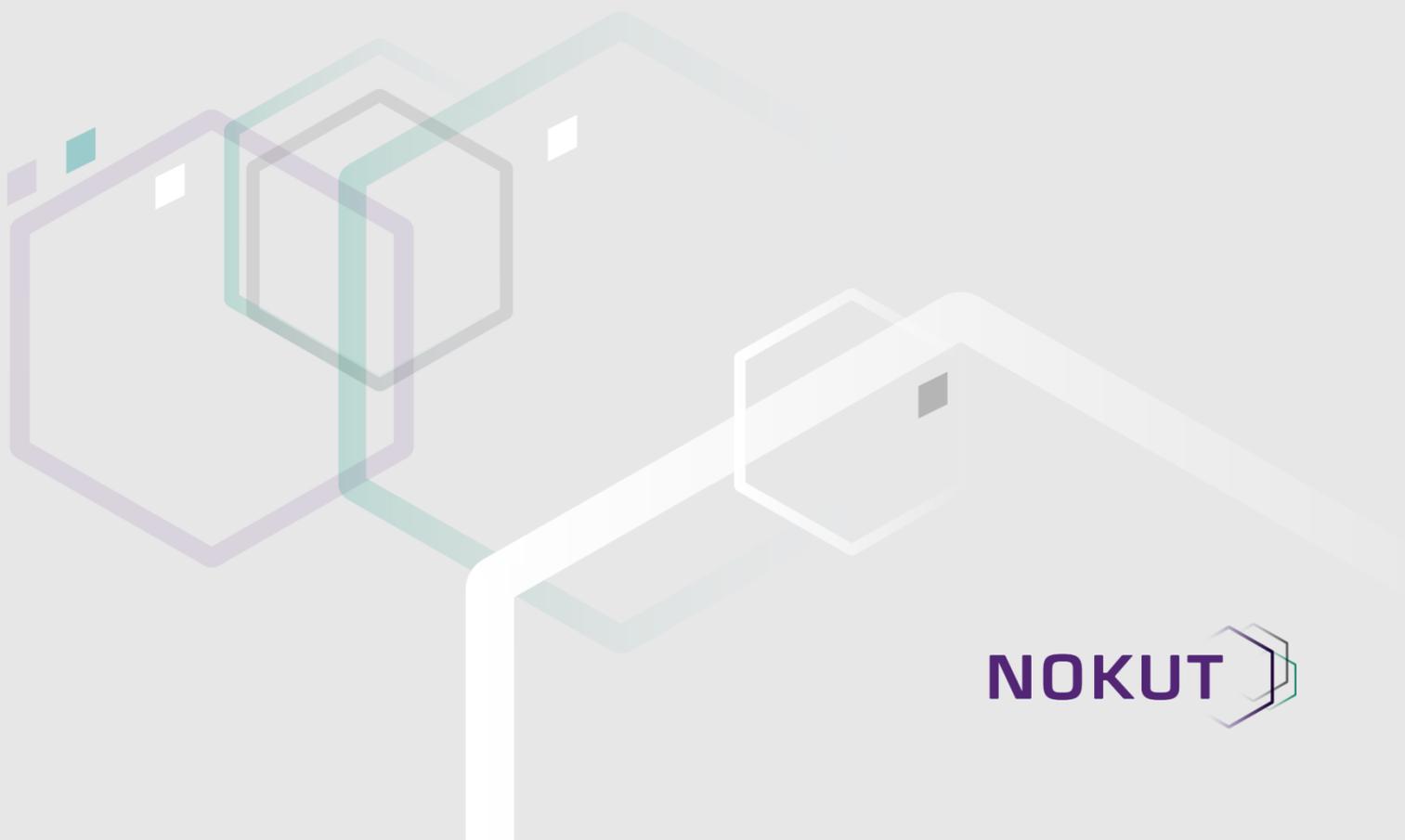


NOKUT's research and analyses

# From counting credits to learning outcomes?

Report from the working group on recognition of foreign doctoral degrees

October 2015



NOKUT 

NOKUT's work is intended to contribute to society at large having confidence in the quality of Norwegian higher education and tertiary vocational education as well as recognised foreign higher education. With the report series 'NOKUT's studies and analyses' NOKUT wishes to contribute further knowledge about issues related to higher education and tertiary vocational education that have a bearing on the quality of study programmes and about issues related to the recognition of foreign qualifications in Norway. The data on which NOKUT bases its reports are obtained either through its own evaluation, accreditation and recognition activities or from projects undertaken in collaboration with external parties.

We hope that NOKUT's analyses and results can be useful in connection with the recognition of foreign qualifications and inspire and stimulate the educational institutions in their work to quality assure and further develop their study programmes.

<b>Title:</b>	From counting credits to learning outcomes? Report from the working group on recognition of foreign doctoral degrees
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## Preface

The Bologna Process has brought some major changes to higher education in Europe. We are also witnessing similar developments in many other parts of the world. As a consequence of this, an increasing number of people acquire a doctoral degree, and doctoral degrees are increasingly in demand on the labour market outside the university and university college sector. Recognition systems have been established for the explicit purpose of facilitating greater mobility between academia and the labour market and across national borders. It is therefore important that NOKUT's general recognition reflect the changes that have taken place in recent years, or it will be more of an impediment than a tool for utilising foreign qualifications. The current criteria for general recognition of doctoral degrees are not in step with developments. We must therefore establish criteria that can form a basis for a more relevant and fair evaluation, so that applicants can obtain recognitions that can be utilised. At the same time, the criteria must ensure that only qualifications that are comparable to a Norwegian doctoral degree are considered equivalent to a Norwegian doctoral degree.

In the Yerevan Communiqué adopted at the ninth ministerial conference on the Bologna Process in Yerevan in Armenia in May 2015, the ministers stressed the need to *ensure that qualifications from other EHEA countries are automatically recognized at the same level as relevant domestic qualifications*<sup>1</sup>. The EHEA<sup>2</sup> Pathfinder Group on Automatic Recognition reached a similar conclusion. In its report from January 2015 the Pathfinder Group recommends a system of automatic recognition of higher education within the EHEA, based on more use of learning outcomes and qualifications frameworks as tools<sup>3</sup>. We have followed this path when working out the criteria proposed in this report.

It is very important for a country to be able to utilise the competences that are available in that country, in order to make optimum use of all competences. Recognition schemes and information about foreign competences is a precondition for Norway to be able to utilise the full range of competencies that exist in the society. 'OECD Skills Strategy Diagnostic Report: Norway' from 2014 recommended that Norway pursue the following goals in this area:

*Foster the internationalisation of Norway's skills system to expand and improve Norway's potential skills pool. Attract and retain more international students and immigrants, especially in shortage areas that are most difficult to fill from the domestic skills pool. Streamline procedures for the recognition of foreign qualifications and provide tailored language training and 'top-up' education and training to accelerate skilled migrants' labour.*<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/SubmittedFiles/5\\_2015/112705.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/SubmittedFiles/5_2015/112705.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> EHEA - European Higher Education Area

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/SubmittedFiles/12\\_2014/154205.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/SubmittedFiles/12_2014/154205.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [http://skills.oecd.org/developskills/documents/OECD\\_Skills\\_Strategy\\_Action\\_Report\\_Norway.pdf](http://skills.oecd.org/developskills/documents/OECD_Skills_Strategy_Action_Report_Norway.pdf)

In autumn 2013, the Norwegian Government presented an action plan for 2013–2016 *We need the competence of immigrants*. The action plan was a follow-up of Report No 6 to the Storting (2012–2013).

The action plan states the following about immigrants' level of education (p. 6):

*Statistics Norway has updated its information about the qualifications that immigrants have when they enter Norway. The figures give a nuanced picture of the qualification level of immigrants and people born in Norway to immigrant parents, compared with the rest of the population<sup>5</sup>. Sixteen per cent of immigrants in the age group 25–39 years have a long university or university college education of more than four years. Only 10% of the rest of the population have qualifications at this level. The proportion of immigrants that have a doctoral degree is about double that of the rest of the population (two and one per cent, respectively).<sup>6</sup>*

This shows that there is a higher percentage of immigrants with doctoral degrees than in the rest of the population, which accentuates the urgent need for tools whereby NOKUT can achieve a correct evaluation and recognition of foreign doctoral degrees.

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.ssb.no/utdanning/artikler-og-publikasjoner/\\_attachment/115532?\\_ts=13f0ed11d68](http://www.ssb.no/utdanning/artikler-og-publikasjoner/_attachment/115532?_ts=13f0ed11d68)

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/bld/ima/handlingsplaner/handlingsplan\\_innvandrerne\\_kompetanse.pdf](https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/bld/ima/handlingsplaner/handlingsplan_innvandrerne_kompetanse.pdf)

## Summary

NOKUT has seen for some time that there is an increasing need to review the set of criteria for recognition of foreign doctoral degrees. The goal is to update the set of criteria in accordance with the changes that have taken place in the education sector and developments in the recognition of qualifications. For this purpose, NOKUT established a working group mandated to consider different aspects related to the recognition of foreign doctoral degrees and, if applicable, propose criteria for general recognition of foreign doctoral degrees.

Up until now, NOKUT has had a homogeneous, system-based recognition regime with a strong focus on measurable input factors. The current criteria were adopted by NOKUT's board, based on the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions' (UHR) guidelines for PhD degrees. NOKUT also awards credits for the doctoral degree and for the thesis using the same practice as for other degrees. NOKUT's criteria include the following:

- The study programme must have been completed and the degree must be an officially recognised doctoral degree awarded by an accredited higher educational institution.
- The study programme must have a nominal length of at least three years (equivalent to 180 credits).
- Admission to the study programme must be based on a master's degree or equivalent.
- The educational pathway must be eight years of recognisable higher education/ 480 credits in Norway.
- The education shall include courses at a high level.
- The nominal length of study for work on the doctoral thesis must be two years (120 credits).
- The doctoral thesis must have been assessed and approved by a committee of experts.

In NOKUT's experience, many doctoral degrees are neither fully nor partially recognised as a result of not being structured so as to meet the whole set of Norwegian criteria, even if they are comparable with a Norwegian doctoral degree. Hence the criteria are neither in step with international developments in the field nor with the policies that drive the international processes. The set of criteria does not allow for variations. Nor does it permit the use of new tools such as learning outcomes and qualifications frameworks, the use of which is recommended in the European Area of Recognition Manual (the EAR Manual), by the Pathfinder Group and in the Yerevan Communiqué. These considerations underline the need for a review of our recognition practice.

In this report, we review the challenges posed by current practice, and we compare NOKUT's practice with corresponding practices in other Nordic countries. We discuss different aspects of recognition, explore the term 'substantial differences' and the relationship between recognition and the GSU list requirements. We go on to consider whether credits should be awarded in connection with the recognition of doctoral degrees and how learning outcomes can be used as a tool in this work.

We have prepared a proposal for a new set of criteria and a new practice for general recognition of foreign doctoral theses. The new set of criteria differentiates on the basis of when and where the doctoral degree was awarded. At the same time, the set of criteria is less detailed with respect to input factors such as admission requirements, structure, the nominal length of study and the GSU list requirements.

We propose that all doctoral degrees must meet the following criteria:

- The study programme must have been completed and an officially recognised doctoral degree awarded by an accredited higher educational institution.
- The main component of the study programme must be supervised independent research that results in an approved scientific thesis. The nominal length of study for work on the doctoral thesis shall be about two years.
- The doctoral thesis must have been assessed and approved by a committee of experts.
- The study programme must have a nominal length of at least three years.

It is proposed that doctoral degrees at EQF level 8 or equivalent in a comparable qualifications framework be fully recognised as doctoral degrees. Older doctoral degrees or doctoral degrees from countries without qualifications frameworks must be based on research and a total of eight, occasionally seven, years of study together with previous education, in order to be recognised by NOKUT. We have also proposed a certain change of practice to allow for a more individual evaluation to take account of the diversity of foreign doctoral degrees.

Our proposal for new criteria use qualifications frameworks and learning outcomes as tools for recognition. The criteria are less detailed than previously and allow for evaluation and recognition of doctoral degrees based on education structures that differ from those that lead up to a Norwegian PhD. The new criteria are more in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention with respect to what may be considered a substantial difference. The criteria also reflect trends and ongoing developments in the field in Europe.

