoned statement to the doctoral studies committee, before the doctoral defence, recommending that the doctoral candidate be permitted to defend the thesis.

The doctoral committee is not fully appointed until after the interim evaluation and is dissolved after the defence. The main supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the doctoral committee is appointed and nominating members to the doctoral studies committee. Members are selected in consultation with the doctoral student.

The doctoral studies committee has approved the following rules about requirements for academic supervisors of doctoral students at the School of Education:

*Each doctoral student must have from the start of the programme at least one main academic supervisor. Generally, an academic co-supervisor should be appointed shortly after the student is admitted to the programme. The co-supervisor and main supervisor are both referred to as academic supervisors in this Regulation.*

*Academic supervisors guide a doctoral student throughout the thesis project and help the student as far as possible to apply for grants to fund the programme and acquire the knowledge, skills and competences required of doctoral graduates.*

*The School of Education doctoral studies committee may permit a doctoral student to have an external supervisor, provided that this person meets the requirements set here. If the main academic supervisor is external to the School of Education, an administrative supervisor shall be appointed from among the permanent members of academic staff at the School (see Article 7 of the Regulation on doctoral study at the University of Iceland School of Education, no. 440/2018).*

*Academic supervisors shall generally:*

- *have completed a PhD in the relevant field.*
- *be recognised and active specialists in the relevant field and have published works which are related to the student's field in a channel that meets rigorous academic standards.*
- *have experience of research collaboration with internationally recognised specialists in the relevant field.*

*Generally the main academic supervisor shall also have:*

- *reached at least the level of senior lecturer/associate professor.*
- *earned at least 15 advanced points on average over the last 3, 4 or 5 years.*

- *experience of supervising students. Sufficient experience is defined as: having been co-supervisor for one doctoral student who passed the interim evaluation or having supervised 3 Master's students whose theses were passed by an external examiner.*

*Ideally, supervisors should be actively involved in discussing their own role and advancing their knowledge of supervision through courses or peer mentoring.*

*At the start of the doctoral programme, the supervisors and the doctoral student sign a partnership agreement.*

## **Partnership between the doctoral student and supervisors**

At the beginning of the partnership, it is reasonable to discuss the scope and form of the relationship, each party's obligations, the frequency and length of meetings and the demands that may be made on the supervisor's time. Supervisors have a certain amount of time to devote to supervision and the student can expect 4 years of supervision.

The student should meet the supervisors regularly over the course of the programme. The partnership agreement signed at the start of the programme should state the frequency of meetings (see agreement in appendix). It is recommended that meetings take place around once a month, at least over the winter, regardless of whether the student is studying full or part time. If the main supervisor does not work at the University of Iceland School of Education, an administrative supervisor shall be appointed from among the permanent members of academic staff at the School.

The doctoral student shall keep a record of meetings with the supervisors and write minutes after every meeting (see appendix). These are helpful when writing the progress report and guarantee shared understanding.

The role of a supervisor is, first and foremost, to advise, support and motivate the doctoral student. Supervisors should not manage the project other than to ensure that the work is in accordance with the standards required of doctoral theses. Doctoral students are not required to follow their supervisors' guidance to the letter. The doctoral thesis is the student's project.

Should a conflict arise between supervisors or between a student and supervisors, the matter shall, in accordance with the Regulation on doctoral study at the School of Education, be referred to the doctoral studies committee, who will recommend a solution. The doctoral student can consult the Ombudsman or current student representative for further support.

## **Course catalogue, courses, and seminars**

Information about doctoral studies and courses at the School of Education is available in the University of Iceland [course catalogue](#).

Doctoral students at the School of Education must complete courses worth at least 30 ECTS. Students may take courses at the School of Education, other UI schools or other universities in Iceland or abroad. The doctoral thesis itself is worth 180 ECTS. Students must register for the thesis project each semester, for which they will receive credits that accumulate as the programme

progresses. Students may not complete more than 90 ECTS before undergoing the interim evaluation.

The doctoral seminars provide a forum for doctoral students and their supervisors to meet, present and discuss their theses. Students present their doctoral project, provide peer feedback and get feedback from supervisors about their thesis, either in whole or in part. 5 of the 30 ECTS that doctoral students complete in coursework are for the introductory course for new doctoral students (UMD075F), which includes a doctoral seminar. Students must also register for another doctoral seminar (UMD815F) at some point during the programme. Doctoral students are encouraged to participate in the doctoral seminars to give feedback and discuss other students' doctoral research, even though they are not presenting themselves. Ideally supervisors should attend seminars, at least when their students will be presenting.

