

The PhD School, Faculty of Business and Social Sciences, University of Southern Denmark

International Evaluation 2013

Self-Evaluation Report



October 2013

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1. Introduction

In order to support and optimise the quality of the programmes at the PhD School at the Faculty of Social Sciences, it is urgent to possess a precise and comprehensive documentation of the PhD School's quality and international performance.

Therefore, during 2013, the PhD School at the Faculty of Social Sciences (alike the other PhD Schools at SDU) will initiate an international evaluation of its activities. The evaluation will represent all relevant interested parties (PhD students, supervisors, Heads of Departments, the Academic Council and potential employers).

Overall, the evaluation will assess the quality of important aspects of research and education at the School as compared to international standards. A special focus will be the level and content of internationalisation of the School, including activities during the study, international research networks and projects, stays abroad, conference and course participation abroad, and international publication and research dissemination.

Given that the present report aims at an evaluation of the overall quality of the PhD School and its activities, focus will be on overall measures of quality. Thus, though selected figures at departmental and research area levels occur, such figures will not be consistently provided. However, in the improvement processes following the evaluation, focus may naturally be turned to such details to support implementation of recommendations.

Furthermore, the evaluation should not only be a description of the state of the art. It is important that the evaluation has an action-oriented and forward-looking perspective that supports and inspires the ongoing quality improvement process at the School.

Finally, the evaluation should rest on as solid empirical documentation as possible. This is ensured by drawing on a large amount of existing data, which will be supplemented with additional survey information from the environments and selected examples/cases to illustrate the state of the art as well as the quality improvement processes.

2. Procedure and timing of the evaluation process

14 March 2013:

Discussion in the PhD Committee regarding plans and contents of the evaluation

15 June 2013:

Deadline for suggestion of external evaluation panel members (appointed by the Dean) Suggested evaluation panel:

- Professor Hans Christian Kongsted, Copenhagen Business School (accepted)
- Professor Per-Ola Öberg, Uppsala University (accepted)
- Professor Eirik Gaard Kristiansen, Norwegian School of Economics (accepted)

15 June 2013:

Deadline for preliminary sketch of self-evaluation report, including analyses based on existing secondary information

15 August 2013:

Deadline for collection of additional information from departments (PhD coordinators and Heads of Department)

16 September 2013:

Deadline for first draft of report sent to PhD Committee and other relevant parties (Professor, former Head of PhD School Asbjørn Sonne Nørgaard, Dean Jesper Strandskov, and PhD coordinators)

15 October 2013:

The final report is published and sent to external evaluators

15 January 2014:

Final statement from external evaluators

First meeting in the PhD Committee February 2014:

Discussion of the report and its recommendations; initiation of actions

3. Background: A description of the PhD School structure

All PhD students enrolled at the PhD school at the Faculty of Business and Social Sciences have to meet the same requirements in terms of course load, international research stay, etc. In addition, all PhD students have two affiliations. Each student is enrolled in a scientific area (or academic field) and affiliated at a department. The PhD school has the five mono-disciplinary programmes, [Business Economics](#), [Economics](#), [Political Science](#), [Law](#) and [Journalism](#), and a cross-disciplinary area [Social Science](#) which allows the PhD School to enroll students who are working cross-disciplinary while the PhD students are enrolled as students under one of these six areas, they are affiliated as fellows to one of eight departments:

- [Department of Law](#)
- [Department of Political Science and Public Management](#)
- [Department of Business & Economics \(IVØ\)](#)
- [Department of Marketing & Management \(IMM\)](#)
- [Department of Environmental and Business Economics \(IME\)](#)
- [Department of Leadership and Strategy \(ILS\)](#)
- [Department of Entrepreneurship and Relationship Management \(IER\)](#)
- [Department of Border Region Studies \(IFG\)](#)

The PhD School offers a standard three year PhD education, which presupposes a M.Sc. degree or similar, and a four year PhD education for students who finished the first year of their (two year) M.Sc. study. Furthermore, part time and industrial PhD students can be enrolled.

At present (October 2013) 106 PhD students are enrolled at the PhD School distributed across scientific areas and departments as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of enrolled PhD students across scientific areas and departments

Area / Dept.	Law	Pol. Sci.	IVØ	IMM	IME	ILS	IER	IFG	Total
Business Economics			2	9	4	5	16	5	41 (50)
Economics			16		1	1		1	19 (14)
Political Science		21			1				22 (11)
Law	12								12 (6)
Journalism		4							4 (5)
Social Science		1	2		2	2		1	8 (1)
Total	12 (5)	26 (15)	20 (19)	9 (10)	8 (18)	8 (5)	16 (12)	7 (3)	106 (87)

Note. Figures are from October 2013 (with May 2010 in parentheses)

It is seen that the total number of enrolled PhD students has increased during the three years from 87 to 106 (an increase of 21.8%). The development, however, has varied across scientific areas; Political Science, Social Science, Law and Economics have increased while Business Economics has decreased and Journalism remained unchanged.

Organisation of the PhD School

All PhD students are enrolled at the PhD School at the Faculty of Business and Social Sciences and are, with a few exceptions, affiliated at the department where the principal supervisor is affiliated. Most of the PhD students at the Faculty get their salary from the University of Southern Denmark.

The Head of the PhD School

The Dean of the Faculty of Business and Social Sciences appoints a Head of the PhD School for a period of three years. The Head of PhD School refers to the Dean and:

- Holds the overall responsibility for the activities of the PhD School.