## List of acronyms

EAR Manual – European Area of Recognition Manual

EHEA – European Higher Education Area

ENIC – European Network for Information Centres in the European Region; NOKUT is the Norwegian ENIC-NARIC office

EQF – European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning

R&D – Research and development

GSU – Higher Education Entrance Qualification for applicants with foreign education

NARIC – National Academic Recognition and Information Centres in the European Union; NOKUT is the Norwegian ENIC-NARIC office

NQF – Norwegian Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning

NORRIC – Nordic National Recognition Information Centres

QF-EHEA – Qualifications Frameworks in the European Higher Education Area, the Bologna Framework. Describes the three cycles – the bachelor's, master's and PhD levels.

The U&UC Act – Norwegian Act relating to Universities and University Colleges

UHR – Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions

The U&UC sector – the university and university college sector

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# 1 The working group's background, mandate and composition

NOKUT took the initiative to establish a working group mandated to consider different aspects related to the recognition of foreign doctoral degrees and, if applicable, propose criteria for general recognition of foreign doctoral degrees. The background for this was NOKUT's observation that many foreign doctoral degrees are either not recognised, only partially recognised or not evaluated at all, because they fail to satisfy the criteria for general recognition of doctoral degrees. There has also been a general increase in applications for general recognition of doctoral degrees, and the need to consider changing the criteria has become more pressing.

The working group was appointed on 17 June 2014 and has consisted of the following members:

- Senior Adviser Andrea Lundgren, Department of Foreign Education, NOKUT
- Senior Adviser Valborg Holten Jørgensen, Department of Foreign Education, NOKUT
- Senior Adviser Luna Lee Solheim, Department of Quality Assurance, NOKUT
- Senior Adviser Åshild Rønnaug Kise, Department of Quality Assurance, NOKUT
- Senior Adviser Stein Erik Lid, Department of Analysis and Development, NOKUT
- Assistant Director Guri Bakken, Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions (participated at meetings in 2014)
- Senior Adviser Rakel Christina Granaas, Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions

Andrea Lundgren has chaired the working group.

The mandate of the working group on evaluation of foreign doctoral degrees

- Report on the general recognition of doctoral degrees and the problems associated with the current regime.
- Report on how PhD degrees are evaluated in other Nordic countries and, if relevant, a selection of other countries that are members of the ENIC-NARIC network.
- Report on the requirements for Norwegian PhD/doctoral degrees to provide a basis for comparison in connection with the recognition of foreign doctoral degrees.
- Report on the advantages and drawbacks of different types of recognition models for doctoral degrees.
- Report on what may be considered to constitute substantial differences in connection with the general recognition of doctoral degrees.
- Consider the role of the GSU list requirements in connection with the recognition of doctoral degrees.
- Consider the consequences of not applying the GSU list requirements in connection with the recognition of doctoral degrees under the general recognition regime.
- Consider whether it is expedient in connection with general recognition of doctoral degrees to award credits or to disconnect recognition from credits.
- Consider how learning outcomes can be used in the recognition of doctoral degrees.
- Propose an optimum relationship between the regulation of Norwegian degrees and general recognition of doctoral degrees.
- Consider the current criteria and, if relevant, propose new criteria and changes.
- Explore the possibility of general recognition of foreign doctoral degrees by comparison with the Norwegian Doctor philosophiae (dr.philos.) degree.

## 1.1 The working group's approach to the mandate

The working group has had a total of three meetings. In the first meeting we considered current recognition practice, the challenges it poses and the various issues that the working group should address. In the second meeting, we reviewed the legal aspects, and the Salzburg principles were presented as a basis for development of PhD programmes within the Bologna Framework<sup>7</sup>. A presentation of various international projects relating to doctoral degrees in which UHR participates, was also given. The final meeting was devoted to a discussion of the content of the report and the proposal for a new set of criteria for general recognition of foreign doctoral degrees. The working group has also communicated and had discussions by email. Some members of the working group also attended a workshop on recognition of foreign doctoral degrees, which was organised by NOKUT in collaboration with the NORRIC network<sup>8</sup>.

## 2 Review of current practice for general recognition of doctoral degrees – problems and challenges

NOKUT has, since 2003, granted general academic recognition of foreign higher education to individuals on application. General recognition is a system-based assessment and compares foreign higher education with Norwegian higher education. NOKUT considers the scope and level of the foreign education. NOKUT applies the 'time-for-time' principle, so that one year of completed and passed education is recognised as corresponding to one year of studies in Norway. Only qualifications over and above the Higher Education Entrance Qualifications (known as the GSU list requirements) may be subject to general recognition by NOKUT. The GSU list<sup>9</sup> specifies requirements for each individual country. NOKUT makes a decision stating the level and number of credits awarded and, if possible, grants degree equivalence in relation to the Norwegian degree structure.

During the first few years of its existence, NOKUT received between five and ten applications for recognition of doctoral degrees per year. Prior to 2003, applications for recognition of doctoral degrees were not considered, as doctoral degrees were only considered in connection with appointments to scientific positions. In connection with such appointments, the doctoral degree was reassessed by a committee of experts. This regime was largely sufficient to meet the need for recognition of doctoral degrees. Society's needs for qualifications and research have changed in latter years. Through the Bologna Process, Norway is committed to introducing a new degree in the form of a PhD degree in the third cycle. The new doctoral degree should be more structured and more aligned with other countries' doctoral degrees in order to facilitate cooperation in the fields of research and education, and it should have greater focus on doctoral programmes as research training programmes.

The introduction of the PhD degree to Norway and the increasing number of applications for recognition of foreign doctoral degrees, epitomise the need for recognition of foreign doctoral degrees on a par with recognition of other foreign higher education. Moreover, both the need for and the use of

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<sup>7</sup> The Salzburg principles: Recommendations and principles for doctoral programmes under the Bologna Agreement. For more information about the Salzburg principles, see: [http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Seminars/050203-05\\_Conclusions.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Seminars/050203-05_Conclusions.pdf) and [http://www.eua.be/Libraries/Publications\\_homepage\\_list/Salzburg\\_II\\_Recommendations.sflb.ashx](http://www.eua.be/Libraries/Publications_homepage_list/Salzburg_II_Recommendations.sflb.ashx)

<sup>8</sup> NORRIC – Nordic National Recognition Information Centres

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.nokut.no/en/Facts-and-statistics/Surveys-and-databases/GSU-list/>

doctoral degrees outside academia have increased significantly. Most of NOKUT's applicants with a doctoral degree probably need recognition for purposes other than taking up scientific positions in the U&UC sector.

Since 2003, NOKUT has been mandated under the U&UC Act to evaluate foreign higher education for general recognition. The result of the evaluation is an individual decision.

## 2.1 The legal basis for NOKUT's evaluation and recognition of doctoral degrees

- The Act relating to Universities and University Colleges of 1 April 2005 No 15 Section 3-4
- Letter of 11 December 2003 from the Ministry of Education and Research concerning specification of administrative procedure and responsibility for recognition of foreign doctoral degrees, stating the following, among other things: *The recognition of doctoral degrees awarded by educational institutions abroad, as of other academic degrees, falls under the scope of Section 48 of the Act relating to Universities and University Colleges and the pertaining provisions set out in the Regulations on accreditation, evaluation and recognition pursuant to the Act relating to Universities and University Colleges (20 03-01-02 No 04) and Chapter 4 of the Act relating to Private University Colleges. In other words, there is no difference in principle between a doctoral degree and other degrees.*
- The criteria for recognition of doctoral degrees were prepared by NOKUT and are based on the recommended guidelines for the PhD degree prepared by the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions. The criteria were adopted by NOKUT's board on 4 May 2004 after a round of consultations with the U&UC sector.

### 2.1.1 The requirements of the Lisbon Recognition Convention

NOKUT's general recognitions shall comply with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, which means that NOKUT may only refuse to recognise a foreign doctoral degree that has been recognised under another country's educational regime, if substantial differences can be proved to exist between the foreign doctoral degree and a Norwegian PhD. When we fail to recognise a foreign doctoral degree, we justify our decision on the grounds that it is substantially different from the Norwegian doctoral degree. The question of when – and/or the degree to which – a difference should be considered substantial, should be re-reviewed in connection with the recognition of doctoral degrees.

The EAR Manual<sup>10</sup> was prepared as a guide to good recognition practice within the meaning of the Lisbon Recognition Convention. Both the EAR Manual and the Pathfinder Group recommend full recognition of qualifications at the same level. It is recommended that the recognition criteria focus on learning outcomes and qualitative criteria rather than quantitative input factors such as years of study, educational pathways, programme structures and admission requirements.

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<sup>10</sup> EAR – European Area of Recognition Manual, [http://www.eurorecognition.eu/Manual/EAR\\_manual\\_v\\_1.0.pdf](http://www.eurorecognition.eu/Manual/EAR_manual_v_1.0.pdf)

## **2.2 NOKUT's criteria for general recognition of doctoral degrees that are equivalent to an accredited Norwegian doctoral degree (PhD)**

NOKUT will recognise a foreign education as equivalent to an accredited Norwegian doctoral degree (PhD), provided that it meets the following criteria:

- The education must have been completed and an officially approved doctoral degree awarded by an institution that is officially approved/accredited to award doctoral degrees in the relevant subject area in the country where the applicant studied. By doctoral degree is meant research qualifications in accordance with the relevant country's education system (third main level in the degree structure).
- The study programme must be a doctoral programme with a nominal length of at least three (3) years (equivalent to 180 credits). If the programme includes a period of compulsory work, this should normally come in addition to the three years.
- The admission requirement for the foreign doctoral degree must be a higher degree (or a corresponding integrated study programme), so that the sum of previously completed higher education and the doctoral programme can be recognised as eight (8) years of higher education/480 credits in Norway.
- The doctoral programme must meet the following requirements:
  - The doctoral programme shall include training/courses at a high level.
  - It shall include a thesis based on independent scientific research work that was not part of another recognised study programme.
  - The nominal period for working on the thesis shall be at least two years (corresponding to 120 credits).
- The doctoral thesis must have been assessed and approved by an expert committee.

## **2.3 NOKUT's current practice based on the currently applicable criteria for general recognition of doctoral degrees**

NOKUT's general recognition consists of a system-based evaluation based on information about the Norwegian and foreign education systems and a comparison between them. NOKUT investigates the status and function of the qualifications in relation to the Norwegian system and evaluates the level and scope of the education. Doctoral degrees are so diversely structured that it is a challenge to evaluate them based on system information alone using the current criteria.

NOKUT's set of criteria for evaluation are based on the structure of the Norwegian PhD degree and are in accordance with UHR's recommended guidelines for the PhD degree. However, while NOKUT has a set of binding criteria for recognition of doctoral degrees, UHR's recommended guidelines are no more than guidelines. Nor do the guidelines mention credits for anything other than the training component.

Educational institutions in Norway have regulations that largely comply with UHR's recommended guidelines for the PhD degree, but they have the option of establishing doctoral programmes that are somewhat differently organised. Because NOKUT's criteria, unlike UHR's recommendations, are absolute, they have a more rigid and limiting effect than other rules and regulations. On the other hand, foreign doctoral programmes seen in the context of prior higher education, appear in so many

combinations that it is difficult to apply a strict set of criteria without causing unintentional differential treatment.

The following are the most common decisions concerning recognition of doctoral degrees:

- NOKUT recognises the doctoral degree as equivalent to a Norwegian PhD when all the criteria are met.
- NOKUT does not grant degree equivalence, but grants partial recognition in the form of credits when
  - work on the thesis has a nominal scope corresponding to less than 120 credits;
  - the doctoral programme does not include courses at a high level;
  - the aggregate scope of prior recognisable education and the doctoral programme is less than eight years / 480 credits;
  - the scope of prior recognisable education is five years or more. In this case credits are awarded at PhD level as the doctoral programme as a whole is deemed to belong to the third cycle. If the scope of prior recognisable education is less than five years, no credits are awarded at PhD level as the doctoral degree is not deemed to belong to the third cycle when seen in relation to the Norwegian degree structure;
  - when the system has a different structure from the Norwegian system.
- NOKUT will not evaluate a doctoral degree that is not
  - based on a nominal length of study, as NOKUT's criteria are based on the nominal length of study.