Students should otherwise select courses in consultation with their supervisors, choosing the options that are most relevant to their research area with regard to methodology and theory.

The School of Education is a member of the network [NorTED](#) and doctoral students can take courses at other Nordic universities through this network.

The University of Iceland [Language Centre](#) offers language courses for students and staff, including courses in Icelandic for doctoral students.

## Funding

Doctoral students are funded in various ways, see [From application to admission](#). If a doctoral student has a scholarship grant, they will also have a contract of employment and the rights of an employee. See further details in the [Staff Handbook](#) in Ugly. Students can apply for grants. See further information under: [Funds and scholarships at the University of Iceland](#).

## A to Z of doctoral studies

Practical information in alphabetical order.

### Centre for Writing

The University of Iceland [Centre for Writing](#) offers support with academic writing. There are regular weekend writing camps at Laugarvatn. You can book a one-on-one session, but there are also regular [workshops for PhD students](#).

### Code of Ethics and handling of personal data

The University of Iceland has an Ethics Committee which, among other duties, is responsible for advising on the interpretation of the [University of Iceland Code of Ethics](#).

You can contact the [Educational Research Institute](#) for advice on handling personal data and the Institute's website contains [useful information about data protection](#).

[Code of Research Ethics for Public Higher Education Institutions](#).

### Copyright and co-authorship

It is important that the doctoral student and academic supervisor have a conversation at the start of the programme, discussing how best to organise their partnership and how to evaluate individual contributions when they publish articles or other material based on collaboration and data related to the doctoral project. The role of each party can be defined in the research plan and a special agreement [document in development].

The [Code of Research Ethics for Public Higher Education Institutions](#) addresses copyright in Article 4.5: "Only those who have contributed to the documentation, analysis and writing up of scientific material, and who are responsible for it as a whole, shall be recorded as co-authors."

Supervision of the doctoral thesis does not automatically mean that supervisors will be co-authors when the findings are published. For a supervisor or another party to be considered a co-author, that person must have contributed to writing the manuscript or played a significant role in reviewing and revising it and be responsible for the article as a whole. Generally, commenting on the text is not sufficient input to be considered a co-author.

### Courses abroad and learning agreements

Students, possibly in collaboration with their supervisors or other colleagues, are responsible for finding courses abroad. Students need to make learning agreements for courses abroad in order to have the credit transferred to their programme at the University of Iceland. The learning agreement can be found in the PhD Portal in Ugly. The same applies if students wish to have credit transferred from a course or article completed earlier in their academic career. See section [Credit transfer from previous studies](#).

## Credit transfer from previous studies

If a student starting a doctoral programme at the University of Iceland School of Education has previously studied at an equivalent level, it is possible to apply to have credit transferred to the programme at the School of Education. PhD applicants cannot assume that credit will be transferred before a decision has been made.

## Doctoral Student Association of the School of Education

The Doctoral Student Association of the School of Education (Félag doktorsnema við Menntavísindasvið – MenntaDoc) was established in 2007 with the aim of advancing the interests of doctoral students and postdoctoral researchers at the School. The association has a [Facebook](#) page. A student representative is appointed by the board of the association to participate in the meetings of the School of Education doctoral studies committee. This representative has the role to ask questions, make comments and step in to share the student side of situations. The representative can also be consulted in case of problems with supervisors or other staff and is allowed to join individual students' doctoral committee meetings for support.

## Doctoral studies committee

The School of Education doctoral studies committee (Doktorsnámsnefnd) is responsible for developing doctoral studies and guaranteeing that programmes meet international standards. The committee works with faculties to monitor and oversee doctoral programmes, courses and administrative frameworks. The committee reviews all PhD applications at the School and, if they meet requirements, checks whether supervisors are available and invites applicants to interview. doctoral students have a representative on the doctoral studies committee from the Doctoral Student Association of the School of Education.

## Dual degree programmes

Doctoral students at the School of Education may graduate with a dual degree from two universities. Collaboration between supervisors is essential in such cases. Students then study at both universities and meet the study requirements of both. Students conduct doctoral research under the guidance of both supervisors and collaboration is based on a contract between all parties. See further details [here](#).