- Is, with inclusion of the PhD Committee, in charge of planning, development, quality assurance and evaluation of the PhD education.
- Establishes internal guidelines and rules for the PhD School, including completion of PhD study courses and supervision, after recommendation from the PhD Committee and approval from the Dean.
- Appoints principal supervisor based on suggestion from the Head of Department.
- Approves enrolment of PhD students subsequent to recommendation from the Scientific Committee as representative for the scientific staff in the PhD Committee.

The PhD Committee

The PhD Committee consists of five representatives for the scientific staff and five representatives for the PhD students, elected by and among these. The PhD Committee:

- Recommends a chairperson among the PhD Committee's scientific staff and a vice chairperson among the PhD students in the PhD Committee to the Dean.
- Approves individual PhD study plans.
- Approves PhD courses.
- Approves credit and dispensation applications.
- Prepares suggestions for the Head of PhD School regarding internal guidelines and supervision.
- Expresses its opinion of evaluation of the PhD education and the PhD supervision to the Head of PhD School.
- Expresses its opinion of issues of importance for the PhD education and the PhD supervision introduced by the Dean or a person authorised by the Dean.
- Recommends the composition of the assessment committee in connection with assessing PhD theses to the Dean.

Course Committees

Course Committees are established for each of the mono-disciplinary PhD programmes at the PhD School, although Political Science and Journalism have a joint committee, and a cross disciplinary scientific committee for Social Science. Each of these committees consists of 3-5 tenured professors

(associate professors and professors). Upon recommendation from the Heads of Department, the PhD Committee appoints committee members.

The Course Committee of Social Science comprises the chairpersons of the four other course committees, which are The Course Committee of Business Economics, The Course Committee of Law, The Course Committee of Political Science and Journalism, and The Course Committee of Economics, and the Course Committee for Social Science is chaired by the Head of PhD School.

The Course Committees serve as representatives for the scientific staff and evaluate applicants prior to enrolment at the PhD School. If desired in relation to a specific evaluation, the Head of PhD School can appoint an additional member with special expertise if a Head of Department asks for it.

The Course Committees can be asked for their opinion in important professional matters by the PhD Committee and the Head of PhD School.

The PhD School Secretariat

The administration of the PhD School is maintained by the PhD School Secretariat. The secretariat manages the following tasks:

- Enrolment of PhD students.
- Study administration of the PhD education.
- Administration of the PhD School's courses.
- Study administrative support and service to potential and present PhD students.
- Web maintenance of the PhD School's website.
- Secretariat support to The Head of PhD School, the PhD Committee and the Course Committees.
- Case processing and follow-up on decisions from the PhD Committee.
- Startup and follow-up on objectives and strategies from the PhD Committee within the PhD area.
- Coordination and follow-up on launched agreements and activities.
- Individual case processing of PhD theses, including settling assessment committees, receiving and distributing PhD theses.
- Issuing PhD diplomas.

4. Overall Structure of the PhD study course

The PhD study has a content corresponding to three years of full time studies (180 ECTS). Within this overall frame, the PhD student must complete a study programme including:

- An individual research project under supervision
- PhD courses corresponding to at least 30 ECTS-points
- Teaching and/or other types of knowledge dissemination (300 hours minimum)
- A longer stay in a foreign research environment, typically abroad
- Writing a PhD thesis as part of an individual research project
- A public defence of the thesis

The PhD education is carried out in close dialogue with a supervisor, who is a leading researcher in the research area of the PhD project. Good opportunities are provided for individually designing one's PhD study, for visiting scholarships abroad at reputable universities aiming at connecting to leading research environments, and for participation in conferences and courses at international as well as national research institutes. Besides, the PhD student obtains experience with teaching and supervision during the PhD study course.

The overall milestones of a PhD study are shown in Figure 1.