NOKUT did not previously evaluate doctoral degrees that were based on a bachelor's degree as they have a different structure from Norwegian doctoral degrees and NOKUT's recognitions are structurally based. In such cases, it was recommended that the applicant apply for an expert evaluation by an educational institution offering PhD programmes in the same academic field. Following an overall assessment, this practice has recently been changed as NOKUT wants to make it clear that doctoral degrees based on such programmes constitute recognisable qualifications. We currently recognise such doctoral degrees by awarding credits, though not at the PhD level.

## **2.4 Issues relating to the recognition of doctoral degrees and the set of recognition criteria**

- Many doctoral degrees are not recognised as degree equivalent because they are based on doctoral programmes without compulsory courses at a high level. We often see that the doctoral degree consists of a doctoral thesis alone, but that the candidate has nevertheless been required to attend one or more courses, based on an individual assessment of the candidate's needs. As a rule, no credits are awarded for these courses and there is no course assessment. The question is whether such courses are part of the PhD programme, and what is meant by courses at a high level. Common to all doctoral degrees that can be compared with the Norwegian doctoral degree, is that research forms the core component. It is therefore unfortunate that input factors like courses are considered more important than the overall qualifications.
- The current practice is based on the whole educational pathway in terms of the number of recognisable years. We may refuse to recognise a doctoral degree as fully equivalent based on

the GSU list requirements. This means that the first or first two years of a higher education from a particular country may not be deemed to constitute higher education in Norway. Such a deduction of one or two years from first cycle education has consequences for the recognition of the doctoral programme, i.e. the recognition of a third-cycle education.

- The combination of GSU list requirements and various requirements for admission to doctoral programmes can have some unintended results. One example is NOKUT's evaluation of the Russian *Kandidat Nauk* degree, which is awarded after a three-year doctoral programme. The *Kandidat Nauk* degree is based on a five-year specialised degree programme or on a six-year educational pathway comprising a four-year bachelor's programme and a two-year master's programme. Applicants are awarded the same qualifications regardless of which of these educational pathways they have followed, while NOKUT's recognition differentiates between the two. Those who are admitted to a doctoral programme based on an integrated five-year specialised degree programme do not achieve degree equivalence for their *Kandidat Nauk* degree because the five-year specialised degree programme is only recognised as four years of higher education in Norway. When combined with the *Kandidat Nauk* programme, this results in a total educational pathway of seven recognisable years, and that is not enough to achieve degree equivalence. Those who choose the 4+2 path, have five recognisable years of study before attending the *Kandidat Nauk* programme and a total educational pathway that satisfies the requirements for degree equivalence. It is unfortunate that the same qualifications are evaluated differently and that input factors have a greater impact on the evaluation than learning outcomes.
- The requirements for admission to doctoral programmes may vary within a country and may depend on prior completion of either a bachelor's or a master's degree. NOKUT cannot give full recognition to a doctoral degree that is based on a bachelor's degree. NOKUT did not previously evaluate doctoral degrees that were based on a bachelor's degree, because the structure of such an educational pathway deviates from the degree structure in Norway. In recent years we have granted partial recognition in the form of credits, but not degree equivalence.

### 3 Requirements for Norwegian doctoral degrees – basis for comparison for recognition of foreign doctoral degrees

Legal authority regarding doctoral degrees is conferred by the U&UC Act. NOKUT's responsibilities and authority related to the accreditation and revision of doctoral programmes and general recognition of foreign doctoral degrees are set out in Chapters 2 and 3. The Ministry of Education and Research has also adopted a set of regulations which list and define NOKUT's tasks, roles and authority.

In the Regulations of 28 February 2013 concerning supervision of the educational quality in higher education (the Academic Supervision Regulations), NOKUT laid down criteria for accreditation of study programmes, including doctoral programmes.<sup>11</sup> The requirements are divided between the following areas:

- Basic requirements for accreditation

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<sup>11</sup>Cross-institutional artistic research fellowship programmes are not included as they are not doctoral programmes.

- Study plan (NQF level 8, content, organisation, work methods, examination and assessment systems, links to R&D, internationalisation, infrastructure)
- Academic community (competence, R&D)

The Norwegian Qualifications Framework was implemented for higher education with a deadline until 1 January 2013 and the reference to EQF was approved on 6 June 2014.<sup>12</sup> For all doctoral programmes in Norway, learning outcomes must be described in accordance with NQF level 8. The NQF requirement is also included in the Academic Supervision Regulations.

There are no central provisions for the preparation of regulations or a set of rules for doctoral programmes. However, the institutions are required to prepare their own regulations for their doctoral programmes. The Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions (UHR) has prepared recommended guidelines, which are largely adhered to by the institutions. In NOKUT's guidelines to the Academic Supervision Regulations, reference is therefore made to UHR's document.<sup>13</sup>

UHR's recommended guidelines emphasize the following:

- The nominal scope of the PhD programme is three (3) years of full-time studies and includes a training component with a scope of at least 30 credits. The organisation of the PhD programme shall be defined in the institution's regulations.
- The most important component of the PhD programme is independent research work or combined R&D work to be conducted under active supervision.
- The PhD degree shall be awarded on the basis of
  - an approved doctoral thesis;
  - approved completion of the course component, alternatively other approved specialised education or qualifications;
  - an approved trial lecture on a specified topic;
  - approved defence of the thesis (public defence).

The following is a summary overview of the provisions that regulate the PhD degree:

- The Act relating to Universities and University Colleges (2005)
- Regulations concerning the Quality Assurance and Quality Development of Higher Education and Tertiary Vocational Education (2010)
- The Norwegian Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (NQF 2011)
- The Regulations concerning supervision of the educational quality in higher education (the Academic Supervision Regulations, NOKUT 2013)
- Recommended guidelines for the PhD degree (*philosophiae doctor ph.d.*) (UHR 2011, updated in 2013 and 2015)
- The institutions' own regulations for the PhD degree.

Other provisions:

<sup>12</sup><http://www.nokut.no/en/Facts-and-statistics/The-Norwegian-Educational-System/The-Norwegian-qualifications-framework/Current-status/>

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.uhr.no/documents/150415\\_Recommende\\_Guidelines\\_for\\_the\\_Doctor\\_of\\_Philosophy\\_Degree\\_PhD\\_.pdf](http://www.uhr.no/documents/150415_Recommende_Guidelines_for_the_Doctor_of_Philosophy_Degree_PhD_.pdf)

- Regulations concerning appointment and promotion to teaching and research posts, (2006, as amended in 2010 and 2015).
- Regulations relating to degrees and professional training, protected titles and nominal length of study at universities and university colleges (2005, as most recently amended in 2015)
- The Salzburg II Recommendations<sup>14</sup>
- European Charter for Researchers & Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers<sup>15</sup> (2005).
- Principles for Innovative Doctoral Training<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> [http://www.eua.be/Libraries/Publications\\_homepage\\_list/Salzburg\\_II\\_Recommendations.sflb.ashx](http://www.eua.be/Libraries/Publications_homepage_list/Salzburg_II_Recommendations.sflb.ashx)

<sup>15</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/pdf/brochure\\_rights/am509774CEE\\_EN\\_E4.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/pdf/brochure_rights/am509774CEE_EN_E4.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/pdf/research\\_policies/Principles\\_for\\_Innovative\\_Doctoral\\_Training.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/pdf/research_policies/Principles_for_Innovative_Doctoral_Training.pdf)

## 4 Review of practice relating to the evaluation of foreign doctoral degrees in other Nordic countries

In autumn 2014, NOKUT organised a workshop on the recognition of doctoral degrees with participants from the NORRIC offices in Sweden, Denmark and Finland. NOKUT wanted to map regulations, guidelines, attitudes and practice relating to the recognition of doctoral degrees in the Nordic countries. The purpose of this was to gain a better understanding of factors deemed to be relevant for the recognition of doctoral degrees in the Nordic countries and to obtain information about related practice. The results of this work were collected in two documents (see annexes 1 and 2).

The survey showed that all four Nordic countries have their own national characteristics and traditions with respect to regulation, degree structures and recognition of doctoral degrees, but that there are also common factors that are relevant to them all. There is, however, some variation in the importance that the different offices assign to these factors. See Table 1 (next page).

Table 1:

	Denmark	Finland	Sweden	Norway
<b>Legal status of recognition</b>				
Binding decision	x	x		x
Advice			x	
<b>Right of appeal</b>				
Yes		x		x
No	x		x	
The applicant may request reassessment	x		x	
<b>Regulation of doctoral programmes</b>				
Legislation by government – ministry	x	x	x	
Recommended guidelines (in Norway's case, UHR)				x
Regulation by the institutions themselves	x	x	x	x
<b>Doctoral programmes taken in the country</b>				
One type of doctoral degree only	x			
Two different types of doctoral degree		x	x	x
<b>Two different types of doctoral degree</b>				
Two different degrees at the same level				x
Two different degrees at different levels in the doctoral programme: licentiate exam + doctoral exam		x	x	
Recognition in relation to both degrees				
Yes		x	x	
No				x
<b>Doctoral degree requirements in the respective Nordic countries</b>				
Researcher qualifications in the country	x	x	x	x
Educational institution approved for offering doctoral programmes in the field	x	x	x	x
Admission requirements: master's or equivalent	x			x
Admission requirements: <i>magister</i> degree or equivalent		x	x	
Defined scope of 3 years	x			x
Defined scope of doctoral programme		x	x	

	Denmark	Finland	Sweden	Norway
2 years (Licentiate exam <sup>17</sup> )		x	x	
Defined scope of doctoral programme 4 years (Doktorexamen <sup>18</sup> )		x	x	
Compulsory courses	x	x	x	x
The thesis includes an independent scientific research work	x	x	x	x
The thesis is assessed and approved by a committee of experts	x	x	x	x
<b>Evaluation for recognition: general or expert</b>				
General, does not assess the content	x	x	x	x
<b>Evaluation of foreign doctoral degrees – criteria</b>				
Researcher qualifications in the relevant country	x	x	x	x
Educational institution approved for offering doctoral programmes in the field	x	x	x	x
Admission requirements: master's, <i>magister</i> degree or equivalent	x	x	x	x
Admission requirements: A bachelor's degree may be acceptable	x	x	x	
Defined scope	x	x	x	x
Compulsory courses				x
The thesis includes an independent scientific research work	x	x	x	x
The thesis is assessed and approved by a committee of experts	x	x	x	x
Recognition requires a minimum number of years of recognisable education for the whole educational pathway.				x
Learning outcomes are considered in the evaluation	x	May be considered, if available	Indirectly: study progr. objectives	
<b>Learning outcomes in the recognition of doctoral degrees</b>				
Definition of the term				
The term is used, but not very well defined	x	x	x	
The term is not used				x
The term is used in the context of the EQF				
<b>Recognition is linked to the admission requirements for higher education</b>				
At a lower level	x			x
At the doctoral degree level				x
<b>Results</b>				
Local credits are awarded in the result				x
Either full recognition or rejection	x	x		
Recognition in relation to the first doctoral degree level (licentiate)		x	x	
Partial recognition in the form of years of study is also granted			x	
Partial recognition in the form of credits and years of study is also granted				x

Table 1: Elements in the recognition of foreign doctoral qualifications. Comparison between four countries' practice in relation to current Norwegian practice.

<sup>17</sup> Licentiate exam: Third cycle programme with a nominal length of study of 2 years, including a thesis of 60 credits/ECT

<sup>18</sup> Doktorexamen: Third cycle programme with a nominal length of study of 4 years, including a thesis of at least 120 credits/ECTS For more information, see: <http://studera.nu/startpage/higher-education-studies/higher-education-in-sweden/study-levels-and-degrees/>

The survey showed that all the offices adapt their recognition system to international conventions, processes and applicable principles in, for example, the Lisbon Recognition Convention, the Bologna process and the qualifications frameworks. Principles and terms such as *substantial differences* and *learning outcomes* have a role in the recognition of doctoral degrees. However, it is not clear how these terms are defined and operationalised for use by the different Nordic offices.