## Educational Research Institute

The [Educational Research Institute](#) (Menntavísindastofnun) is a research and academic institute operating at the University of Iceland School of Education. Staff at the institute help academics at the School with research, work on data analysis and processing, organise conferences, manage the publication of academic works, oversee the organisation of doctoral studies at the School, and support professional development in the educational sciences. Doctoral students can contact the Educational Research Institute with questions about methodology, issues relating to data protection, and support with grant applications. The director of the Educational Research Institute also manages the allocation of [Workspaces](#) for doctoral students in consultation with the human

resources manager; students who are employed by the School have priority. Requests for workspaces should be submitted to the director of the Educational Research Institute, Kristín Harðardóttir ([krishar@hi.is](mailto:krishar@hi.is)).

## FEDON

The University of Iceland's Association of Doctoral Students and Doctoral Graduates (Félag doktorsnema og nýdoktora - [FEDON](#)) is an umbrella association working to advance the interests of doctoral students and early career researchers at the University of Iceland. FEDON has a [Facebook](#) page and publishes a regular newsletter.

## Funds and scholarships at the University of Iceland

[Overview of funds and scholarships](#) for students and staff at the University of Iceland.

The application deadline for the University of Iceland [doctoral grants fund](#) is generally in January.

Doctoral students at the University of Iceland can apply for [travel grants](#). The School of Education also refunds travel expenses partly, on presentation of receipts, up to three times over the course of the programme for doctoral students who travel to give lectures at conferences abroad. The School also provides a grant to cover part of the printing costs for the thesis. For more information, please contact the coordinator for doctoral studies.

## Other funds

Rannís, the Icelandic Centre for Research, runs the [Icelandic Research Fund](#) and the [Education Research Fund](#). The application deadlines are generally in June and the autumn respectively.

## Graduate School

The [Graduate School](#) (Miðstöð framhaldsnáms) oversees and follows up established standards and requirements for the quality of graduate studies at the University of Iceland. The Graduate School website contains various information about doctoral studies at the University of Iceland, rules and academic standards. The Graduate School supports doctoral students (and supervisors) in various ways. One example is the PhD Student Toolbox, which is a collection of practical minicourses, workshops and presentations on topics such as career development, time management and academic writing. See further details [here](#).

## Hiring and employee rights

People who are hired to work on a research project as doctoral students are considered UI employees and enjoy all the rights described in the [Staff Handbook](#).

## International Division

The International Division can provide information about Nordic and EU scholarships (Erasmus+) for doctoral students to study abroad. In accordance with the rules at the School of Education, doctoral students must spend some time at a university outside Iceland or participate in equivalent formal collaboration with scholars abroad. The International Division can provide more information

about universities in other countries that have formal partnership agreements with the University of Iceland.

The International Division also provides various assistance to doctoral students who have moved to Iceland from another country, see [here](#).

## Library of the School of Education

Information services and help finding sources are available at the [School of Education Library](#). Further information about services for doctoral students can be found [here](#).

[Instructions](#) for using the PhD Portal are available in Ugla for registered doctoral students.

## Ombudsman for PhD students

The [ombudsman for PhD students](#) has been established at the University of Iceland. The role of the ombudsman is to be somebody impartial who can advise doctoral students and help them resolve problems. The ombudsman makes sure students are aware of their rights and responsibilities, promotes effective communication between students and supervisors, and helps students navigate the rules and procedures at UI.

## PhD Portal

The PhD Portal is the online learning management system for doctoral studies at the University of Iceland. Doctoral students must activate their PhD Portal accounts at the start of the programme by agreeing to the statement that appears when you log in. The PhD Portal contains an overview of the student and their doctoral committee. It can be used to submit various applications, e.g. for study leave or credit transfer from courses abroad. Students use the PhD Portal to fill in progress reports, which must be submitted to the supervisors by 1 December and 1 June each year. Registered doctoral students can find the PhD Portal under [My Ugla](#).

