

Why no professional doctorate in Norway

The fate of «the practical» in Norwegian Higher Education.

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The newest Norwegian university

A merger of two teacher training institutions, nursing school, forestry school and regional university college.





Merger completed in 2017. Full university in 2024

5 doctoral degree
programmes

First doctoral disputation in 1816

The Royal Fredriks University
In Kristiania (later Oslo), est.
1811.



*Frederik Holst: doctor in
medicine on a dissertation
on:*

***Radesyge og hvordan kan den
utryddes?***

Viva conducted in Latin

The practical colleges...and new universities

- Agricultural college 1896
- Technical college 1911
- College for commerce 1936
- College for veterinary medicine 1935,
- College for dentistry 1905
- Faculty for Theology 1907
- Bergen University 1946
- University of Tromsø 1968
- Norwegian University for Science and Technology 1993
- Now 11 universities and 10 colleges offering doctoral training

Doctoral degree as premise for tenure

- Until 1969, a minority of professors had a Doctor of philosophy
- From 1958 a policy established that required a doctorate for tenure
 - «or similar»
 - University lecturers were recruited in large numbers from the 1950-ies
 - Some used spare time to write academic research and applied for tenure
 - Many remained in teaching and sought promotion to 1.lecturer
- In 1970 applicants for tenured jobs in HE, having **relevant experience from worklife and industry** were acknowledged
- Two distinct tracks were established: one for the doctorate leading to professor and one for the teacher leading to «the dosent» - which formally is equivalent to the professor.

Doctoral training in Norway

- Established in 1973
- All doctorates except Doctor Philos under one term in 2003
 - Reduced 14 various doctorates to 1 + the doctor philosophia
- 20+ institutions are offering phd-programmes
- 41000 candidates had completed their degree in 2023
- Annually 1600 candidates complete their degrees
- 54% are female
- 50% remain in academia
- 4 out of 5 complete their studies
- 44% of phds are from foreign countries
- Median age for completed doctorates is 34 years

A committee appointed by the rectors in 1967

- Certain practical subjects, such as some subjects studied at our agricultural university college, or our Technical University College, will be of such a nature that practical experience and insights documented in practice would be recognized as such an important area of expertise, apart from other scientific results, that a doctoral degree should not be regarded as an absolute requirement. (p.26)

General criticisms

- Candidates are too old
- Too few candidates compared to other Nordic countries
- Doctoring takes too long and lacks relevance for the professional
- Old traditions for the doctorate still reigns to the detriment of the modern
 - The doctor of philosophy dissertation contained 300 pages, weighed 700 grammes, contained 378 references and 104 footnotes. The author would be at least 50 years of age
 - The new phd dissertation contained 150 pages, weighed 350 grammes, and published on 158 pages, weighing 350 grammes, contain 15 footnotes and 158 references (Hamilton, 2003).

Private sector-phd - 2008



Established by the Norwegian Research Council (NRC)



Requires a 50-50% finance sharing between a university and the private business.



Requires a project plan approved by the NRC and the university

And participation in a doctoral training programme

Supervisor from the university – and the employer

Bedrift	Firma	Kommune
FRAMO – Aquastream2	FRAMO AS	Askøy
Computational studies on the impact of electrochemical pre-lithiation process on cell production	BEYONDER AS	Sandnes
Vitamin K2 for improving cellular health	NATTOPHARMA AS	Bærum
Business Models for Zero Emission Aviation	WIDERØE ZERO AS	Bodø
Non-destructive evaluation and modeling of degradation mechanisms in Lithium-ion battery modules.	EVYON AS	Oslo
Methods for enhanced utilization of the regional distribution grid system (DSO) in the interplay with the transmission system (TSO)	LEDE AS	Porsgrunn
Modellering av overvannsstrømmer fra nedbørshendelser med fokus på metodikk for beregning av avrenningskoeffisienten.	7ANALYTICS AS	Bjørnafjorden
Transforming Learning and Development A study on the 70:20:10 learning framework using VR and AI to enhance organizational outcomes	WILHELMTSEN SHIPS SERVICE A/S	Bærum
Nærmere naturlig lys: effekter av døgnrytmestyrte belysning (arbeidstittel)	NORCONSULT AS	Bærum
SKILLREF – Studying and addressing the challenges of integration of high-skill refugees in the Norwegian labour market	NORGES MULTIKULTURELLE SENTER AS	Kvinesdal
Trening som behandling av spondyloartritt	ABEL TECHNOLOGIES AS	Tromsø

Public-sector-phd in 2014

- Municipalities, directorates, public administration on all levels and areas
 - HE-institutions are not eligible for applying
- Same financing and organization as private sector phds
- Same requirements for academic results (monograph or collection of paper with a cappa)

2003-2021: a seesaw of opportunities for a PD

The Mjøs-committee (2003) opened for merged colleges and new universities to establish doctoral programmes, after accreditation process

- as long as they didn't copy or double already established ones at the universities
- ...but soon they did.....

In 2009 an important committee within the University Norway requested an investigation into «professional doctorates»

In 2012 a committee appointed by the main organization rejected the idea with the statement: «there is no such thing as a researching professional».

In 2018 a new committee proposed that HE-teachers with professional interest in teaching could apply for a «professional doctorate».

In 2021 a new committee rejected the idea.

The 2012 committee suggested....

- That the regulation for the phd (regulated by the University Norway) was already open for practice based studies.
 - It just lacked a sentence allowing candidates to document their competence with a wider interpretation of the academic genre.
 - University Norway subsequently expanded the genre requirement for articles/monograph to include video, film, artistic research results....
- They also claimed that the «private sector phd» would allow for the claims of «mode 2-approaches» within the «PD» conception.

Critical research suggests otherwise..



Candidates are left to guesswork about what innovation in business and public sector entails



There is no specific doctoral training for handling their challenges



There is no training of supervisors in order to coordinate their support for doctoral research



The HE- institution is still seen as «the transmitter of knowledge» to industry or the public.



Candidates more often than not, seek employment in higher education.

So, why no professional, work based or practice based doctorates in Norway?



A critical analysis of the hearing after the 2018 committee, reveals that the sector was very little informed about the concept.



The consistent academic drift towards making emerging HE-institutions more «university-like» has hampered the ability to think along the lines of a PD



Norwegian phd scholarships require full employment, and a generous salary for four years. The process for private/public-sector doctorates is entirely organized by the Norwegian Research Council, the universities, and by predominantly large businesses or organizations.



No programmes are open for people from the professional lives as individuals. You have to be employed in HE.