We also see that all the offices conduct a general evaluation of the scope and level of doctoral degrees, and consider many of the same factors we consider in Norway. Nevertheless, compared with NOKUT, our Nordic colleagues reach a more generous conclusion in some cases. The reason for this is that the other offices do not use the same precise and measurable parameters. Particularly in Denmark, there has been a move away from measurable parameters towards use of 'end competence' as an evaluation criterion. Compared with NOKUT's practice, Danish practice also entails a more individual evaluation of doctoral degrees. This leads to a more differentiated evaluation of doctoral degrees and opens up for the possibility of evaluating doctoral degrees that are based on programmes with a different structure from the European model. The national degree structure also plays a role. Sweden and Finland have two degrees in the third cycle (licentiate and doctoral exam). This gives more flexibility, because they can evaluate doctoral degrees from other countries in relation to both degrees.

Our review of Nordic practice shows that:

- Only NOKUT awards credits in connection with the recognition of doctoral degrees
- Only NOKUT links admission requirements to higher education (GSU list requirements in Norway) to the recognition of doctoral degrees
- Only NOKUT requires the inclusion of compulsory courses in the doctoral programme in order to grant degree equivalence.
- The other Nordic offices usually recognise doctoral programmes that are based on the completion of a master's programme, but they may also recognise doctoral programmes that are based on the completion of a bachelor's programme.
- The other Nordic offices to a varying degree base their recognition on learning outcomes.
- Fewer doctoral degrees are awarded degree equivalence in Norway.

The above leads us to the conclusion that NOKUT has a less flexible practice for the recognition of doctoral degrees than the other Nordic countries. By changing the set of criteria for general recognition of doctoral degrees, NOKUT could achieve a practice that is more aligned with practice in the other Nordic countries.

## **5 What can be considered to constitute a substantial difference in the recognition of doctoral degrees?**

### **5.1 The term 'substantial difference' in the Lisbon Recognition Convention**

NOKUT's recognition shall be in accordance with the principles for recognition of qualifications set out in the Lisbon Recognition Convention. Article VI.1 of the Lisbon Recognition Convention states:

*To the extent that a recognition decision is based on the knowledge and skills certified by the higher education qualification, each Party shall recognise the higher education qualifications conferred in another Party, unless a substantial difference can be shown between the qualification for which recognition is sought and the corresponding qualification in the Party in which recognition is sought. The term 'substantial differences' can pose problems and is not specifically defined. The Lisbon Recognition Convention and the documents adopted in recognition thereof provide general instructions on the practical interpretation of substantial differences:*

*36. Qualifications of approximately equal level may show differences in terms of content, profile, workload, quality and learning outcomes. In the assessment of foreign qualifications, these differences should be considered in a flexible way, and only substantial differences in view of the purpose for which recognition is sought (e.g. academic or de facto professional recognition) should lead to partial recognition or non-recognition of the foreign qualifications.*

*37. Recognition of foreign qualifications should be granted unless a substantial difference can be demonstrated between the qualification for which recognition is requested and the relevant qualification of the State in which recognition is sought. In applying this principle, the assessment should seek to establish whether:*

*(a) the differences in learning outcomes between the foreign qualification and the relevant qualification of the country in which recognition is sought are too substantial to allow the recognition of the foreign qualification as requested by the applicant. If so, the assessment should seek to establish whether alternative, partial and/or conditional recognition may be granted;*

*(b) the differences in access to further activities (such as further study, research activities, and the exercise of gainful employment) between the foreign qualification and the relevant qualification of the country in which recognition is sought are too substantial to allow the recognition of the foreign qualification as requested by the applicant. If so, the assessment should seek to establish whether alternative, partial and/or conditional recognition may be granted;*

*(c) the differences in key elements of the programme(s) leading to the qualification in comparison to the programme(s) leading to the relevant qualification of the country in which recognition is sought are too substantial to allow the recognition of the foreign qualification as requested by the applicant. If so, the assessment should seek to establish whether alternative, partial and/or conditional recognition may be granted. The comparability of programme elements should, however, be analysed only with a view to the comparability of outcomes and access to further activities, and not as a necessary condition for recognition in their own right;*

*(d) competent recognition authorities can document that the differences in the quality of the programme and/or institution at which the qualification was awarded in relation to the quality of the programmes and/or institutions granting the similar qualification in terms of which recognition is sought are too substantial to allow the recognition of the foreign qualification*

*as requested by the applicant. If so, the assessment should seek to establish whether alternative, partial and/or conditional recognition may be granted.*<sup>19</sup>

In summary, the Lisbon Recognition Convention recommends that in order to identify any substantial differences we should consider learning outcomes, access to further activities and differences related to core components in the programme, and whether the quality of the programme or the institution at which it is offered is substantially different from corresponding programmes/institutions in Norway. The EAR Manual emphasises that differences related to criteria such as work load and programme structure do not necessarily constitute substantial differences<sup>20</sup>.

## **5.2 NOKUT's practical interpretation of 'substantial difference'**

NOKUT's present practice entails a stricter definition of substantial difference enshrined in its criteria, which leads to a less flexible practice than recommended by the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the EAR Manual. According to NOKUT, a substantial difference may be that the educational institution and/or the doctoral programme is/are not accredited or that, rather than being research-based, the doctoral programme is largely based on practical training and courses. Furthermore, NOKUT considers it a substantial difference if there is an absence of compulsory courses, if the thesis has too narrow a scope, and if the doctoral programme, the educational pathway as a whole or the basis for admission comprises too few years of study.

The EAR Manual, on the other hand, states that the emphasis should be on the core component of the education and that differences in the programme structure should not necessarily be considered to constitute a substantial difference. The core component in a doctoral degree is research, not the number of completed courses. In order to recognise doctoral degree equivalence, NOKUT also requires that admission to the doctoral programme must have been based on a master's degree, regardless of learning outcomes. The EAR Manual stresses that, in accordance with EQF/NQF, learning outcomes and not the educational pathway shall be decisive in the evaluation of qualifications. The 2013 Subsidiary Text to the Lisbon Recognition Convention recommends use of qualifications frameworks in the recognition of foreign qualifications.<sup>21</sup>

The accreditation status of the educational institution or programme, the programme profile (research-based or profession-oriented) and a certain minimum length of both the programme and research element should still serve as basis for considering whether any substantial differences exist in relation to a Norwegian PhD.

Based on the above, we recommend introducing a more accommodating definition of 'substantial difference' in order to extend NOKUT's scope of action to establish new criteria. We envisage a differentiated system with separate criteria for doctoral degrees awarded within the framework of the Bologna process or in countries with qualifications frameworks that are comparable to the Norwegian

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<sup>19</sup> The Lisbon Recognition Convention: Revised recommendation on procedures and criteria for the assessment of foreign qualifications and periods of study.

[http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/recognition/Criteria%20and%20procedures\\_EN.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/recognition/Criteria%20and%20procedures_EN.asp)

<sup>20</sup> European Area of Recognition Manual 2012, p 45, [http://eurorecognition.eu/manual/EAR\\_manual\\_v\\_1.0.pdf](http://eurorecognition.eu/manual/EAR_manual_v_1.0.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> [http://www.nokut.no/Documents/NOKUT/Artikkelbibliotek/Utenlandsk\\_utdanning/NKR%20i%20Lisboakonvensjonen/Subsidiary%20Text%20to%20the%20Convention\\_Recommendation%20on%20the%20use%20of%20qualifications%20frameworks%20in%20the%20recognition%20of%20foreign%20qualifications.pdf](http://www.nokut.no/Documents/NOKUT/Artikkelbibliotek/Utenlandsk_utdanning/NKR%20i%20Lisboakonvensjonen/Subsidiary%20Text%20to%20the%20Convention_Recommendation%20on%20the%20use%20of%20qualifications%20frameworks%20in%20the%20recognition%20of%20foreign%20qualifications.pdf)

qualifications framework; see the Yerevan Communiqué. At the same time, a more flexible set of criteria than the one we use today must also be introduced for other doctoral degrees.

### **5.3 The quality of the educational institution as a marker for 'substantial difference'?**

In its general recognition of foreign higher education, NOKUT evaluates the scope and level based on the relevant country's education system. NOKUT does not consider the quality of the educational institution as long as the institution and/or education programme is/are accredited in the relevant country. In some countries, however, there are major differences in quality between the educational institutions. NOKUT's sister offices, for example in the UK and Australia, have developed a differentiated practice for certain countries, by which qualifications are recognised according to the educational institution at which they were obtained. Qualifications obtained at an educational institution ranked as being of very high quality according to national guidelines, are thus recognised at a higher level than similar qualifications obtained at an educational institution deemed to be of poorer quality. The grades achieved may also have a bearing on the recognition of the qualifications.

Such an approach to recognition is seen as controversial in many countries and unheard of in Norway. We should nevertheless keep in mind that there are sometimes considerable quality differences between educational institutions. Education taken at a regional university college and at a Centre of Excellence in the Philippines both qualify for a Bachelor of Arts degree, even though the quality level of these bachelor's degrees may be different. NOKUT can either choose to disregard this fact and continue its current practice, or it can change its practice to include a differentiated evaluation of qualifications obtained in one and the same country. A differentiated practice, however, entails a more complex case processing, which, in turn, requires more resources.

## **6 Are the GSU list requirements relevant in the recognition of doctoral degrees?**

General recognition of foreign higher education is linked to the GSU list (Higher Education Entrance Qualification for applicants with foreign qualifications applying for admission to higher education in Norway). This means that only education over and above the level required for admission to higher education in Norway may form the basis for general recognition by NOKUT. This is a decades-old practice that has existed longer than NOKUT. Even though the GSU list is no more than a guideline to recognition, it has, in practice, formed the basis for the vast majority of decisions on general recognition. In our experience, the GSU list is a key premise in the educational institutions' academic assessments of foreign education.

This practice entails that education taken in countries subject to a requirement for one or two year(s) of higher education for admission to higher education in Norway, cannot be fully recognised by NOKUT. For example, a four-year Philippine bachelor's degree is recognised as equivalent to a Norwegian university college degree (two years of higher education), because the GSU requirement for the Philippines is two years of higher education. This practice also entails that a subsequent master's degree is not recognised as equivalent to a Norwegian master's degree; the bachelor's

programme (4 years) and master's programme (2 years) are considered to be equivalent to a Norwegian bachelor's degree plus 60 credits at master's degree level.

The current practice also entails that the GSU requirement, whereby the first or first two years are not considered to be part of the basis for recognition, affects the evaluation of education in the third cycle. One of the criteria for granting doctoral degree equivalence is a total educational pathway of at least eight years of recognisable higher education. This practice may have unfortunate consequences in relation to countries that are subject to a GSU list requirement for one or two years of higher education.

Denmark has a similar list of admission requirements for higher education to the GSU list. The list also contains criteria for the recognition of first and second cycle education, but is less predominant in the recognition of doctoral degrees in Denmark. As a consequence, the evaluation of foreign doctoral degrees is not based exclusively on the length of prior education, but on other criteria, with the final qualifications being the most decisive. We find a similar approach to the recognition of foreign doctoral degrees in several other countries, including the UK and Sweden.

Since the GSU list forms a guideline for NOKUT's general recognition, it is possible to distinguish between recognition practice relating to first and second cycle education and education/research in the third cycle. The PhD degree in the third cycle is clearly different in that it is a structured research training programme, while it is also individually adapted to a high degree. NOKUT believes that it is possible to change recognition practice for the third cycle without this creating consequences for recognition of education at a lower level.

## **7 Is it possible to grant general recognition of doctoral degrees without awarding credits?**

### **7.1 Doctoral degrees that are comparable to a Norwegian PhD**

NOKUT's general recognition is expressed in terms of number of credits, number of years of study, level and, if applicable, degree equivalence. Authority for this is found in Chapter 6 of the Regulations concerning the Quality Assurance and Quality Development of Higher Education and Tertiary Vocational Education: *Recognition shall state credits towards degrees or professional education awarded pursuant to Section 3-2 of the above-mentioned Act, and whether the level and scope of the education corresponds to a Norwegian degree or education.*

Norwegian PhD degrees are not allocated credits; credits are only awarded for the course component. This practice is in accordance with the Bologna process which describes a qualifications framework for higher education in which credits/ECTSs are only specified for first and second cycle education, while there is no specification of credits for doctoral degrees.<sup>22</sup> A corresponding view is expressed in the Salzburg II Recommendations, which state the following among other things:

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/qualification/QF-EHEA-May2005.pdf>

*Applying the credit system developed for cohorts of students in the first and second cycles is not a necessary precondition for establishing successful doctoral programmes. Some universities consider credits useful for the taught components of doctoral education, especially in cross-institutional (joint) doctoral programmes. Credits, however, do not make sense when measuring the research component or its associated dissemination outputs. Applied wrongly, rigid credit requirements can be detrimental to the development of independent research professionals. High quality doctoral education needs a stimulating research environment driven by research enthusiasm, curiosity and creativity, not motivated by the collection of credits.<sup>23</sup>*

Doctoral programmes are different from all other education programmes in the first and second cycles because of the large component of independent research work and the requirement for producing new research and knowledge. It is difficult to quantify research work in the form of credits and nominal length of studies. It would therefore be an advantage if NOKUT were able to award degree equivalence without specifying the number of years or credits.