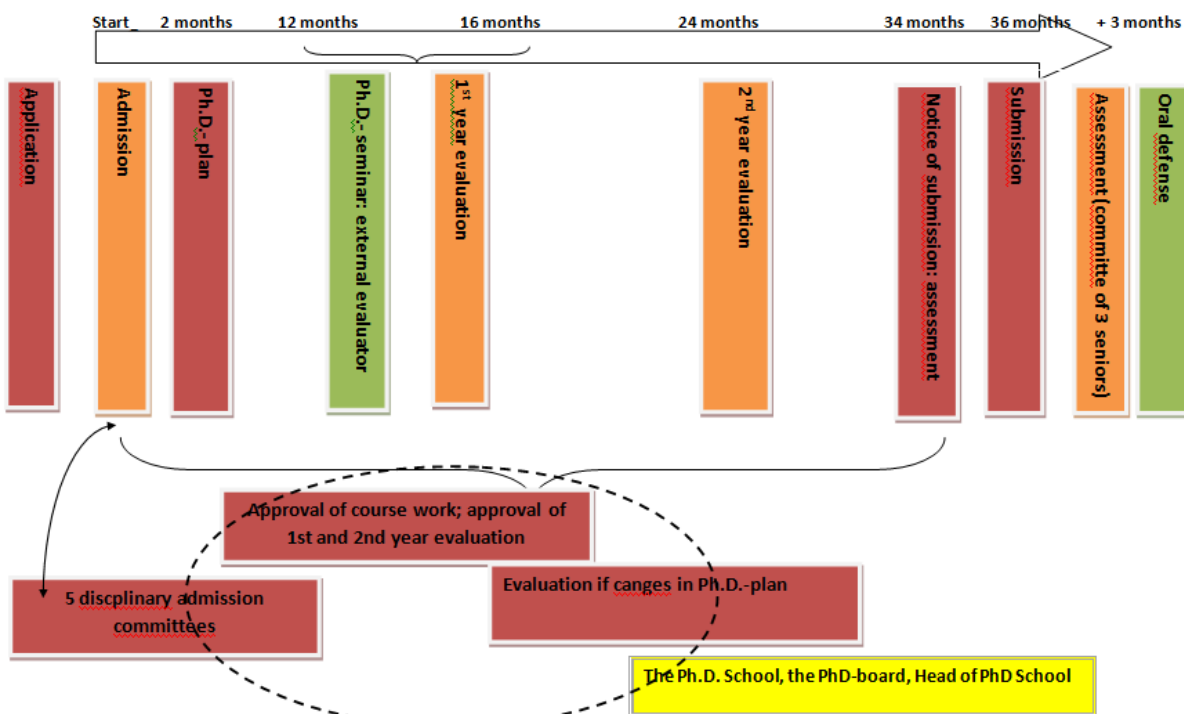


Figure 1. Organisation and milestones of the PhD study.

The milestones are outlined in further details in the following section, as these serve as anchoring points for monitoring and developing the quality of the PhD study.

While the above and subsequent presentation corresponds to the traditional three year PhD study, it should be noted that the rules to some extent varies for 4+4 PhD students and Industrial PhD students. However, given that the main lines and ideas are comparable for these students, and to facilitate comprehensiveness of the presentation, we will generally not go into details with these exceptions. Furthermore, it should be noticed that special action has been taken at the university level with respect to monitoring and evaluation of the special problems for 4+4 and Industrial PhD students. Finally, we refer to the [PhD School's website](#), where detailed information about 4+4 and Industrial PhD can be found.

The PhD students's voice

As part of the continual quality monitoring and development process, the PhD School carried out an anonymous satisfaction questionnaire among the PhD students in 2012. The questionnaire covered a number of essential items related to the PhD study course. An extensive report based on the questionnaire is available from the PhD School's website; see <http://static.sdu.dk/mediafiles//2/E/5/%7B2E5EC57A-4550-4420-9AD4-062B50BB3656%7DFINAL%20PhD%20Survey%20November%202012.pdf>.

Selected results from this questionnaire will be provided below when relevant. The plan is that the questionnaire should be repeated regularly every third year in the future.

5. Application, admission and affiliation

The admission and affiliation procedure is important for a successful and professional PhD study. Therefore, these procedures have been designed to ensure the quality of PhD students and the individual PhD study programmes.

Most of the PhD positions are posted by and employed at the University of Southern Denmark, no matter whether they are internally or externally funded. Such positions are set up in open calls and advertised internationally, although a few are in Danish and predominantly targeted to Danish

applicants. Only a few positions, where the applicant brings his or her own money (externally funded) or is employed by a private or public company as industrial PhD students, are not set up in open calls.

Given that most of the calls are advertised internationally, a number of PhD students at the Faculty of Business and Social Sciences hold non-Danish citizenship. Table 2 shows the distribution of PhD students by departments and nationality. It is seen that about one out of four PhD students holds non-Danish citizenship.

Table 2. Distribution of enrolled PhD students across departments and nationality

Dept. / Nat.	Law	Pol. Sci.	IVØ	IMM	IME	ILS	IER	IFG	Total
Danish	9	21	15	5	4	8	13	4	79 (76.0)
Other EU	1	2	4	0	2	0	2	1	12 (11.5)
Outside EU	1	2	3	0	0	2	1	4	13 (12.5)
Total	11	25	22	5	6	10	16	9	104 (100.0)

Note. Figures are from 30 July 2013

Prior to admission, each student must send a standardised formal application, including a detailed project description and information about educational background and other qualifications. This application is reviewed by one of six course committees (see above). The course committee assesses the personal qualifications (grades, relevance of education, experience in relevant scientific activities, etc.), and, in case the applicant is found personally qualified, the quality, relevance and viability of the attached research proposal. This assessment concludes if an applicant is *qualified*, *qualified with reservation(s)*, or *not qualified*. Enrolment and affiliation will only take place if the applicant is at least evaluated as *qualified with reservation*. There are no fixed admission dates; PhD students can begin their study at any time of the year, but most start around summer or around January.

Following enrolment and affiliation, the PhD School ensures that the PhD student starts as fast and as effectively as possible. This is ensured by several initiatives:

- During the admission and affiliation process, the PhD student is assigned a principal supervisor as well as a co-supervisor. The roles of these are described in detail below. Formally, the supervisors are appointed by the department and subsequently approved by the PhD School. Given that many and even conflicting interests may be in play at the time of appointment, especially when external financing or affiliation is present, the approval procedure at the PhD School is fundamental in order to guarantee subsequent high quality supervision.
- No later than two months after enrolment, the PhD student must provide a final PhD plan, which includes a description of the research project, including time planning and expected thesis outcome; detailed agreement on supervision; a description of the workload and research dissemination plan; a plan for research stays at other research institutions outside SDU and a preliminary plan of courses to be followed.
- The PhD School offers detailed information to new students, including welcoming information and rules and regulations concerning the PhD study programmes.
- All departments have written PhD policies concerning norms and expectations for good supervision, which are available for the PhD student at the time of affiliation. These policies are anchored at the departments to ensure ownership and to meet variation in local practice. Mandatory themes for the supervision policies include the obligations of the supervisor, the obligations of the PhD student, matching of expectations, explicit agreements about supervision frequency, and handling of conflicts.
- Most departments have active PhD groups, where different integrative initiatives are offered (mentors, social activities, discussion clubs, etc.).
- Supervisors/PhD coordinators introduce new PhD students to department staff, secretariats, library and IT facilities, etc.