## Progression and progress reports

By 1 June and 1 December each year, the student must submit a progress report through the PhD Portal. The purpose is to obtain an overview of how far all students have progressed in their studies, in accordance with Article 9 of the Regulation on doctoral study at the School of Education. Supervisors are given a few days to evaluate whether the progress report needs to be amended and may send it back to the student or to the School for approval. The academic supervisor must approve the report in the PhD Portal by 10 June and 10 December each year. Progress reports are reviewed by members of the doctoral studies committee and if doctoral students fail to demonstrate satisfactory progress, they are invited to an interview with a member of the doctoral studies committee.

## Research plan

A doctoral student is admitted to the programme on the basis of a research plan submitted with the application. The research plan must contain a draft description of the theoretical framework behind the project and the student's plan for carrying out the research. In accordance with Article

9 of the Regulation on doctoral study at the School of Education, within a year from the start of the programme, the student must submit a revised study plan and a research plan to the supervisors.

### **Student Counselling and Career Centre**

Doctoral students can book appointments with careers advisers and student counsellors at the University of Iceland [Student Counselling and Career Centre](#), or a [session with a psychologist](#).

### **Study plan**

At the start of the doctoral programme, the student must produce a study plan describing the knowledge and skills required in order to complete the project. The student should state what courses they intend to take and when, as well as explaining ideas for lectures and articles. The study plan must be in writing and approved by the academic supervisor and the student. In accordance with Article 9 of the Regulation on doctoral study at the School of Education, within a year from the start of the programme, the student must send the supervisors a revised study plan and a research plan. It is expected that the study plan will evolve over the course of the programme. A study plan is just between the student and the supervisors; there is no need to submit it to the School.

### **Workspaces**

Students employed by the School have priority when it comes to workspaces with lockable storage, but unfunded students may also be allocated workspaces if one is available. A doctoral student studying full time must demonstrate that they are using the workspace, generally at least 2-3 days per week. Students studying part time 50% will need to share a workspace with another part-time student. In order to be allocated a workspace, a student must submit a request to the director of the [Educational Research Institute](#) and a workspace must be available.



# The interim evaluation – a major milestone in the programme

All about the interim evaluation

## Interim evaluation

A full-time doctoral student must submit the thesis project for interim evaluation no later than two years after the start of the programme. The supervisors write a reasoned statement arguing that the doctoral candidate should be allowed to submit the project for evaluation. This statement is submitted to the doctoral studies committee, along with nominations for two external examiners, at least two months in advance.

A complete report on the thesis project should be 40-60 pages. The report should describe the theoretical framework, methodology, organisation and implementation of the research. It should also contain a clear research plan, a description of the thesis structure and a time frame/schedule.

Example:

### *Introduction*

- Introduce and define the subject
- Short statement on the aims and value of the project
- Reasons for choosing the subject and how it relates to the author's experience or goals

### *Literature review*

- Theoretical approach and explanation of terminology, as required
- Review of existing knowledge based on other research
- Description of the subject in the context of an academic overview of the state of the art
- Research questions the student will attempt to answer or issues the student will shed light on.

### *Methods and methodology*

- Methodology and study design
- Development/design of the project
- Preliminary investigations
- Description of data collection
- Ethical considerations
- Plans for data processing
- Limitations of the study

### *Implementation plan and schedule*

Students planning to submit a collection of articles as the thesis should include a description of each article they intend to write: proposed subject, available data, and intended publication channel. Ideally and as far as possible, the report should include ideas about articles to be written with or without the supervisor.

*Bibliography*

*Appendices*

### **Aims of the interim evaluation**

The primary aims of the interim evaluation are to:

- Evaluate the student's knowledge and ability to conduct research in the selected field.
- Evaluate the academic value of the proposed research.
- Ensure that the subject of the proposed research is well defined and that the research is feasible.
- Provide the doctoral student with feedback that will improve the research and identify potential problems that may arise.

### **Appointment of the interim evaluation committee**

The interim evaluation committee, consisting of two external examiners, shall evaluate the doctoral student's thesis project and performance and send the doctoral studies committee their conclusions on how to proceed. The report on the interim evaluation should state whether the study plan or research plan need to be amended and whether the student has sufficient knowledge and competence to conduct the research.

Committee members:

- a) a member of the doctoral studies committee, who shall also chair the committee
- b) supervisor(s) and other experts from the doctoral committee
- c) two experts in the relevant research area, generally external to the School of Education, who meet comparable standards as those required of supervisors.