Like Norway, many other countries do not award credits for doctoral degrees, but some countries have clear requirements for credits in their regulations relating to doctoral degrees. We also see that different educational institutions may have a different practice for awarding credits in doctoral programmes. For example, some doctoral degrees include a high number of ECTS credits awarded for participation in conferences and seminars. This can result in the student work load in the form of ECTS credits corresponding to much more than three years of studies, even if the doctoral programme has a nominal length of three years. With a view to recognition, this is clearly a dilemma.

Another argument against specifying credits, is the nominal scope of foreign doctoral programmes. According to UHR's recommended guidelines, the Norwegian PhD degree programme has a nominal length of three years, while we see considerable variation when it comes to foreign doctoral programmes. In many places a doctoral degree can be obtained without any nominal length of study, or minimum and maximum lengths of study have been defined within a wider framework.

We also see that some countries have a nominal length of study of more than three years. In accordance with current practice we have, for example, recognised four-year doctoral programmes as equivalent to a Norwegian PhD degree plus 60 credits at PhD level. In such cases, NOKUT is indirectly pointing out that the doctoral programme in question is more extensive than the three-year doctoral programme.

A completed doctoral degree should lead to doctoral competence, as given in the description of learning outcomes, regardless of how it is structured. It therefore makes little sense to award extra credits in addition to degree equivalence with a Norwegian doctoral degree.

On that basis, we believe that it would be an advantage to be able to grant degree equivalence regardless of the number of credits awarded, by looking at the actual qualifications from a learning outcome perspective. In that way we would take the achieved qualifications into account rather than the formalistic requirements. By using the achieved qualifications as the point of departure, we will ensure more equal treatment of foreign doctoral degrees. The current practice whereby we grant

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<sup>23</sup> [http://www.eua.be/Libraries/Publications\\_homepage\\_list/Salzburg\\_II\\_Recommendations.sflb.ashx](http://www.eua.be/Libraries/Publications_homepage_list/Salzburg_II_Recommendations.sflb.ashx)

recognition based on nominal length of study and credits, can lead to inappropriate results because of the diverse structure of foreign doctoral degrees.

Recognition of doctoral degrees without awarding credits could pose a challenge in relation to the formulation of decisions, as NOKUT makes reference to the total number of credits awarded in its decisions. As a consequence of removing credits from the recognition procedure for doctoral degrees, NOKUT will have to change the way in which it formulates its decisions. Since NOKUT's general recognition is based on the Regulations concerning the Quality Assurance and Quality Development of Higher Education and Tertiary Vocational Education, consideration should be given to whether a change of practice is in accordance with the current Section 6-1(1). In connection with such a change, we see the expedience of also including an EQF reference in the new decisions.

## **7.2 Doctoral degrees that fail to meet the requirements for degree equivalence with a Norwegian PhD**

We propose that degree equivalence be granted for foreign doctoral degrees without awarding credits. In our opinion, credits can still be awarded in recognition of doctoral degrees that fail to meet the requirements for degree equivalence and for partially completed doctoral programmes.

The current practice relating to recognition of doctoral degrees that do not meet our criteria is to grant credits at master's degree or PhD level, but not degree equivalence. In such cases, NOKUT awards credits to show that the candidate has recognised qualifications even if they do not meet the requirements for degree equivalence.

Based on our proposed adjustment of the criteria, some doctoral degrees that are not granted degree equivalence today will probably be evaluated differently and possibly be considered as equivalent degrees. At the same time, we recommend that the option of awarding credits in recognition of doctoral degrees that may be recognised, though not as equivalent to Norwegian doctoral degrees, be retained. The following are examples of doctoral degrees that may fall into this category:

- Doctoral thesis of insufficient scope: The core component in a doctoral programme is research resulting in the production of an original, scientific work. NOKUT is therefore of the opinion that a lack of or insufficient scope of research and scientific work should still disqualify from obtaining full recognition. The current requirement for devoting at least two years of study to research and production of an original scientific work should be retained. Doctoral degrees in which the scope of the thesis is insufficient should be recognised by awarding credits only, as they are not comparable to Norwegian doctoral degrees. Examples are some profession-oriented doctoral degrees with large practical training and course components, but lacking significant research work.
- Doctoral programme of insufficient length: A doctoral degree must entail a work load of at least three years for degree equivalence to be granted. Only credits may be granted for doctoral degrees with a scope of less than three years.

## **7.3 Partially completed doctoral programmes**

In contrast to many other recognition offices in the ENIC-NARIC network, NOKUT grants general recognition for partially completed degree programmes using the time-for-time principle. For

education in the first and second cycle, NOKUT may consider how much of the education programme has been completed on the basis of the number of credits awarded, the number of passed courses, exams etc. The recognition of a partially completed doctoral programme, however, is more complicated. The question is how a partially completed doctoral programme can be evaluated. On the basis of the number of completed courses for which credits are awarded? On the basis of an incomplete thesis and no completed courses? On the basis of completed courses for which no credits are awarded?

The training component of a doctoral programme can be diverse. The educational institution may offer organised courses at PhD or master's level. The educational institution may also choose to award credits for various types of scientific work, participation in seminars and conferences or courses in career development, training in writing skills, development of presentation skills etc. We often see examples of individual courses being transferred from previous education programmes. The training component may also be individually adapted. Most often, it represents a minor part of the total programme. In comparison, in Norway the course part represents 30 credits of the total programme scope, according to UHR's recommended guidelines.

The research work, and hence the degree, is completed when the work has been assessed by a scientific committee and defended by the doctoral candidate. In the case of a partially completed doctoral programme, the quality of the research work has not been assessed by a scientific committee. This means that NOKUT can only recognise a passed course component in the form of credits.

We propose that NOKUT change its practice relating to the evaluation of partially completed doctoral programmes. NOKUT cannot evaluate partially completed doctoral programmes that do not include compulsory credit awarding courses. If the partially completed doctoral programme includes credit awarding courses that have been passed, NOKUT may recognise the courses and award credits without specifying a level, as it is difficult to determine the exact level of such courses. At the same time, we can state in the grounds for the decision that these courses may form part of a doctoral programme in the applicant's home country.

## 7.4 Other third cycle education

In Norway third cycle education is limited to PhD programmes, *Doctor philosophiae (dr.philos.)* programmes and the Norwegian Artistic Research Fellowship Programme. They have in common that research forms the core component of the education or degree programme. In other countries, third cycle education may include highly specialised education programmes, whose purpose is not research but specialisation in a particular field. Examples of the latter are the Italian *Diploma di specializzazione* and *Master universitario di secondo livello*. NOKUT can evaluate such education programmes individually and possibly recognise them by awarding credits. It is, however, difficult to specify a level for such credits. We therefore propose that such credits be awarded without specification of level.

## 8 Can learning outcomes be applied in the recognition of doctoral degrees?

The structuring of doctoral degrees has been an important part of the Bologna process for the last decade. In the Bergen Communiqué from 2005, the Ministers proposed that doctoral programmes should be more structured and included as a third cycle in the degree structure:<sup>24</sup>

- *Doctoral level qualifications need to be fully aligned with the EHEA overarching framework for qualifications using the outcomes-based approach.*
- *Core component of doctoral training is the advancement of knowledge through original research.*
- *The normal workload of the third cycle in most countries corresponds to 3-4 years full time.*
- *Doctoral programmes should promote interdisciplinary training and the development of transferable skills to meet the needs of the wider labour market.*
- *More doctoral candidates should be encouraged to take up research careers within the EHEA.*
- *Participants in third cycle programmes are considered both students and early stage researchers.*

Implicitly, this harmonisation of doctoral programmes has meant that it is easier to obtain recognition of doctoral degrees across national borders. The introduction of learning outcome descriptions and inclusion of doctoral degrees in a qualifications framework can and should be used as tools in connection with recognition.

We therefore propose an almost automatic recognition of doctoral degrees from countries

- 1) that have a recognised qualifications framework, in which the doctoral degree is at EQF level 8 or equivalent;
- 2) where such an education represents that country's highest level of research training;
- 3) where we cannot refer to substantial differences in relation to the Norwegian doctoral degree as described in NQF.<sup>25</sup>

In the above cases we recommend that the education be recognised as equivalent to an accredited Norwegian PhD degree regardless of whether the admission requirements, scope and structure differ from the Norwegian model. In practice, this will be the case for the countries that participate in the Bologna process, in addition to certain other countries that have introduced a national qualifications framework.

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<sup>24</sup> [http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/Bergen\\_Communique1.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/Bergen_Communique1.pdf)  
<http://www.ehea.info/article-details.aspx?ArticleId=144>

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.nokut.no/en/Facts-and-statistics/The-Norwegian-Educational-System/The-Norwegian-qualifications-framework/Levels/>

## 9 Is it possible to grant general recognition of foreign doctoral degrees as comparable to the Norwegian *Doctor philosophiae (dr.philos.)* degree?

On 18 December 2013 NOKUT was requested by NOKUT's appeals board to explain the systemic requirements for Norwegian doctoral programmes and the legal basis for NOKUT's criteria for general recognition of foreign doctoral degrees. The question was also asked whether foreign doctoral degrees could be recognised as comparable to the *dr.philos.* degree, and not just the PhD degree. The *doctor philosophiae (dr.philos.)* degree consists exclusively of a written thesis that is assessed by an expert committee and defended by the candidate. This degree programme is not based on a nominal length of study, no credits are awarded and it includes no courses at an advanced academic level. Such a degree can only be assessed through an expert assessment, and NOKUT is not mandated to conduct such an assessment. An expert assessment of a *dr.philos.* degree pursuant to Section 3-5 of the U&UC Act may only be carried out by the educational institutions.

Even though this report proposes that it should be possible to recognise foreign doctoral programmes that do not include compulsory courses or where the nominal length of study is not regulated, the question concerning the *dr. philos* degree falls outside the scope of this report as it is a degree that is achieved exclusively on the basis of an expert assessment of a written thesis.

## 10 Proposal for new criteria and changes to practice

In this report, we have shown how the Bologna process, the development of qualifications frameworks, conventions and internationalisation have contributed to greater harmonisation of educational systems. The current Norwegian system for general recognition reflects neither the developments that are taking place nor the social expectations regarding mobility and recognition. NOKUT would therefore like to adjust the criteria for recognition of doctoral degrees.

The criteria must ensure that NOKUT can recognise both doctoral degrees harmonised through the international processes and other doctoral degrees if they are comparable. At the same time, the criteria must be flexible enough to incorporate possible future changes. This means that the criteria should not be overly detailed and should not be linked to the evaluation of several specific, measurable parameters and input factors. Where possible, learning outcomes and qualifications should be the key elements. Such a change will probably result in degree equivalence for more foreign doctoral degrees than is the case today.

We propose a differentiated recognition scheme for doctoral degrees, with separate criteria for education programmes that are covered by the Bologna process and/or a qualifications framework that is comparable with EQF (for example, the qualifications frameworks in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa). The requirements of a Bologna doctoral degree or a doctoral degree in a qualifications framework are standardised and their objective is to ensure essentially the same learning outcomes.

We recommend that NOKUT define certain main criteria for granting degree equivalence, and otherwise open up for more individual consideration in the recognition of other doctoral degrees.

For NOKUT, it is a principle that education programmes are treated equally. In our opinion, this principle will not be breached by introducing a differentiated set of criteria. With the new criteria, NOKUT's practice will be more in line with that of other countries' recognition offices.

