

EURODOC survey on the Doctorate¹ structure across Europe (version February 2018)
prepared by the EURODOC Doctoral Training Working Group

Poland

I. General information and application procedure

Which institutions award doctoral degrees?

In Poland there are several types of institutions entitled to award doctoral degrees:

- Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), i.e. Academies, Universities and Technical Universities;
- Departments of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN).

Non-university research facilities can be involved in doctorate and research activities in cooperation with HEIs or PAN.

What forms of doctorate attendance are available?

The most common form of attendance is a full-time doctorate. However, it is also possible to pursue a part-time doctorate, which means that either classes are organized in the evenings during the week or during the weekend. Here is also a practice of double degree programs, when part of a research project is carried out in cooperating institution, very often in cooperation with foreign HEIs. Apart from the above, from 2017 it is also possible to pursue an industrial doctorate in cooperation with private companies. There is an opportunity to follow the doctorate in the form of “Diament grant” (“Diamentowy Grant” in Polish) for outstanding master students provided by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. The grantee has opportunity to continue the research without Master’s thesis, and defend directly doctoral thesis.

What is the formal length of time foreseen for completing a doctorate?

According to the Law, the doctorate in Poland lasts for 4 years. However, it can be shorter, but not less than 2 years. There is also the opportunity to prolong it up to 2 years, however only in justified cases. HEIs decide whether it will cover the basic scholarship for a person in the period of prolongation. Usually the basic scholarship is not paid in that period, but it is worth to mention that it is allowed to apply for other additional scholarships then. There is a possibility to take a break during the doctorate due to various reasons, however the person will not receive the basic scholarship due to lack of scientific activity (scholarships are granted based on the activity in the last academic year). The academic year in Poland is divided into autumn and spring semesters.

What is the status of the doctoral candidates²?

According to the Law, the doctoral candidates are officially students. In case that the doctorate is additionally funded through research grant(s), they can also be employed.

¹ **Doctorate** is understood as the institutional frameworks and processes geared towards the completion of a doctoral degree.

² **Doctoral candidate** is a person enrolled in a doctorate.

Moreover depending on the university, the doctoral candidates can also be employed as professor assistants, at administrative or technical positions, which are paid in addition to their scholarship.

What are the social benefits for doctoral candidates with student status?

Doctoral candidates have the right to sick and maternity leaves, but procedures to obtain these are specific for the different institutions. The maternity and sick leave are unpaid periods. Social assistance (i.e. cover of accommodation rent) is provided only for doctoral candidates with Polish citizenship and depends on the family revenues. Health insurance is covered by the institution when doctoral candidate is older than 26 years, but any other pension schemes, accident and liability insurance are not provided (unless the doctoral candidate is employed). A great deal of institutions as well as some local authorities provide discount cards for sport activities and cultural events. Discount for public transport and trains (51% of price for 2nd class) is till age of 35 years.

How are doctoral candidates financially supported?

Financial reward of the doctoral candidates in Poland is strongly dependent on the policy, regulations of the HEIs as well as the scientific domain. Doctorates in the social sciences and humanities are often unpaid, while the ones in technical, natural and medical areas are supported. However, since academic year 2017/18 at least 50% of all full-time doctoral candidates at the university are awarded with the basic scholarship, which cannot be lower than 60% of the minimum basic salary of the professor's assistant. The basic scholarship for Polish doctoral candidates is not subjected to taxation and is near 350 euro per month. Apart from the basic scholarship, there is possibility to receive funding according to doctoral candidate's ranking:

- Scholarship for Excellence Program (30% of doctoral candidates),
- Scholarship for great scientific achievements (15% of doctoral candidates),
- Scholarship of Ministry of Science and Higher Education, and others.

Moreover, foreign and Polish doctoral candidates can obtain a scholarship from specific sources, i.e. the Rector's fund, International Visegrad Fund, and others national agencies like The National Science Centre, the National Center for Research and Development, and the National Agency for Academic Exchange can provide extra funding for top research projects.

Some of HEIs require tuition fee per year, for example some universities providing medical programmes or for foreign doctoral candidates, in case when they are not recruited for the project.

What are the admission requirements for a doctorate?

The applicant can be citizen of Poland, European Union (EU) or European Economic Area (EEA), as well as outside the mentioned areas.

- At the first stage, an applicant should prepare and send the following main required documents: application form, certificate of Master's degree or equivalent, CV, list of publications, motivation letter. For foreigners, additional documents can be asked,

such as foreign language certificate, recommendation letter, translation of documents etc. This list is not exhausted.

- At the second stage, there is a qualification exam (in a form of conversation) to check candidate's knowledge in a particular area and competence in a foreign language (usually, it is English, but can be other languages).

In a majority of Polish institutions the application process has two terms: beginning of September or March for Polish citizens. For foreign candidates application can be the same or earlier, i.e. beginning of June. The doctoral programme then starts in October or March.

II. Progression

How is a doctorate organized in your country?