The PhD students' voice

A large majority, 67 percent of all PhD students think that their departments have always or almost always been assisting them in their PhD studies, and an additional 22 percent finds this to be the case “in general, but not always”. The perception among PhD students that the department rarely assists them in their PhD study is more widespread at one department; it is not the general perception.

Most PhD students, 77 percent, are satisfied with the study and work environment, while 23 percent of all PhD students are not. However, those PhD students who are “not very satisfied” or “dissatisfied” with the working environment are particularly widespread at one department for which special action has already been taken.

A large majority, 86 percent of all PhD students, has a good relationship to their fellow PhD students – most of them both socially and academically. An additional 9 percent find the relationship reasonable.

A large majority, 87 percent, find the level of service at the PhD School satisfactory.

6. PhD supervision

The allocation of a principal supervisor and a co-supervisor to each PhD student aims at ensuring an optimal scientific quality of the supervision, and a number of rules and regulations are set forth to ensure this.

While supervisors are proposed by the department, they must be approved by the Head of PhD School upon admission. The principal supervisor must be a recognised researcher in the scientific area of the PhD project, must be a tenured professor, and must be affiliated at the University of Southern Denmark. The principal supervisor must have supervision qualifications, and new supervisors must follow the PhD Advisor course offered by the University of Southern Denmark. This course aims at optimising the supervision of the students, and major themes for the course are the obligations of the supervisor, expectation alignment, conflict handling and a presentation of formal rules and requests as set forth by the PhD Order and the internal rules at the PhD School.

The principal supervisor is the main responsible for ensuring that the individual PhD study progresses as planned.

Co-supervisors must be scientifically qualified within the scientific area of the PhD project, but they do not need to be tenured (e.g. post.doc or assistant professor).

Obligations of the supervisors

Supervision is the essential element of the PhD course and includes regular meetings with the PhD student, where information and sparring are offered on all study and research activities. The principal supervisor is responsible for:

- Reading and commenting on the PhD project
- Staying in regular contact with the PhD student and acting as sparring partner on the research project
- Ensuring that the PhD plan is worked out and submitted in due time; supplementing it with a supervisor statement; and ensuring that a detailed and mutually agreed upon plan regarding timing and content of supervision is set up and sent to the PhD School for approval
- Informing the PhD student about relevant courses and conferences, and making recommendations to the PhD Committee regarding approval of courses
- Supporting the PhD student in establishing networks and contacts with established and relevant national and international research environments
- Supervising the student regarding his or her teaching and dissemination activities
- Working out the regular evaluations and leading the first year PhD seminar, including taking initiative to inform the Head of PhD School if the PhD plan is changed
- Writing the final supervisor statement, which summarises the full PhD study course and accompanies the hand-in of the PhD thesis
- Participating in the work of the assessment committee without voting rights and in the public PhD defence

The responsibilities of the co-supervisor are agreed upon at the time of appointment and normally include professional sparring on selected parts of the research project.

At the regular evaluations, the course and the content of the supervision must be reported, so that the quality, frequency and scope of the actual supervision can be properly assessed.

The PhD students' voice

The large majority – more than 80 percent – are satisfied with (a) plans and agreements about advising meetings; (b) the availability of their advisors; (c) the quality of advising on their thesis; and (d) the academic and pedagogical competences of their advisors. Female PhD students are a little less satisfied with the availability of advisors and the perceived quality of advising than men.

A small group of approximately 10 percent, who is not satisfied with their PhD study, is significantly less satisfied with (a) plans and agreements about advising meetings; (b) the availability of their advisors; (c) the quality of advising on their thesis; and (d) the academic and pedagogical competences of their advisors. These PhD students do not cluster at any particular department or programme.

PhD students who are making a thesis, which is part of a larger, usually externally funded project find that their advisors are more often available when needed. In contrast, PhD students who have their own independent project are on average more satisfied with their PhD study.

7. The PhD plan and evaluations

The PhD School continuously evaluates its programme, rules and practices to make sure that the quality is high and managed effectively.

The PhD plan is a central tool for the PhD student in steering and developing the research project and the study course, including detailed agreement on supervision and a portfolio of course and dissemination activities. Correspondingly, the PhD plan ensures transparency in order to allow for continuous quality control of the PhD study course. Therefore, a detailed initial PhD plan as described above must be handed in no later than two months after admission for the PhD Committees' approval. Later on, revised plans must be handed in as part of the first year and second year evaluations, which are screened by the Head of PhD School for approval.

The primary aim of the first year evaluation is to document that the scientific quality of the PhD research project as well as the contents of activities obtained at this time is adequate and that a qualified PhD thesis can be expected in due time. Therefore, an evaluation committee, which involves an external and an internal evaluator, partakes in the first year evaluation. The internal evaluator serves as chairman and is responsible for communication and collection of a written evaluation statement, which may be a joint document or independent documents from the evaluators. The PhD student is in charge of providing the evaluation committee with the revised PhD plan and papers and drafts. After a seminar, where the PhD student gives a lecture based on his or her work so far and the evaluators and the supervisors ask questions and give comments, the committee prepares a written statement, which assesses the quality and prospect of the PhD work. The evaluation report concludes whether the progression of the PhD project is satisfactory, and based on this the primary recommends whether the project and the study can continue. If the statement is negative on this point the PhD School can offer a three-month rectification period, during which the PhD student is offered the opportunity of rewriting the work to a satisfactory level, the latter evaluated by a rectification committee including external and internal evaluators. However, while the evaluation formally serves as a control device, it is equally important to recognize that it provides an excellent opportunity for having a review and receive detailed constructive comments and recommendations on the thesis work. Such recommendations are highly valuable for the further development of the thesis and should be an outcome of any first year evaluation. Thus, action must be taken to ensure that the evaluation serves this dual purpose. Specifically, we recommend that the student's satisfaction with their first year evaluation is evaluated in the next satisfaction evaluation in 2015. Furthermore, we recommend that follow-up routines are established at the departments to ensure a successful outcome of the evaluation; a brief three-part talk between the PhD student, the principal supervisor and the PhD coordinator should satisfy.