### **Implementation of the interim evaluation**

For the interim evaluation, the doctoral student shall give a 30-40 minute lecture introducing the research project. The lecture should be open to all staff and graduate students at the School of Education. 20-30 minutes are then allowed for questions and discussion. Doctoral interim evaluations should be advertised 10 days in advance on the UI website and the School of Education website.

Following the public lecture, there is a closed meeting between the doctoral student and the interim evaluation committee to discuss the quality of the research plan and the student's competency. This meeting may take up to two hours. The student may request permission to record the meeting. The external examiners will already have read and evaluated the report submitted by the student and have specific criteria in mind. They will have agreed with the chair of the interim evaluation committee in advance on how to divide responsibilities at the meeting. At the meeting itself, the external examiners will start by discussing issues in the student's report. The student will answer their questions and the supervisors will add their perspective. The student will then leave

the meeting while the interim evaluation committee reaches a conclusion. The student is then informed of the committee's conclusion and whether any response is required and, if so, how, when and to whom the student should report. As well as the doctoral student and the interim evaluation committee, the coordinator for doctoral studies shall attend the meeting and take minutes.

### **Report on the interim evaluation**

The chair of the interim evaluation committee is responsible for producing a report on the interim evaluation, to be sent to the doctoral student no later than 10 days after the event. The purpose of this report is to record the conclusion of the interim evaluation and the interim evaluation committee's recommendations and instructions to the student, which the student may, as applicable, need to answer, incorporate into the research or respond to in some other way.

The conclusion must be selected from a list of "Potential conclusions of the interim evaluation committee" (see below). The report must state what the student is required to do in terms of amendments to the research, the timeframe in which this must be done, and to whom the student should report (doctoral committee or evaluation committee). In addition to the actual requirements, the report may contain advice and guidance. In most cases the time allowed for taking required action is three months.

### ***Potential conclusions of the interim evaluation committee***

- A. The project is accepted as it stands. The student is not expected to make any amendments but encouraged to continue working in line with existing plans.
- B. The project is accepted subject to amendments. The student shall demonstrate to the doctoral committee within a stated length of time that appropriate amendments have been made. There is no need for further involvement from the evaluation committee.
- C. The project is accepted subject to amendments. The student shall demonstrate to the evaluation committee within a stated length of time that appropriate amendments have been made.
- D. The project is accepted subject to passing another evaluation. The student shall demonstrate to the evaluation committee, through a second open presentation and another evaluation meeting, within a stated length of time, that appropriate amendments have been made.
- E. The project is not accepted. The student is advised to write a new research proposal based on a new premise or withdraw from the doctoral programme.

## Doctoral thesis – rules about academic writing

All about the doctoral thesis

### Doctoral thesis

The doctoral thesis shall generally be 50,000-100,000 words in length. It must meet certain standards with regard to academic/scientific methodology and represent an original contribution to knowledge creation in the field.

### Doctoral thesis in the form of scientific articles

A PhD thesis composed of scientific articles or book chapters must include a total of 3-5 articles or chapters. At the time of the defence, at least two of the articles must have been published. The others must have been accepted for publication or meet requirements to be published in international peer-reviewed journals or as chapters in published works in the relevant field. The PhD student must be the primary author of at least three of the articles.

[Rules for the EdD programme are currently being reviewed].

If the student submits a work based on scientific articles or chapters, the student must compose a special overview (synopsis) that critically describes the content of each article and justifies their value and contribution to knowledge. The student must link the subjects of the articles to present a coherent academic whole and justify grouping them together. The overview should also discuss the methods and conclusions of the research. Text from the articles should not be reproduced in the synopsis; the material should be summarised and brought into focus. The synopsis must refer to all the articles and lend depth to the findings and explain their significance for the future of the discipline. The total length of the overview and the articles together should be between 50,000 and 100,000 words.

### Formatting and submission of the doctoral thesis

The foreword must clearly indicate that the project was completed at the University of Iceland, the name of the supervisor, school and research institute, if applicable. All funding sources must be acknowledged, as well as external institutes or companies who have had involvement with the project. The logo of the University of Iceland must appear on the front page of the thesis. In the case of dual doctoral degrees awarded with another university or universities in accordance with a special agreement, the logos of both or all universities involved must appear on the front page of the thesis. The layout of the thesis shall otherwise conform to the School of Education's template for doctoral theses [a new template is currently being developed].