### ***Proposed criteria for recognition of doctoral degrees that are equivalent to an accredited Norwegian doctoral degree (PhD)***

#### **Criteria for doctoral degree equivalence – applies to all doctoral degrees**

- The education must have been completed and an officially approved doctoral degree awarded by an institution that is officially approved/accredited to award doctoral degrees in the relevant academic area in the country where the applicant studied. By doctoral degree is meant research qualifications in accordance with the relevant country's education system (third cycle in the degree structure).
- The main component of the doctoral degree must be supervised independent research that results in an approved scientific thesis. The nominal length of study for work on the doctoral thesis shall be about two (2) years.
- The doctoral thesis must have been assessed and approved by a committee of experts.
- The nominal length of study should be at least three (3) years.

### **For countries with a qualifications framework**

- Countries with QF-EHEA/EQF: The doctoral programme must be benchmarked at level 8. Degree equivalence with a Norwegian PhD degree shall be granted for qualifications that also meet the general requirements.
- Other countries that have a qualifications framework (for example Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa): The doctoral programme must be benchmarked at or correspond to level 8 in EQF. Degree equivalence with a Norwegian PhD degree shall be granted for qualifications that also meet the general requirements.
- Doctoral degrees taken in these countries before the qualifications framework was introduced: The foreign doctoral degree must be the relevant country's research-based doctoral degree, and the doctoral programme and previous education must have a combined educational pathway of eight, sometimes seven, years.<sup>26</sup>

### **Practice for countries with centrally regulated doctoral degrees and alternative admission requirements for doctoral programmes**

- Some countries (for example, Russia) offer doctoral programmes with different admission requirements based on different educational pathways. The doctoral programme (*Kandidat Nauk*) in Russia is government regulated and leads up to the same qualifications regardless of the educational pathway by which the candidate gained access to the programme. NOKUT's current practice is to consider doctoral degrees in the context of previous recognisable higher education. This results in differences in recognition according to the length of previous education. We propose a change of practice whereby such doctoral degrees are granted the same recognition regardless of previous recognisable higher education. The qualifications must meet the general requirements and, if degree equivalence is to be granted, the length of the doctoral programme and previous education must be at least eight years.

### **Practice for countries that are subject to a GSU requirement of 1–2 year(s) higher education in addition to upper secondary school**

- NOKUT's current practice is to consider doctoral degrees in the context of previous recognisable educational pathways in addition to other requirements. In this report, we have proposed that the GSU list requirements should no longer apply to doctoral degrees. However, we see the need for a differentiated practice based on an individual evaluation of educational pathway, learning outcomes and the general requirements. Particularly degrees taken in those countries that are subject to a requirement for two years of higher education on the GSU list, will require an overall evaluation. NOKUT does not receive many applications for recognition of doctoral degrees from such countries, and we therefore believe an individual evaluation to be unproblematic.

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<sup>26</sup> In the UK, for example, many doctoral degrees are based on a bachelor's degree. This results in a combined learning path of seven years. If the doctoral degree has been recognised in the country where it was taken, we cannot see that one year's difference in the overall educational pathway would result in different learning outcomes.

### **Practice relating to completed doctoral degrees that fail to meet the requirements for degree equivalence**

- Examples of such doctoral degrees are profession-oriented doctoral degrees and doctoral degrees based on a nominal length of study of two years. We propose to continue the current practice of awarding credits for the degree as a whole.

### **Practice relating to doctoral degrees without a nominal scope (for example, from many countries in Latin America)**

- We propose that these degrees be evaluated individually, based on work load and time consumption in addition to the general criteria for a doctoral degree. The nominal length of study is often stated to be between two and five years, but it is very hard to complete the doctoral programme in the minimum amount of time. We therefore consider two years to be an unrealistic nominal length of study, and the case officer must consider this matter from case to case.

### **Practice relating to the recognition of partially completed doctoral degrees**

- Partially completed doctoral programmes without a compulsory course component cannot be evaluated by NOKUT.
- In the case of partially completed doctoral programmes that include compulsory courses that have been passed and for which credits are awarded, NOKUT can adopt a decision on recognition of the courses. The credits will not be specified as it is difficult to determine the exact level of such courses. However, NOKUT can provide additional information that these courses may form part of a doctoral programme in the applicant's country of education.

## **11 Summary**

NOKUT proposes changes to the criteria for general recognition of doctoral degrees as a consequence of the changing international education landscape with greater focus on mobility. This entails a greater need for modern tools of recognition. Norway is committed to greater flexibility through the Bologna process, most recently affirmed at the ministerial conference in Yerevan in May 2015, with a view to promoting mobility. Under the Lisbon Recognition Convention, qualifications frameworks are also included as tools of recognition.

Up until now, NOKUT has had a homogeneous, system-based recognition regime with a strong focus on measurable input factors. The criteria are closely linked to UHR's recommended guidelines for the PhD degree. The criteria are highly detailed and do not take much account of what can be deemed to constitute a substantial difference. Based on the existing regulations, it is therefore difficult to evaluate doctoral programmes that have a different structure from the Norwegian PhD degree.

We now propose a move towards a more differentiated recognition system, where learning outcomes linked to a qualifications framework are important elements. The set of criteria involves less scrutiny

of the detailed structure of individual doctoral programmes, and gives more weight to ascertaining whether they include the core components. The set of criteria is no longer as closely linked to UHR's guidelines, which are primarily addressed to Norwegian institutions as an aid to developing their PhD regulations. NOKUT's general recognition is intended to cover doctoral degrees from all over the world for use in the Norwegian labour market. We would therefore like to see NOKUT use other tools in addition to the applicable Norwegian regulations in its recognition practice. We believe this will be a positive development and make it possible to determine what does and does not constitute a substantial difference. This will be an advantage for those who apply for recognition of their doctoral degrees as well as for society as a whole.

At the same time, we will retain elements from the previous systemic approach so that we can evaluate education programmes from countries that have no or only a partially completed national qualifications framework.

NOKUT's current set of criteria for general recognition are applied to all three cycles of higher education. To start with, we have limited ourselves to updating the criteria for recognition of doctoral degrees, rather than the whole set of criteria for all three cycles. This is partly because we consider the need for change to be most pressing in the recognition of doctoral degrees, and partly because doctoral programmes are different from the other two cycles in that they include independent research as a large component. In our opinion the new criteria for recognition of doctoral degrees are in line with today's trends. The proposed criteria may also be valuable in a possible subsequent review of NOKUT's criteria for recognition of foreign education in the first and second cycle.

NOKUT's practice is generally expected to be in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention so that it is predictable, transparent and thus ensures equal treatment. We hope that these expectations are fully met by our proposal for a new set of criteria. Even if the original criteria worked at the time of their inception, changed educational pathways and trends in recognition have led to a need for updating the criteria in order to ensure that the results are fair and just. It is therefore important to take into account that the criteria should be subject to regular reviews in order to ensure that any new changes in the education sector or in recognition practice are followed up.

## Appendices to the report

The two appendices are the summary from the NORRIC-workshop held 18.09.2014. The purpose of the workshop was to map recognition practices for doctoral degrees in Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Norway.

### Appendix 1: Examples of recognition practice for doctoral degrees

1.	<p><u>PhD Degree in Law from Cairo University in Egypt:</u></p> <p>The programme does not have a standardized scope and does not require mandatory courses. Require defense of thesis based on original research.</p>
Danmark	<p>Comparable in level to a Danish PhD. Explanation in the cover letter: PhD degree from Egypt is generally assessed to be comparable in level to a Danish PhD degree. Due to the high degree of specialisation of PhD programmes, we do not undertake any comparison of the content of the programme concerned with a particular Danish PhD programme.</p>
Finland	<p>So far, we have not had an application with an Egyptian third-cycle degree. The application would be processed taken into account the Egyptian HE degree structure and requirements. We would compare the scope and the requirements of the Egyptian and a Finnish degree. The comparison should not compare fields of study, but is general in its nature.</p>
Norway	<p>NOKUT cannot assess this programme for general recognition as a PhD-degree. Recommends applicant that he should apply for recognition at a h. ed. inst.</p>
Sweden	<p>Comparable in level to a Swedish PhD. No comparison or comments on contents of the programme.</p>
2.	<p><u>Doctor of Science in Physical Therapy from Oakland University in USA</u></p> <p>This is a professional doctorate and not a research-oriented doctorate.</p>
Danmark	<p>The programme is more professionally oriented than research oriented (forskeruddannelse).” We would probably describe the programme and its learning outcome in our letter to the applicant without providing an assessment. Vi mener, at der ikke er et decideret research doctoral programme men nærmere en professionel efter/videreledende uddannelse (post-professional) på højt niveau (niveau højere end masterniveau), men der er ikke en egentlig forskeruddannelse”.</p>
Finland	<p>The application is processed taken into account the HE degree structure and degree requirements in the USA. We compare the scope and the requirements of the degree with a Finnish degree. The fields of study are not compared, but the comparison is general in its nature.</p>

Norway	The degree can be recognized in terms of credits by NOKUT, but not equal to a PhD-degree, as the scope of the study and the research component is not large enough.
Sweden	The degree can be recognized as a 3 <sup>rd</sup> cycle level degree, but we would not compare it with a Swedish PhD, only in number of years within the 3 <sup>rd</sup> cycle. We might comment on that the degree follows on a bachelor, and prepares for the labour market, and maybe that we do not have a corresponding degree to compare with in Sweden
3.	<u>Diploma Di Specialista in: Dermatologia E Venerologia from Universita' Di Bologna</u> Medical specialization, in Italy it is placed in the 3 <sup>rd</sup> cycle and can have a standardized scope of 2-6 years.
Danmark	It is a specialist medical training. We would not assess this qualification in comparison to the Danish education system since specialist medical training programmes are not within the formal education/degree structure in Denmark. We would rather describe the programme and its learning outcome in our letter to the applicant.
Finland	We have not had an application with this qualification.
Norway	We do not assess specialist medical training, recommend applicant to apply for specialist recognition in medicine at the competent authority.
Sweden	We would do like Norway, and recommend the applicant to apply for specialist recognition in medicine at the competent authority. However, we have evaluated an Italian "Specialista" in another field, and compared it with number of years on advanced level, with some extra information in the commentary (f ex about the lack of a comparable degree in Sweden and information about the labour market orientation etc).
4.	<u>Doctor in Management from Liceo De Cagayan University in the Philippines</u> The Philippines has two doctoral degrees: 1. Require defense of thesis based on original research 2. Professional doctoral degrees that require a completion of specific number of semester units of coursework without a thesis or original research program or with a minor thesis. This is a professional doctorate.
Danmark	The programme differs from the traditional PhD in the Philippines. The programme in question includes 27 credits, no thesis and shorter in length. The traditional PhD in the Philippines includes 45-60 credits (including 12 credits dissertation) and minimum duration is 3 years. We would not assess the qualification in question to be comparable in level to a Danish PhD.
Finland	Please see above the case from Egypt.
Norway	The degree can be recognized in terms of credits by NOKUT, but cannot be compared to a Norwegian PhD-degree.
Sweden	We would not assess the qualification in question to be comparable in level to a Swedish PhD, rather to number of years in the 2 <sup>nd</sup> cycle or a master. We do treat

	advanced qualifications from the Philippines on a case-by-case-basis as we see very few of them.
5.	<p><u>The 3 PhDs from Romania</u></p> <p><u>1985: Master of Science, Agriculture, Agronomic Institute “Dr. Petru Groza” (4 years)</u></p> <p><u>1988: Doctor, Agronomie, Agronomic Institute “Dr. Petru Groza” (3 years)</u></p> <p><u>1996: Doctor, Economie, Academia de Studii Economice Bucuresti (3 years)</u></p> <p><u>1999: Doctor, Law, Universitatea din Bucuresti (3 years)</u></p>
Danmark	Would assess the 3 degrees separately to be comparable in level to a Danish PhDs. The applicant would receive three assessments of the three PhDs from Romania.
Finland	The application is processed taken into account the Romanian HE degree structure and degree requirements. We compare the scope and the requirements of the Romanian and a Finnish degree. The fields of study are not compared, but the comparison is general in its nature.
Norway	The degrees can be recognized in terms of credits by NOKUT, but cannot be recognized as equal to Norwegian PhD-degrees. The degrees from 1985 and 1988 are recognized together as a master’s degree (300 Norwegian credit points) and in addition 120 Norwegian credit points on PhD level. Each degree from 1996 and 1999 is recognized as 180 Norwegian credit points. This study path with the four degrees is recognized as 13 years of higher education/ 780 Norwegian credit points.
Sweden	We would also, as Denmark, assess the 3 degrees separately, each one comparable in level with a Swedish PhD.
6.	<p><u>Degree of Doctor of Philosophy from University of Dundee</u></p> <p>Minimum admission requirement is a bachelor’s degree; the programme does not require mandatory courses.</p>
Danmark	Would assess the qualification to be comparable in level to a Danish PhD even though the access requirement can be a bachelor’s degree. Our assessments focus on a comparison of the learning outcomes (Slutkompetencen) evidenced by the foreign and the Danish qualifications respectively. Explanation in the cover letter: PhD degree from the United Kingdom is generally assessed to be comparable in level to a Danish PhD degree. Due to the high degree of specialisation of PhD programmes, we do not undertake any comparison of the content of the programme concerned with a particular Danish PhD programme.
Finland	The application is processed taken into account the Scottish HE degree structure and degree requirements. We compare the scope and the requirements of the Scottish and a Finnish degree. The fields of study are not compared, but the comparison is general in its nature.