The final regular evaluation of the PhD project is carried out after the second year of the PhD study. This constitutes the background for an evaluation of the progress made and results achieved, and it provides an opportunity to adjust the plans for the remainder of the study period if necessary. The evaluation is based on a status report from the PhD student and his/her principal supervisor and a statement from the principal supervisor. Alike the first year evaluation, the second year evaluation

also serves as an opportunity for providing critics and recommendations that can guide the last year's work with the thesis.

Thus, the first and second year evaluations aim at 1) assessing the quality of the PhD project work; 2) offer the PhD student a proper opportunity to remedy his or her work in cases where the quality is lacking; 3) in the worst case, terminate PhD projects which cannot be expected to be successfully carried to an end; and 4) in general serve as an opportunity of giving critics and recommendations that can be useful during the future work with the thesis. Especially, point 2) and 4) are important, as they offer genuine opportunities of lifting the quality of the PhD project.

The PhD students' voice

The large majority of PhD students – 89 percent – are satisfied with their PhD study. Older PhD students and PhD students with children are most satisfied with their PhD study.

A large majority, 81 percent, find that the work on the thesis is progressing well without problems or no major problems. 17 percent think that the work is progressing so-so and face a number of challenges while one PhD student faces a lot of problems relating to the thesis. Older PhD students and PhD students with children to a higher extent find that their work on the thesis is progressing well.

8. Dissemination activities and teaching / workload

According to the Ministerial Order on the PhD programme (PhD Order) the PhD student must gain experience in teaching or other types of knowledge dissemination which are related to the PhD project. The total extent of knowledge dissemination must correspond to at least 300 hours' work, irrespective of the PhD student's terms of employment.

Employment as a salaried PhD scholar is carried out in pursuance of the Collective Agreements for Academics employed by the state, thus the PhD students must fulfill the requirements laid down in the Ministerial Order on PhD Programme and is also obliged to perform tasks corresponding to 840 hours' work during the term of his/her employment. The tasks could include teaching, knowledge dissemination and other academic tasks. According to the PhD Order, these activities are requested, *as far as possible*, to be relevant for the PhD study. To ensure that the necessary amount of

activities is provided, while not violating the upper limit, and to ensure the quality of the dissemination activities, this workload must be specified as part of the PhD plan, and it is evaluated by the PhD Committee.

The PhD students' voice

A large majority, 75 percent of PhD students finds the advising with respect to teaching activities satisfactory and 25 percent find it less satisfactory/unsatisfactory. 86 percent are satisfied with their teaching experience and research dissemination. The level of satisfaction with advising on teaching activities is rather strongly correlated with teaching experience (0.35).

9. Study completion time and completion percentage

As can be seen from the table below, the average completion time was fairly high up to 2008. In combination with a relatively large number of cancellations without degree, the situation was considered to be unsatisfactory. It was thus decided to introduce new and strict rules for the granting of extensions. Specifically, it was requested that the thesis should be handed in according to the rules, i.e. after three years of study and that extensions should only be granted when the delay could be motivated with personal conditions (sickness etc.) or conditions outside the students' control (delays in delivery of data from external partners, supervision problems etc.). Furthermore, it was decided to aim for an earlier termination of potentially unsuccessful projects; this was one of the intentions behind the introduction of the first year evaluation. As a consequence of the tightening, an extraordinarily high number of study courses were cancelled in 2010-2011. However, the development appears to be back in control from 2012. The number of theses returned for revision turned out to be constantly around 4-5 per year. However, given that the number of graduates almost tripled, this figure is very satisfying. Next, only one thesis was rejected during all five years. This thesis never finished evaluation; it was rejected because of plagiarism.

Table 2. Development in selected key figures 2008-2012

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Stock of PhD students	75	87	86	89	96
New PhD students	18 (24.0)	29 (33.3)	27 (31.4)	29 (32.6)	31 (32.3)
Graduates	8 (10.7)	17 (19.5)	14 (16.3)	22 (24.7)	23 (24.0)
Completion time	4.4	4.0	3.8	3.7	4.3

Cancelled without degree	6 (8.0)	2 (2.3)	5 (5.8)	9 (10.1)	2 (2.1)
Theses returned for revision	5	3	5	4	4
Theses rejected	0	0	0	0	1

Note. Stock is number of active students on 14 May. Numbers in parentheses are percentages of this stock. All figures include 4+4 students.

Obviously, the completion time dropped during 2010-2011 as a consequence of the tightening. Apparently, there seems to be an increase in 2012. However, this development is due to a few very extraordinary study courses, which were finalised this year.

What happened to completion time in 2012?

The average thesis completion time increased in 2012. However, the increase was due to three very unusual study courses, which were finished with acceptance of thesis this year: One student spent 15 years (including a 12 year period without enrolment at the PhD School), another spent 7 years including some periods as private student, and a third spent 6 years including a period without enrolment. If these three courses are omitted, an average completion time is obtained for the remaining 20 students of 3.5 years, which must be denoted as satisfying, and at least comparable to other Danish universities. Anyway, focus should be maintained at keeping the completion time as low as possible.