The doctorate consists of a set of courses, evaluated with ECTS credits. The doctorate has a rigid program, but sometimes doctoral candidates have the possibility to choose a set of courses based on their individual subject related to dissertation topic (it depends on the domain and HEI).

There are also doctoral schools, which are organized mostly for foreign doctoral candidates, with the similar rules as the standard doctorate.

How is doctoral supervision provided?

Doctoral candidates have an individual supervisor from the institution that controls the progress of the research project. It is possible to have also additional consultant(s) in case of collaboration with industry or there is the need of an expert in a specific sphere.

What are the main obligations of doctoral candidates?

Doctoral candidates have the following obligations:

- to conduct the experiments/research as well as to analyse the obtained results according to the plan established at the beginning of the doctorate;
- to attend and participate in the courses graded with ECTS credits, which are planned in the framework of doctoral programme/school;
- to make semestrial or annual reports on results of the research project;
- to undertake teaching responsibilities in case of full-time programme (the minimum is 10 academic hours (45 minutes) and maximum is usually less than 90 academic hours in one year);
- to represent the scientific project of doctoral thesis at the Scientific board of faculty/ department/institute;
- other duties defined by supervisor, i.e. publication of articles, application for grants, participation in conferences/symposiums/round tables/scientific discussions, attending additional courses, etc.;
- to follow the principles of research ethics.

Is any mobility compulsory?

Doctoral candidates have the right to take participation in internships in other academic institutions as well as outside the academic sector at national and international level. These

internships should be organized according to the plan established at the beginning of the doctorate. In the majority of institutions providing doctorates, an internship is not obligatory, but is defined as a good practice and influences the scholarship.

How are courses in transferable skills provided?

There is also the possibility to participate in courses and lectures, summer schools, webinars etc. to develop specific, leadership, business, and other transferable skills and competences. These can be organized directly by the doctorate institution or outside-university facilities, and obviously, they are not obligatory. Many HEIs have the Office of career development which helps doctoral candidate to improve transferable skills.

How is the progress of the doctoral candidate evaluated?

Doctoral candidates should prepare a semester and/or annual reports on results of the research project and teaching responsibilities. These reports include information about the achieved results according to project schedule, amount of publications, participation in conferences, congresses, courses, seminars, obtained awards, patents and grants, teaching hours. Frequently, reports can include information about social and organizational activities of doctoral candidate. Reports should be signed by the supervisor and the dean/director of the institution that allows to continue the doctorate. Beside the mentioned procedure, in some institutions there is a practice to make public presentation of the obtained scientific results one or twice per academic year.

Is it possible for doctoral candidates to change supervisor(s)?

There is the possibility to change supervisor(s). A doctoral candidate should write a letter of a supervisor change and receive agreement from a new supervisor(s), the chief of doctorate, and the dean/director of faculty/department/institute.

Are supervisors required to have training in order to supervise doctoral candidates?

There are no requirements for special training for supervisors in order to be allowed to supervise doctoral candidates.

III. Defence procedure

What requirements should be met to receive acceptance to enter the defence procedure?

- A scientific topic of dissertation should be accepted by the Scientific Board of faculty/department/institute (this usually occurs within two first years of doctoral training).
- The necessary amount of ECTS credits depending on faculty/department/institute has to be achieved.
- Three doctoral qualification examinations should be passed: i) exam for a level of competency in a particular discipline; ii) exam of foreign language (usually English, but can be others), and iii) exam of Philosophy, Economy, or History. The exams can be organized for a group of doctoral candidates or individually, and the

examination commission is defined by the Scientific Board of the faculty, department or institute.

- The next stage is a public seminar, where the doctoral candidate shows the results of his/her research project. The work is accepted if there is quorum of the Scientific Board and more than a half of them vote positively. After such procedures, the Scientific Board appoints at least two academic experts/opponent outside of institute where the doctorate takes place and the manuscript of the doctoral thesis is sent for reviewing (average time for receiving the reviews is 60 days). Thereafter, if the manuscript meets the qualifications set for dissertations, experts declare this by sending positive written statements, and the doctoral candidate is accepted to defence.

What documents are required to start the defence procedure?

The doctoral thesis can be in a form of a monograph, i.e. dissertation, as well as a set of publications in peer-reviewed journals (amount of publications depends on the discipline and institution). The language of the thesis can be Polish or English (others are quite rare). Additional documented which can be required: CV of doctoral candidate, list of his/her achievements, supervisor's recommendation letter, and abstracts in the English and the Polish languages, two positive reviewers' conclusions. The dissertation manuscript and abstracts need to be available at least 14 days before the defence (in library of HEI or PAN).

What is the defence procedure?

In a majority of Polish institutions the defence of doctoral dissertation is a public event and open to all, except cases when the doctoral thesis is dealing with international security, military, and/or industrial secrets. The first stage of a doctoral defence is an oral presentation of the research project using needed visualization tools (e.g. PowerPoint). The second stage starts with public reading of the experts conclusions, which also often include additional questions requiring the answers from the doctoral candidate. The doctoral degree is awarded if there is quorum of the Scientific Board of the institution and more than a half of them vote positively.

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