Norway	Recognized as 180 Norwegian credit points. Recommends applicant that he should apply for recognition at a h. ed. inst.
Sweden	We agree with Denmark, and would compare with a Swedish PhD degree even though the access requirement can be a bachelor's degree, as we see to the outcome of the qualification.
7.	<u>German PhD – previous system</u> : The programme does not have a standardized scope and does not require mandatory courses. Require defense of thesis based on original research.
Danmark	Individual assessment
Finland	The application is processed taken into account the German HE degree structure and degree requirements. We compare the scope and the requirements of the German and a Finnish degree. The fields of study are not compared, but the comparison is general in its nature.
Norway	NOKUT cannot assess this programme for general recognition as a PhD-degree. Recommends applicant that he should apply for recognition at a h. ed. inst.
Sweden	Generally comparable with a Swedish PhD.  (Doktor der Medizin though, are comparable with a Swedish "licentiatexamen
8	<u>German PhD – new system</u> : with structured 3-year programmes, mandatory courses
Danmark	Individual assessment
Finland	The application is processed taken into account the German HE degree structure and degree requirements. We compare the scope and the requirements of the German and a Finnish degree. The fields of study are not compared, but the comparison is general in its nature.
Norway	If it satisfies all our criteria for general recognition of doctoral degrees: recognized as equivalent to a Norwegian PhD.
Sweden	We have not received any so far but should probably not have any problems with them evaluated as corresponding a Swedish PhD.

## Appendix 2: Comparison of regulation and practice for recognition of doctoral degrees in the Nordic countries

	Danmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden
Mandate, legal status				
Doctoral degrees				
What is the legal status of the assessment/ recognition of foreign credentials your office grant?	<p>The assessment shall be binding on the following decisions:</p> <p>(i) The decision on admission by a publicly recognised educational institution.</p> <p>(ii) The decision on admission by an unemployment fund.</p> <p>(iii) The decision by an authority on employment.</p> <p>(iv) The decision by an authority on access to a regulated profession (subject to subsection (5)).</p> <p>(v) The decision by a trade committee (fagligt udvalg) or by the Council for Agricultural Education on a</p>	<p>The Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE) decides on the eligibility provided by foreign qualifications for civil service posts in Finland. These personal <b>decisions</b> taken by the FNBE are based on the Act on Eligibility Provided by Foreign Higher Education Studies for Public Posts in Finland / <a href="#">Lag om den tjänstebehörighet som högskolestudier utomlands medför</a> (531/1986).</p> <p>The person presents this decision when applying for a post or position in public administration where a university degree of a certain level is part of the eligibility requirement.</p>	<p>Legally binding individual decision - “enkeltvedtak”</p> <p>Recognition of education is outlined in the Act relating to Universities and University Colleges, Chapter 3,</p> <p>§ 3-4</p> <p><a href="http://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/2005-04-01-15?q=universitets+og+h%C3%B8yskole#KAPITTEL_1-2">http://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/2005-04-01-15?q=universitets+og+h%C3%B8yskole#KAPITTEL_1-2</a></p> <p>and: <a href="#">Forskrift om kvalitetssikring og kvalitetsutvikling i høyere utdanning og fagskoleutdanning</a></p>	<p>Advisory. (Done as a free service from the State, for the Swedish labour market. No legally binding, it is not a decision, but a recommendation).</p>

	<p>reduction in the length of study.</p> <p>An assessment shall only be binding on a decision on access to a regulated profession, cf. subsection (4)(iv), if it has been obtained for that purpose, cf. section 2(2).</p> <p><b>Vurdering af udenlandske uddannelseskvalifikationer m.v. Loven er oprindelig vedtaget i 2001, og dens nuværende indhold fremgår af lovbekendtgørelse nr. 579 af 1. juni 2014 (på dansk – vedhæftet)</b>  <a href="https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/R0710.aspx?id=163397">https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/R0710.aspx?id=163397</a></p>		<p>§ 6-1.</p> <p><a href="http://lovdata.no/dokument/SF/forskrift/2010-02-01-96">http://lovdata.no/dokument/SF/forskrift/2010-02-01-96</a></p>	
Is there any difference in the legal status of the assessments in the first, second or third cycle credentials?	No	No	No	No

<p>Can applicants file a complaint against your office's decision?</p>	<p>Applicants cannot appeal against our assessments to any other administrative authority, cf. Consolidation Act on the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications etc. (LBK nr. 579 of 1 June 2014), section 7(2).</p> <p>Applicants can write to us or call if they have questions or need clarifications or ask for a reassessment.</p>	<p>The FNBE decision is subject to appeal to an Administrative Court in Finland.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Decisions on recognition of education pursuant to § 48 of the Act relating to Universities and University Colleges are individual decisions that can be appealed against. The procedure must be conducted in accordance with the Public Administration Act.</p> <p><a href="http://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/1967-02-10">http://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/1967-02-10</a></p>	<p>No. When not satisfied, one can ask for a reassessment done in the same authority/department.</p>
<p>Does the degree system in your country encompass more than one type of doctoral degree? If yes, what are they?</p>	<p>Academic and industrial PhD-degrees, but the final diploma does not differ between the two types. In the end the student achieves a PhD-degree.</p>	<p>There are two scientific or artistic postgraduate degrees in Finland: the licentiate and the doctorate.</p>	<p>PhD and Doctor philosophiae</p>	<p>Licentiatexamen and Doktorsexamen, both placed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle.</p> <p>General qualifications: Degree of Licentiate [Licentiatexamen] Degree of Doctor [Doktorsexamen]</p> <p>Qualifications in the fine, applied and performing arts: Degree of Licentiate [Konstnärlig</p>

				<p>licentiatexamen] Degree of Doctor [Konstnärlig doktorsexamen]</p> <p><a href="http://www.uhr.se/sv/Information-in-English/Laws-and-regulations/The-Higher-Education-Ordinance/Annex-2/">http://www.uhr.se/sv/Information-in-English/Laws-and-regulations/The-Higher-Education-Ordinance/Annex-2/</a></p>
<p>Are doctoral degrees regulated in your country? If yes, what kind of regulations are these (law, guidelines) and who regulates them (institutions of higher education, ministry)?</p>	<p>The PhD Programme is regulated by a Ministerial Order at the Universities and Certain Higher Artistic Educational Institutions (PhD Order) that regulates the PhD. The institutions of higher education administrate the PhD rules.</p> <p><a href="http://www.cbs.dk/files/cbs.dk/useful_link/phd_regulations_2008.pdf">http://www.cbs.dk/files/cbs.dk/useful_link/phd_regulations_2008.pdf</a></p>	<p>Doctoral degrees are regulated: Universities Act (Yliopistolaki/<a href="#">Universitetslag</a> 558/2009): degrees, degree structure, eligibility criteria, RNFIL, length of studies, and the Government Decree on University Degrees (Valtioneuvoston asetus yliopistojen tutkinnoista / <a href="#">Statsrådets förordning om universitetsexamina</a> 794/2004): subject areas, degrees and degrees by universities, ECTS, language requirements, aims of the degrees, general competences.</p>	<p>Recommended Guidelines for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree (PhD) recommended by Board of the Norwegian Association of Higher the Education Institutions and H.Ed</p> <p>The Institutions' own ph.d. regulation</p> <p>NOKUTs regulation: Regulations concerning supervision of the educational quality in higher education (Academic Supervision Regulations)</p>	<p>In the Higher education ordinance, which is regulated by the ministry.</p>

<p>What are the doctoral degree requirements in your country?</p>	<p>The PhD degree is awarded to students who have successfully completed the PhD programme, and successfully defended their PhD thesis. Persons who have been awarded a PhD degree have the right to use the title PhD. The PhD programme is equivalent to 180 ECTS points and normally takes the form of full-time studies; however, the institutions may lay down rules providing for part-time studies (60 ECTS points correspond to one year of full-time studies). Admission to the PhD programme is based on a Master's degree or equivalent. The university may decide to let the PhD programme start in connection with a Master's programme. (refer to PHD order - <a href="http://www.cbs.dk/files/cbs.d">http://www.cbs.dk/files/cbs.d</a>)</p>	<p>Government Decree on University Degrees (Valtionevoston asetukset yliopistojen tutkinnoista 794/2004), Section 22:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>complete the required postgraduate studies</i></li> <li>- <i>demonstrate independent and critical thinking in the field of research; and</i></li> <li>- <i>write a doctoral dissertation and defend it in public</i></li> </ul> <p>In addition, the universities have their own degree requirements, also for doctoral degrees.</p>	<p>The degree of <i>Doctor Philosophiae</i> awarded graduates who have qualified for the doctorate on their own, without formal guidance. The degree has no time limit for and the applicant has no affiliation with the university as a doctoral candidate until he/she has approved the application for the doctoral examination.</p> <p>Degree requirements for Doctor Philosophiae:</p> <p>an approved doctoral thesis,</p> <p>an approved trial lecture on an assigned topic,</p> <p>an approved public defence of the doctoral thesis,</p> <p>The PhD degree, organized 3-year full-time program, is conferred on the basis of:</p>	<p>Research, course work 120 ects and a thesis 120 ects.</p> <p>The main focus of PhD programmes in Sweden is the dissertation. Swedish universities don't offer taught PhD programmes; rather, programmes are mainly research-based, meaning you'll spend most of your time performing research toward your dissertation. Theoretical studies in the form of small courses or seminars are also an important component. Programmes usually consist of a minimum of four years of full-time study, or 240 ECTS credits.</p>

	<a href="#">k/useful link/phd regulations_2008.pdf</a>		<p>an approved doctoral thesis,</p> <p>approved completion of the required coursework (30 ECTS), and any other approved educational qualifications or expertise,</p> <p>an approved trial lecture on an assigned topic,</p> <p>an approved public defence of the doctoral thesis</p>	
<p>When recognizing foreign credentials, the country that recognizes the credential normally assesses it in relation to its own degree system. If you have more than one type of doctoral degrees, do you recognize/assess foreign doctoral degrees in relation to all types of doctoral degrees that your country has?</p>	<p>We assess in relation to the one and only type we have in Denmark.</p> <p>Our assessment will be: the education is comparable in level to a Danish PhD</p> <p>Explanation in the enclosed cover letter:</p> <p>PhD degree from LAND is generally assessed to be comparable in level to a Danish PhD degree. Due to the high degree of specialisation of PhD</p>	Yes	NOKUT recognizes doctoral degrees only in relation to Ph.D.	Yes, both of them (licentiatexamen and doktorsexamen), or when needed, to number of years on research level/3 <sup>rd</sup> cycle.

	programmes, we do not undertake any comparison of the content of the programme concerned with a particular Danish PhD programme.			
Evaluation criteria, methodology for doctoral degree assessment and recognition				
Is there a connection between your countries doctoral degree regulations and the recognition/assessment of foreign doctoral degrees?	Yes. Our assessments focus on comparing the learning outcomes (Slutkompetencen) evidenced by the foreign PhD and the Danish PhD respectively	These regulations have different legal basis, but since the main criteria for assessment are ‘scope and requirements’ (omfång och svårighetskrav), in practice comparison on these elements is made between foreign and Finnish degree. It is important to notice, that this comparison should not compare fields of study, but are general in their nature. Comparability of the level is being looked at.	Yes, our evaluation criteria follow the Recommended Guidelines for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree (PhD)	Yes, we consider the Swedish Higher Education Act and the Higher Education ordinance, (as well as the Lissabon convention), when elaborating our assessment criteria for 3 <sup>rd</sup> cycle degrees (which is a process going on for the moment).