The PhD students' voice

The overwhelming majority of PhD students expect to finish as planned after 3 years of study or – if on a 4 + 4 programme – after 4 years. Almost all, 94 percent, expect to submit their thesis exactly as planned (85 percent) or after a delay of up to 3 months (9 percent) (excluding sickness and parental leave). Thus, when asking the PhD students themselves the PhD School will not have many delayed submissions in the years to come.

10. PhD course supply

To ensure that the PhD students follow high-level quality courses, all course activities must be formally recommended by the PhD supervisor and subsequently approved by the PhD Committee. This approving can be asked for before as well as after the course activity. It is requested that a part of the course activities should be in the scientific and methodological core of the research project. When approving a course activity, the PhD Committee assesses the scientific level and quality of

the activity as well as the workload involved and subsequently determines the number of ECTS points to assign. This assessment follows rules which are available at the PhD School's website.

PhD course activities from the Faculty of Business and Social Sciences 2012

JurForsk Conference on the Danish Legal Research Education Programme (PhD)
Introduction to Scandinavian Law
Political Science as a Craft
Quantitative Methods
Political Communication
International Research Workshop
Entrepreneurship as Making
Publish or Perish: Preparing, Writing and Reviewing Business Research
Social Network Analysis
European Summer University on Entrepreneurship – Summer School
Intensive Research Course in Complex Systems Theory and Agent Based Simulation Methods for Business
Quantitative Research Methods
Science Innovator
Advanced Asset Pricing
Priority Setting in Health Care
Insurance Economics
Advanced Microeconomic Analysis
Canon of Classics (in Oxford and Odense)
Theoretical Organisational Models (TOM)
DRUID winter conference
Science Innovator
Quantitative Methods for Causal Inference

It is essential that the PhD students have access to a sufficient range of PhD courses of high quality. Such courses can partly be obtained from universities abroad, and the PhD School is proactive in disseminating knowledge about upcoming courses via the PhD School's website. Thus, more than half of the PhD students have taken at least one course outside Denmark and at least one course at another Danish university. Furthermore, it is important to ensure a qualified course supply from the Faculty of Business and Social Sciences itself. A satisfying range of methodological high-level courses must be provided, so that all scientific areas and needs are covered. In order to ensure this, a flexible regulation was implemented from April 2012. From that time, the departments were

granted a sum of DKK 35,000 for each course they held. To ensure the quality of these courses, it is a precondition that the course is approved by the PhD Committee. This flexible regulation provides a genuine incentive to the departments which is expected to stimulate a large course supply. Finally, the PhD School and the research environments participate in several collaborative programmes and consortia in order to optimise the number of courses available.

Selected programmes and consortia partners

DOME / FiOL

Aarhus University

Bilateral cooperation on courses in political science with University of Aarhus

School of Pharmaceutical Sciences

EIASM

GRASPH

DGPE

Helmut Schmidt Universität - Universität der Bundeswehr in Hamburg,

Universität Hamburg

Universität Flensburg

Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung Berlin

Leuphana Universität Lüneburg

Institute für Arbeitsmarktforschung

The PhD students' voice

A large majority, 75 percent, finds the assistance with regard to PhD courses, conference participation and establishing networks satisfactory. Three out of four take courses/have taken courses at SDU while more than half have taken courses at other Danish universities and at universities outside Denmark. 64 percent have mainly positive course experiences and 36 percent have mixed experiences; none have mainly negative experiences. Still, around 60 percent find that there are not always enough relevant courses to choose from; this perception is more widespread in some programmes than others. Some comments indicate that information about relevant courses has been lacking; with the introduction of the

inclusive national PhD course homepage www.phdcourses.dk in September 2012 this problem has been solved.

11. Internationalisation

It is an ultimate target for the PhD School that all its activities are at the highest international level and that the PhD School is internationally well reputed. This aim is naturally mirrored throughout the PhD study courses.

As part of the PhD study, the PhD student must participate in more than one active research environment and thus during the study course stay for a longer time at another research institution. To simultaneously ensure a high international quality and orientation of the education and the thesis, the PhD School recommends that the PhD student stays for a longer time period of 3-6 months at another, preferably international, research institution, which is scientifically relevant for the PhD study and project. Dispensation from this request is only given if convincing personal or professional reasons can be given. About 85 percent of the PhD students go for such longer stays at renowned international universities.

Examples of abroad universities recently visited by PhD students

Stanford University
University of Oxford
Stockholm School of Economics
Florida international University
Kingston University
Brandeis University
University of Aberdeen
University of Western Sydney
Brown University
Stern Business School
University of California
Newcastle University
Bergen University
Simon Fraser University
York University
New York University
Oslo University
Duke University
Max Planck Institute for Foreign and International Criminal Law - Freiburg
Radboud University Nijmegen

Monash University
Technische Universität Berlin
Universität Heidelberg
University of Maastricht
University of Oulu
University of Minnesota

Furthermore, the PhD students are encouraged to participate in international conferences, preferably with paper presentation, and the departments are granted earmarked funds to cover such activities. As an incentive, the PhD students can apply for 1 ECTS of study activity if they participate in a conference and 2 ECTS if a paper is presented. The aim of this incentive is twofold: to ensure that the project work of the PhD students get feedback at highest international level, and to stimulate the build-up of the PhD students' international networks.

Funding of abroad stays

The departments can only cover part of the expenses connected with the abroad stay. Commonly, travelling expenditure, enrolment expenditure and expenditure for transportation of books, etc. are covered. Furthermore, most (but not all) departments provide up to DKK 6000 to cover other living expenditures. However, financial problems are especially profound for those who have families to bring with them; according to formal legislation the University of Southern Denmark is not allowed to provide financial support for family members. Therefore, many PhD students apply for economic support from external funds. This application activity, however, has traditionally been partly left to the PhD student, with varying support across departments.