A thesis comprising a collection of scientific articles must be submitted with the articles. The student must get authorisation from the publishers of the articles already published before reproducing them. If any of the articles making up the thesis are co-authored, the introduction must clearly describe the doctoral student's contribution, especially if the student is not the primary author.

The purpose of the [Rules of procedure on the digital submission and archiving of PhD theses at the University of Iceland](#) is to ensure that doctoral theses at the University of Iceland are accessible and deposited in the Opin vísindi repository. The doctoral student must deposit a *digital copy of the final thesis in the Opin vísindi repository four weeks before the date of the doctoral defence.*

### Criteria for evaluation of the doctoral thesis

The thesis is sent to the opponents in confidence. Under no circumstances shall opponents discuss the thesis or other elements of the evaluation process with a third party without the approval of the doctoral studies committee.

Opponents are asked to comprehensively evaluate the thesis, stating their opinion on whether the thesis contributes new knowledge, whether the content of the thesis is fit to be published in a peer-reviewed channel, and whether the formatting of the thesis, including handling of sources and the bibliography, is acceptable.

Opponents are asked to discuss the following points:

Literature review and theoretical framework	Does the review demonstrate both a thorough knowledge of literature and theories relevant to the topic and general field, and of the candidate's ability to exercise critical and analytical judgement of that literature and relevant theories?
Topic	Does the thesis deal with a topic of sufficient range and complexity to meet the requirements of the doctoral degree?
Investigation of topic	Does the thesis comprise a sufficiently coherent investigation of the chosen topic?
Methodology	Does the thesis display a mastery of appropriate methodology and/or theoretical material?
Publication	If the work is not a collection of scientific articles: Are any parts of the thesis, in the opinion of the opponent, worthy of being the basis of a publication?
Presentation	Is it satisfactory in extent, style, and literary presentation?
Original contribution	Does the thesis make an original contribution to knowledge in its relevant field?
Conduct and presentation	Does the thesis meet internationally recognized standards for the conduct and presentation of research in its field?
Summary	Is the thesis a work of substance such as may reasonably be expected of candidates who have fully applied themselves to research for not less than two (normally three) calendar years, or for a longer but equivalent period of part-time study?

For a thesis based on a collection of scientific articles, the overview (synopsis) is evaluated, as well as the articles and the student's contribution to each one and the entire collection. Consideration is given to publication channel and how well the articles and the overview form a coherent whole.

Opponents must select one of the following conclusions and, as appropriate, specify the changes the student needs to make in order to make the thesis acceptable for defence.

	The thesis is acceptable for defence
	The thesis is acceptable for defence subject to certain amendments
	The thesis is not acceptable for defence

If one or both opponents reject the thesis manuscript as not acceptable for defence, the next step shall be determined by the relevant rules of procedure.

## The doctoral defence – the final steps

All about the doctoral defence

### Doctoral defence

Once the doctoral committee believes the thesis is acceptable for defence, they shall contact the doctoral studies committee, requesting permission to hold the defence and nominating opponents. The request can be submitted through the PhD Portal.

Opponents are appointed by the Dean of the School, subject to the approval of the [Graduate School](#). They evaluate the thesis project and deliver a report on their conclusions. The doctoral candidate has one month to make any changes required by the opponents, if applicable. These changes must be approved by the doctoral candidate and the opponents before the defence can take place.

Opponents must be recognised experts in the subject of the doctoral thesis. They must not have professional connections to the doctoral student or the doctoral committee of such a nature that their impartiality may be called into question, see the [Regulation on opponents for doctoral defences](#).

### Objectives of the doctoral defence

The main objective of the doctoral defence is to allow an academic discussion between the candidate and the opponents about the thesis project. The doctoral candidate must demonstrate their knowledge and ability to engage in academic debate on the thesis subject.