<p>Are learning outcomes used systematically in your assessments? If yes, how do you apply learning outcomes in your assessments?</p>	<p>Yes – Our assessments focus on a comparison of the learning outcomes (Slutkompetencen) evidenced by the foreign and the Danish qualifications respectively. Furthermore, we describe the programme shortly and inform what the programme gives access to in the country of education.</p>	<p>If descriptions of the learning outcomes are available, we go them over and consider them in our decision-making.</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>If not systematically, but indirectly, yes, it is present in our discussions. In difficult cases, we look on the purpose with the studies for example (academic, professional) and might give information about in in the commentary.</p>
<p>Are learning outcomes applied in your assessments of foreign doctoral degrees?</p>	<p>We make a level assessment of the degree (learning outcome/Slutkompetencen). We do not compare to a specific Danish PhD. We inform in our assessment letter about the nature of the programme (i.e. research based or combination of coursework and research) and inform about the area of specialization. We do not compare to a specific Danish PhD.-programme</p>	<p>If descriptions of the learning outcomes are available, we go them over and consider them in our decision-making.</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>Indirectly, yes. In difficult cases, we look on the purpose with the studies for ex (see above).</p>

<p>When assessing foreign doctoral degrees, do you take into account workload/standardized scope, admission requirement? (e.g. a doctoral program with 2-year standardized scope or a doctoral degree that builds on a 3-year bachelor's degree)</p>	<p>We focus on learning outcomes (slutkompetencen) - our assessments are based on the following criteria</p> <p>Recognition of the qualification or the study periods in the home country.</p> <p>ii) The date of completion of the educational programme or the study periods.</p> <p>iii) The admission requirements of the educational programme or the study periods.</p> <p>iv) The length of the educational programme or the study periods.</p> <p>v) The purpose of the educational programme or the study periods.</p> <p>vi) The structure and academic content of the educational programme or the study periods.</p> <p>vii) The relationship between theory and practice in the</p>	<p>All qualifications are evaluated case-by-case. All elements mentioned are taken into account. Main criteria are described above.</p>	<p>Yes. All qualifications are evaluated individually. Therefore workload/standardized scope, admission requirement are checked against our evaluation criteria:  <a href="http://www.nokut.no/en/Foreign-education/NOKUTs-general-recognition/NOKUTs-criteria/">http://www.nokut.no/en/Foreign-education/NOKUTs-general-recognition/NOKUTs-criteria/</a></p>	<p>We focus on learning outcomes. Our evaluation criteria for doctoral degree are under development for the moment.</p>
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	<p>educational programme or the study periods.</p> <p>viii) Previous assessments made by the Centre or others.</p> <p>A doctorate Degree from Iran (for example Doctor of Business Administration), Germany or Switzerland is not necessarily a PhD in the country of education (enclosed a study case from Germany. See also the case Doctor of Science in Physical Therapy from Oakland University in USA).</p>			
<p>When assessing foreign doctoral degrees, do you take into account the content/structure of the program? (Mandatory course or without course and/or thesis workload with 120 credits).</p>	<p>Yes – for example Iran (see below). See also the case Doctor in Management from the Philippines)</p>	<p>Yes, we confirm that the degree corresponds to the requirements set for a doctoral degree in that country.</p>	<p>Yes, we require that it is an organized the doctoral program which includes both courses at an advanced level and a thesis. The thesis must be based on an independent scientific work, and the thesis workload must correspond to minimum 120 credits.</p>	<p>There must be a thesis (as it is expressed in the Swedish Higher Education ordinance), and the degree should correspond to the requirements set for a doctoral degree in the country.</p>

Do you use/allot credits in your recognition?	A doctorate Degree from Iran (for example Doctor of Business Administration), Germany or Switzerland is not necessarily a PhD in the country of education (enclosed a study case from Germany. See also the case Doctor of Science in Physical Therapy from Oakland University in USA).	No	Yes. When we recognize a qualification we express our recognition in terms of credits (Norwegian credits=studiepoeng), level of education and whether the qualification is comparable/equal to a Norwegian degree (høyskolekandidat or bachelor or master or PhD) i.e. our recognition states how many Norwegian credits the qualification corresponds to.	No.
Do you allot credits in doctoral degree recognition?	A doctorate Degree from Iran (for example Doctor of Business Administration), Germany or Switzerland is not necessarily a PhD in the country of education (enclosed a study case from Germany. See also the case Doctor of Science in Physical Therapy from Oakland University in USA).	No	Yes	No

<p>Does the minimum requirements for admission to higher education influence recognition in your country? (If the minimum requirements for admission to higher education in your country is not satisfied with the secondary school qualification from a country, would that influence your assessment of a degree from the given country? E.g. Do you recognize a 4-year bachelor's degree from the Philippines, as a 4-year degree equivalent to a bachelor's degree in your country.)</p>	<p>Yes Admission to a bachelor's degree in the Philippines is based on 10 years of schooling. Thus, a 4 year bachelor's degree from the Philippines is not comparable to a Danish bachelor's degree. It is comparable to 2 years of a Danish bachelor's degree.</p>	<p>No, the minimum requirement for admission to higher education in another country does not influence the recognition.</p>	<p>Yes the minimum requirements for admission to higher education influences recognition in Norway. E.g. in the case of the Philippines: the minimum requirements for admission to higher education for students with education from the Philippines are secondary school + 2 years of university education. Hence we recognize a 4-year bachelor's degree from the Philippines as a "høyskolekandidat", 2-year of higher education.</p>	<p>Needs to be discussed. Might be the case for some (a few) countries.</p>
<p>Does this apply to doctoral degrees? And to master degrees?</p>	<p>Yes – if the formal admission requirement to a master's degree is a 2-year bachelor's degree, then the master's degree is not comparable in level to a Danish master's degree (kandidatuddannelse).</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>Yes, e.g. A study path from the Philippines with a 4-year bachelor's degree + a 2-year master's degree + a 3-year PhD: we can only recognize 7 years from this path. Our system requires 8 years of study for a B+M+PhD path. So, we won't be able to</p>	<p>Yes, in that case.</p>

			recognize the master and the PhD fully, only partially.	
Do you have specific criteria for doctoral degree recognition which you do not have for degrees in the first or the second cycle?	No	No difference, same principles applied.	Yes, we have extra criteria for recognition as equal to a Norwegian PhD	No (but a thesis is demanded). Or, we have not completed our work with developing criteria for recognition of doctoral programs yet).
What legal form does your evaluation criteria have?	Our evaluation criteria are based on the following ministerial order:  Assessment of Foreign Qualifications etc. Order No. 602 of 25 June 2003	Act on Eligibility Provided by Foreign Higher Education Degrees for Public Posts in Finland 531/1986, Section 5, Criteria for recognising the equivalence of degrees: <i>The equivalence of the level of degrees shall be assessed on the basis of their extent and scope.</i>	Doctoral degree evaluation criteria is a decision adopted by NOKUTs Board.	None.
Do you follow the principle in recognition that the applicant needs a final degree in the previous level to enter the next level? Do you recognize a doctoral degree	Normally yes, even if the formal admission requirement in the country of education is a bachelor's degree(i.e. in Australia for example it is possible to enter a doctoral degree in the basis	We can accept doctoral degrees taken after Bachelor's degree in case this is possible in the country of origin.	Yes, normally we do. We do not recognize a doctoral degree if it comes from a system where the requirement for admission to	Normally.  Yes, for some countries, depending on the systems structure in the country (like the Finnish answer).

<p>that follows a bachelor's degree?</p>	<p>of a research-based Master Degree or a Bachelor Honours Degree (First Class or Second Class, Upper Division) and see case from UK).</p>		<p>doctoral degrees is a bachelor's degree.</p> <p>But we would recognize a doctoral degree if it comes from a system where we normally recognize doctoral degrees, i.e. the system for doctoral degrees is comparable to the Norwegian PhDs, the given doctoral degree satisfies our doctoral degree requirements, but the applicant has a specific path that lacks a master degree. It happens normally with studies in different countries and systems.</p>	
<p>Does your methodology allow recognizing a master's degree although the applicant does not have a bachelor's degree?</p>	<p>Yes - Our assessments focus on a comparison of the learning outcomes (Slutkompetencen) evidenced by the foreign and the Danish qualifications respectively</p>	<p>No, for a positive decision the applicant must have a 1<sup>st</sup> cycle university degree + a 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle university degree, or a continuous Master degree.</p>	<p>As above</p>	<p>Yes, as we look on the level and outcome; if it is placed in the NQF in the country, for example.</p>

<p>How do you recognize Russian <i>Kandidat Nauk</i> doctoral degrees when they follow a 4-year degree, a 5-year degree or 4-year bachelor + 2-year master's degree?</p>	<p>As a Danish PhD - but we have not seen Kandidat Nauk doctoral degree on the background of a 4-years degree yet</p>	<p>A Russian Kandidat Nauk qualification may be recognised as comparable to a postgraduate university Licentiate degree completed in Finland.</p>	<p>We would only recognize a Russian <i>Kandidat Nauk</i> as equivalent to a Norwegian PhD, if it contains minimum 9 years of study (6/4+2+3).</p>	<p>We do not make any difference, and consider them all to be comparable with a Swedish PhD.</p>
<p>Possible outcomes of the assessments</p>				
<p>How is the result of a doctoral degree recognition formulated?</p>	<p>In the assessment letter:  The qualification is comparable in level to a Danish PhD (in Danish: en dansk ph.d.-uddannelse)  Explanation in the cover letter:  PhD degree from LAND is generally assessed to be comparable in level to a Danish PhD degree. Due to the high degree of specialisation of PhD programmes, we do not undertake any comparison of the content of the programme</p>	<p>A higher education qualification completed abroad may be recognised as comparable to a postgraduate university Licentiate / Doctoral degree completed in Finland.</p>	<p>The degree is recognized as equivalent to a Norwegian PhD (180 Norwegian credits)</p>	<p>The qualification corresponds a Swedish x-grade.  Evaluation paper:  The degree is comparable with a Swedish doktorsexamen.  Example commentary: The programme consists of (coursework and) research, finished with a theses, defended in a public dissertation.</p>

	concerned with a particular Danish PhD programme.			Extra explanations might be added in a cover letter.
Do you give partial recognition of doctoral degrees?	No	No	Yes	Yes.
If so, how they are formulated?		N/A	<p>The degree is recognized as 180 Norwegian credits on PhD-level, but no equivalent to a Norwegian PhD. OR</p> <p>Part of the degree can be recognized as master's degree and in addition 60 / 120 Norwegian credits on PhD-level.</p>	<p>For example we express it as studies corresponds with "2 years of studies on the 3rd level".</p> <p>And some extra information in the commentary and cover letter, if needed.</p>
What do you consider substantial difference in recognition of doctoral degrees? In other word, what can be the reason for rejection of a doctoral degree?	Length and content of the programme, i.e. some Iranian, German and Swiss programmes.	<p>We would consider carefully the decision in case</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- there were more than one 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle degrees in the HE qualification</li> </ul>	No standardized scope of program, no requirement of previous master's (or comparable) degree and a different profile (no research requirement, only course) can lead to rejection of the recognition.	If there is no thesis or is not based on scientific research.

		<p>structure in the country of origin, or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- if a statement asked from a Finnish university would not support the positive decision to a doctor's degree.</li> </ul>		
<p>What can be the reason/substantial difference for granting partial recognition of doctoral degrees?</p>	<p>We do not grant partial recognition of doctoral degrees</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>The length, and the structure (no requirement of organized courses) of the program me leads usually to partial recognition.</p>	<p>If there is a lack when it comes to study periods to short, or the dissertation or the thesis.</p> <p>But, as said above, we are not finished with our criteria yet.</p>