To improve the situation, collaboration with professional fund raisers affiliated to the Faculty of Business and Social Sciences has recently been established. The aim of this initiative is that at the end of 2013 there should be online general practical information to the PhD students on how to successfully apply for funding. This information will be supplemented with a link to a database with standardised information about available funds, which will be regularly updated by the funding office at the Faculty.

Moreover, the PhD students are encouraged to participate in international PhD courses. The PhD School supports this by providing detailed information on international course activities on its website.

Finally, to ensure highest international quality of the PhD thesis, it is a standard request that one international member must join the assessment committee unless this is inappropriate for academic reasons.

The PhD Students' Voice

A large majority, 76 percent, is satisfied with the assistance with regard to their research stay at another university, and 85 percent have had or are planning a long research stay of three months or more which the PhD School strongly encourages. Those who are planning a short research stay of less than three months have provider responsibility (except one); in this situation the PhD School makes exemption from the requirement to go abroad for a longer research stay. Almost all, 93 percent, of those who plan or have undertaken a long research stay are going to universities outside Denmark which is in accord with the goals and ambitions of the PhD School. Almost all have positive experiences from their research stay.

12. Assessment of the PhD thesis

The PhD study is finalised with the hand-in, evaluation and defence of the PhD thesis. The thesis must document the PhD student's abilities with respect to application of the scientific methods of the discipline and with respect to providing a research contribution on a level corresponding to the international standard for PhD theses in the discipline.

The thesis will be assessed by an expert assessment committee comprising three members who must be professors, full-time associate professors or hold similar academic qualifications in the relevant academic field. Two of the examiners must be from outside the university, of whom one must be from abroad unless this is inappropriate for academic reasons. Where PhD students under the Industrial PhD programme are concerned, at least one of the members of the assessment committee must have company-relevant research experience in the academic field in question. The University of Southern Denmark's representative acts as the chairperson of the committee. The PhD student's

supervisors may not be members of the assessment committee, but the principal supervisor is delegated to the assessment committee without the right to vote.

The evaluation process consists of two major parts. First and most important, the assessment committee works out a written assessment of the PhD thesis. The outcome of this assessment can be 1) accept for public defence, 2) rewrite part of the thesis according to the committee's instructions and resubmit within at least three months, or 3) reject the thesis. When the thesis (or a rewritten thesis) is accepted by the committee, a public defence is held which lasts approximately three hours, where the PhD student makes a lecture over the thesis, followed by examination from the three committee members. Finally, the evaluation committee writes a final statement, based on the written thesis as well as the oral defence, in which they recommend to the Dean as to whether the PhD degree can be awarded or not.

To ensure and to monitor the quality of the evaluation process, prospective as well as retrospective initiatives have been taken. Prospectively, the PhD School has a detailed written instruction specifying the formal request to content and quality of the written evaluation. This instruction is available at the PhD School's website, and is sent to the members of the assessment committee. Retrospectively, the written evaluation of the committee is screened by the Head of PhD School and subsequently sent for approval in the Academic Council of the Faculty. Thus, in a few cases an assessment committee has been instructed to rewrite their preliminary evaluation or implement modifications in their final statement in order to live up to the formal quality requests.

13. Scientific production

While the primary outcome of a PhD study course is the thesis itself, a secondary, and no less important outcome, is publications in refereed journals based on the work from the thesis. Both will be assessed in what follows.

Given that the final assessment is the ultimate documentation of the quality of the theses, this assessment procedure has been supplemented with a questionnaire, which is filled out and returned by the members of the assessment committee. In the questionnaire, the evaluators rate their satisfaction with the quality of the thesis with respect to theoretical part, empirical part, research in general, oral presentation and discussion, and written research products. Each of these items is rated on a five point scale (1=bad, 2=below average, 3=average, 4=good, 5=very good). Table 3 shows the average score for the items by year and by nationality of the evaluator.

Table 3. Rating of thesis quality

	By year					By nationality of evaluator	
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	DK	Foreign
Theoretical part	3.59	3.53	3.23	3.47	3.50	3.41	3.45
Empirical part	3.31	3.78	3.29	3.77	3.83	3.59	3.56
Research in general	3.41	3.76	3.33	3.57	3.67	3.46	3.60
Oral presentation	3.88	4.29	3.50	3.93	3.83	3.89	3.87
Written research	3.41	3.74	3.29	3.53	3.67	3.54	3.49
General	3.41	3.74	3.27	3.70	3.83	3.54	3.54

Apart from a drop in 2011, the figures indicate a slight increase in satisfaction over years. Given that dropout rate and completion time were simultaneously reduced, these figures are very satisfying indicators of improved quality of the theses. On average, the external committee members of evaluation committees consider the general level of the PhD theses at the Faculty of Business and Social Sciences to be between ‘average’ and ‘good’ compared to international standards. This is an acceptable score, but further improvement is indeed possible.

In order to provide an impression of publication activity of the PhD graduates from the Faculty, publications were counted for those PhD students who graduated in 2010 and 2011. A total of 43 PhD students graduated in these years. The following box summarises the outcome with respect to publication activity.

Publication activity

For the 43 PhD graduates in 2010-2011, publication activity was recorded. These 43 graduates have a total of 170 refereed journal publications and 237 non-refereed publications, i.e. on average 4.0 refereed and 5.5 non-refereed publications per graduate. Given that a thesis is normally expected to be equivalent to three papers, these figures are very satisfying.