## Timeline: Preparation and schedule for the doctoral defence

Timing	Action	Accountability	Implementation	Documentation
Six months before the defence	The doctoral committee contacts the doctoral studies committee, requesting that the thesis be put forward for defence.  Nomination of opponents.  Request submitted through the PhD Portal.	Main supervisor and doctoral committee	Main supervisor	Short report, the thesis if it is ready. Nomination of opponents with their CVs.
At least five months before the defence	The doctoral studies committee discusses the doctoral committee's request	Chair of the doctoral studies committee	Doctoral studies committee	
At least five months before the defence	Graduate School asked to approve appointment of opponents	Board of the Graduate School	Coordinator for doctoral studies	Statement from the Graduate School approving appointment of nominated opponents.
At least four months before the defence	Dean appoints opponents.	Chair of the doctoral studies committee	Coordinator for doctoral studies	Letters of appointment sent to opponents. They are also sent the thesis and instructions about the event.
Two and a half months before the defence	Report from the opponents on the doctoral thesis.	Opponents	Coordinator for doctoral studies requests the report.	Report(s) from the opponents
Two months before the defence	Doctoral candidate responds to comments and amends thesis.	Doctoral candidate	Doctoral candidate	Revised thesis sent to the doctoral committee and opponents.
One month before the defence	Opponents and doctoral committee approve the thesis for defence.  Graduate School and Student Registration notified of the doctoral defence	Main supervisor  Coordinator for doctoral studies	Main supervisor  Coordinator for doctoral studies	Notification of the doctoral defence sent to the Graduate School and Student Registration.
Four weeks before the defence	The thesis is made publicly available in accordance with the rules.	Doctoral candidate	Doctoral candidate  Coordinator for doctoral studies	



The doctoral student shall deliver the thesis to the coordinator for doctoral studies at the School of Education, in accordance with Article 12 of the Regulation on doctoral study at the School of Education. For further details see appendix: [Doctoral defence checklist for doctoral students](#)

### **Procedure for the doctoral defence**

Doctoral theses at the University of Iceland are defended and evaluated in accordance with the University regulations on doctoral degrees. A thesis is defended at a public event which has been advertised with at least a week's notice. No grade is awarded for a doctoral defence or doctoral thesis.

The Faculty Head or a representative of the head shall preside over the event. Those actively participating in the event shall enter the room in the following order: the Faculty Head, Dean of the School, and the doctoral candidate first, side by side, followed by the opponents, then the doctoral committee.

The Dean of the School shall open proceedings and invite the Faculty Head to take over chairing the event. The Faculty Head shall briefly introduce themselves, the doctoral candidate and the opponents and announce the title of the thesis. The Faculty Head then explains how the doctoral defence will proceed and introduces the candidate's supervisors and the members of the doctoral committee.

The defence shall begin with a lecture from the doctoral candidate, introducing the thesis project. 30 minutes are allowed for this. The Faculty Head may call a halt to the lecture if the doctoral candidate goes over the allotted time.

The doctoral candidate shall thank the University of Iceland for accepting the thesis for defence either at the start or end of the lecture.

The opponents shall speak in a pre-agreed order and may examine the research topic and the candidate's thesis as they wish. Opponents shall review the strengths and weaknesses of the thesis and pose specific questions. The doctoral candidate shall respond immediately in such a way that a natural debate and exchange of opinions develops between the opponents and doctoral candidate.

The Faculty Head shall then announce that the opponents, Dean of the School, and Faculty Head will leave the room to discuss whether the candidate has passed the defence. Once the result has been determined, the Dean of the School, opponents and Faculty Head shall return to the room and to their seats or the stage.

If any members of the panel object to awarding the candidate the title of Doctor following the defence, the relevant [rules of procedure](#) shall be followed.

The Faculty Head shall announce whether the thesis has passed the defence and, if so, read the doctoral certificate, present the new doctor with the certificate and congratulate them. The opponents may then congratulate the candidate.

The Faculty Head shall then give the floor to the new doctor. The new doctor shall thank the Faculty Head for chairing the event, the opponents for their work, and any others they wish to publicly acknowledge. Finally, the new doctor shall thank the University of Iceland for the honour of being awarded a doctoral degree and express well wishes towards the University.

The Faculty Head shall thank the doctoral candidate for the lecture and defence. The Faculty Head will thank the opponents in particular for their contribution and the audience for attending the defence. The head of faculty shall conclude the ceremony.

Following completion of the doctorate, the new doctor and their immediate family, opponents, Faculty Head, Dean of the School and the doctoral committee are invited to a short celebration in the doctoral room.

## Appendices

[Agreement between doctoral student and supervisor](#), p. 28

[Form for meeting minutes](#), p. 29

[Checklist for doctoral student in the lead-up to the defence](#), p. 30.

## Written partnership agreement at the start of the doctoral programme

Parties to this agreement:

Main supervisor:

and

Doctoral student:

Who shall call meetings:

- ☐ Main supervisor
- ☐ Somebody else, who?

How many meetings will take place each year?

The parties have signed an agreement on research collaboration [document in development]

- ☐ Yes (specify date)
- ☐ No
- ☐ Does not apply

The parties agree to contact the doctoral studies committee and/or the ombudsman for PhD students as early as possible if any conflict arises.

The School of Education guarantees four years of supervision for doctoral students and this agreement therefore needs to be extended if the programme takes longer than four years. When will this agreement next be reviewed?

Date and signature

## Report (meeting minutes) on a meeting between the student and supervisors

Reports on meetings between the student and supervisors must always be written by the student and then sent to the supervisors, who shall make comments as appropriate.

Names of supervisors:

Name of student:

Date, location and duration of the meeting:

Attendees:

Main topics of discussion / meeting agenda:

Main decisions taken:

Short description of proposed next steps:

Date of next meeting:

Planned or likely topics of discussion:

Other comments/notes:

## Doctoral defence checklist for doctoral students

### Leading up to the defence:

A [template](#) for doctoral theses at the School of Education is available on the Uglá page for registered doctoral students.

The statement from the doctoral committee declaring the thesis acceptable for defence and nominations of opponents should be sent to the doctoral studies committee 6 months before the proposed date of the defence. At least 4 months before the proposed date of the defence, the opponents must have been approved by the doctoral studies committee and the Graduate School. The opponents have 6 weeks to read the thesis manuscript and issue their report. See further details in the timeline for the doctoral defence in the Handbook for Doctoral Studies.

The doctoral candidate shall deliver a report on changes made to the thesis as well as responses to other comments from the opponents. One month before the defence, the thesis must be completed and print copies available.

In consultation with the National and University Library of Iceland, the doctoral candidate must ensure the thesis is allocated an [ISBN](#). The candidate must also contact a print shop and make sure that printed copies of the thesis are available one month before the defence. The candidate shall personally provide copies to the doctoral committee, but the 10 copies for opponents, the library etc. should be delivered to the coordinator for doctoral studies. The candidate may claim a reimbursement of ISK 70,000 towards printing costs, in consultation with the coordinator for doctoral studies.

The candidate must apply for an [ORCID](#) ID if they do not already have one.

The final version of the doctoral thesis must be deposited in the [Opin vísindi](#) repository four weeks before the defence, see [instructions](#).

For publicity purposes, the doctoral candidate shall deliver a text about themselves and the project in Icelandic and English to the coordinator for doctoral studies one month before the defence at the latest. The coordinator will facilitate communication between the candidate and the UI photographer in order to arrange a photograph of the candidate for publicity material. A press release may be issued in consultation with the SE public relations manager before or after the defence.

### The defence itself:

Be prepared to give a 30-minute lecture introducing the doctoral thesis. Have slides based on the University of Iceland [template](#).

At the two-hour rehearsal for the defence (the day before or a few days before), the event and procedures will be explained. The doctoral candidate has around an hour to go over the lecture and practise with the supervisors or other people.

Arrive punctually on the day of the defence.

Be prepared to open the presentation on the lectern computer well before the defence is due to start.

A photographer will take photographs of the doctoral candidate, the Dean of the School, the Faculty Head, supervisors and opponents outside the entrance to the Aula Hall in the main building right before the defence starts.

The doctoral candidate walks in first, beside the Dean of the School or a stand-in who will open proceedings.

The candidate shall thank the University of Iceland for accepting the thesis for defence either at the start or end of the lecture.

The candidate is advised to have a copy of the final version of the thesis on the lectern, or a digital copy open on the lectern computer, to make it easier to discuss specific points with the opponents.

After the candidate has been awarded the title of doctor, they shall thank the Faculty Head for chairing the event, the opponents for their work, and any others they wish to publicly acknowledge. Finally the doctor shall thank the University of Iceland for the honour of being awarded a doctoral degree and express well wishes towards the University.

Following the defence, the doctor, and their immediate family (partner, parents, children), opponents, head of faculty and the doctoral committee are invited to a short celebration in the doctoral room.