Recently, however, there has been a debate in some of the research environments at the Faculty as to whether immediate publication after the PhD defence is actually an optimal quality target to go for. While arguments can obviously be given in favor of this position, it can also be argued that some of the best PhD students may improve the quality of their work and publish in even better journals if they do further work on the papers. One way to stimulate this development is by employment in temporary post.doc positions. Such positions are occasionally set up at some departments, and good students are encouraged to and supported in applying to the research councils and other external funding for one or two years of post.doc means.

Supporting applications for post.doc means

In Autumn 2012, six PhD students from The Faculty of Business and Social Sciences applied for an individual post.doc grant from the research councils. Four of these obtained a grant. I.e., a success ratio of 67 percent, compared to an average success ratio at the councils of about 10 percent. In Spring 2013, nine students applied for such a grant; the success ratio is not known yet.

14. Career coaching and subsequent employment

In concert with requests from political decision makers and other external stakeholders, the number of PhD students is continually increasing. Given that a growing number of these go for a career outside the university world, there is an increasing need for career coaching of PhD graduates. The University of Southern Denmark has well developed initiatives that offer targeted support and coaching regarding career development within as well as beyond the university.

The PhD School encourages establishment of PhD networks in the individual programmes as well as cross-disciplinary networks among the PhD students. The School has supported an initiative in November 2013 organised by a group of PhD students and PhD coordinators in the form of a two-day seminar entitled “Building a career with a PhD degree” with the main purpose of informing and debating possibilities and careers to pursue with a PhD degree. A secondary purpose is to develop contact and relationships between PhD students at the Faculty of Business and Social Sciences.

Career coaching from University of Southern Denmark.

The CareerCentre at University of Southern Denmark has offices in all five campus cities and offers individual career coaching tailored to the needs of the individual PhD student and contains items like elicitation and dissemination of qualifications and competences; personal tests using the Garuda Focus Profile and JTI; introduction to the academic job market; strategies for job search; application and CV; networking etc. For further details; see http://www.sdu.dk/en/information_til/studerende_ved_sdu/job_og_karriere/karrierevejledning.

The HR department at the University of Southern Denmark offers a range of courses particularly aimed at supporting PhD students and promoting their careers. Courses in teaching, project management, professional coaching and career planning are among the courses offered every semester. Most courses are offered in both Danish and English

Based on the above described sample of 43 PhD graduates from 2010-2011, it was possible to describe their subsequent affiliation.

Type of employment	Number (percent)
University positions	25 (58.1)
Private / public enterprise	14 (32.6)
Teaching / education	4 (9.3)
Total	43 (100)

It is seen that more than 40 percent of the PhD graduates go for positions outside the universities. This development is in good accordance with the political desire of having more PhD students in such affiliations.

Examples of non-university affiliations

Economist, Danish National Bank

Teaching development at university college

Project manager, Innovation Center Iceland

Research Director, Massolution

Specialist at Vestas A/S

Foreign Service Officer, US Department of State

Head of Partner Relations, Business Kolding

Sales Support Manager, KOMPAN UK

Attorney-at-law, Kammeradvokaten and Plesner

15. Conclusion and recommendations

A high percentage of the PhD students go for a longer research stay abroad. Given the successful outcome of these stays as reported by the PhD students themselves, and given the necessity of stimulating the PhD student's abilities to join an international labour market, it is a profound target of the PhD School that more PhD students should go for such abroad research stays.

One fourth of PhD students at the School is non-Danish and equally distributed across EU and non EU citizenships. These students are indeed an international stimulus to the PhD School, but they also put requests on efforts aiming at successful integration in the social and research environments.

Perceptions of 'often feeling stressed' were found among 15 percent of PhD students. This figure is not very different from what you find in other groups (assistant professors, professors, etc.), but it is still an important issue that calls for monitoring and action.

Work conditions and professional integration of PhD students is a focal point. As part of the Faculty of Business and Social Sciences' strategy on improving the well-being of its employees, all employees, including PhD students, will be offered coaching sessions in small groups or individually. A reputable private coaching firm will offer this service along with general feed-back to management.

Future focus points for quality improvement:

- Given the increased political focus on 4+4 and Industrial PhD, and given the increasing number of such students, attention must be paid to special problems for these. This effort will be anchored at the university level.
- The number of high level PhD courses offered from the PhD School or in partnerships must be improved.
- Evaluation of the PhD courses offered by the PhD School. Courses should be evaluated by the participants using SurveyXact immediately after the courses are held. The evaluations will be screened by the Head of PhD School for potential improvement efforts.
- A folder about PhD supervision, which can supplement the PhD policies specified at the departments and the PhD supervisor courses.
- Quality insurance efforts specifically targeted to PhD supervisors with several years of experience. This will be developed and implemented in cooperation with the Human Resource Office at SDU.
- The PhD student's satisfaction with the first and second year evaluations and the abroad research stay will be evaluated, conveniently during the next satisfaction evaluation in 2015.
- We recommend that the departments initiate actions to ensure a constructive and development oriented outcome of the first year evaluation. One way of doing this could be a brief three-part talk between the student, the supervisor and the PhD coordinator after the evaluation.
- Mentors for new PhD students are implemented at some departments and should be implemented at all departments.
- Improved network building for PhD students at the University of Southern Denmark as well as across Danish universities and internationally.
- An improved service level for abroad PhD students. Integration of this service by establishment of a joint International Help Desk.
- Increased focus on international doctoral research cooperation. Guidelines for entering international doctoral research cooperation and templates for agreements on e.g. joint/dual degree projects will be launched during 2013.