

Internal evaluation of the PhD program at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Oslo

June 2022 by Jens Jungblut, Department of Political Science, University of Oslo

Terms of reference for the evaluation of the PhD program

The quality assurance system at the University of Oslo prescribes that PhD programs must be regularly evaluated. This process has two components: First, an internal evaluation, which is then followed by an external panel assessing the quality of the program. This report presents the results of the first step.¹ The internal evaluation has two main objectives: 1.) to describe the status of the program and its seven tracks including considerations about strengths and weaknesses, 2.) suggest areas where there is room for improvement or highlight issues that should be in the focus of the external evaluation. The report has been written by Associate Professor Jens Jungblut at the Department of Political Science with the support from Ida Louise Bellizia and Ingebjørg Hovde at the administration of the Faculty of Social Sciences.

The evaluation should be based on the principles highlighted in the regulation on the assessment of quality in higher education by NOKUT, the national quality assurance agency in Norway.² According to this regulation, quality work in the universities has to be anchored in the institutions strategies and cover all relevant aspects of the institution. Moreover, institutions should create a quality culture across all levels of the organization including both staff and students. Quality work in institutions should be systematic, cover all types of degree programs, collect information systematically from all relevant sources, and use the information to improve quality. The results of quality work should be accessible and form the basis for future strategic development of the organisation.

The internal evaluation has been based on collecting and analyzing different types of data and information about the PhD program. This includes statistical data on present PhD candidates, results from previous evaluations, a survey of PhD candidates who are registered in the program, questionnaires to PhD track leaders, interviews with the PhD program leadership and administrators, a focus group debate with PhD candidates, and documents describing study plans as well as other information about the program. The ambition of this report is not to describe every aspect of the PhD program in comprehensive detail but to present an overview of the most important features and reflect on strengths and weaknesses. The evaluation is anchored in the collection of a plurality of views as perceptions on the program can be expected to differ between groups, tracks etc. Moreover, the PhD program has to be understood in relation to its different environments: The University of Oslo, Norwegian higher education, but also European or global disciplinary communities. These different frames of reference can create tensions and might demand contradicting approaches to PhD education.

Key features of the PhD program

The Faculty of Social Science at the University of Oslo has one PhD program with a common set of PhD regulations and one PhD program plan. The program is structured in seven specializations or tracks representing the different departments and research centers in the faculty: Sociology, human geography, political science, economics, psychology, social anthropology and technology, innovation

¹ See: <https://www.sv.uio.no/forskning/phd/kvalitetssystemet/>

² See: <https://lovdata.no/dokument/SF/forskrift/2017-02-07-137>

and culture (TIK). Each of the specializations has their own study plan, which mainly specifies the course component of the program. The program enrolled between 44 and 82 people each year over the last five years and has a total enrollment in 2022 of 406 candidates.³ The PhD program description specifies overall goals for the program and learning objectives and sets down criteria for admission, structure and size of the course work, the regulations for supervision of candidates and the criteria and procedures for granting the PhD degree at the Faculty.⁴ The Program description specifies that the overall goal of the program is to:

“[...] educate independent researchers of high international standard in Social Sciences, in accordance with recognized scientific and ethical principles. The education shall qualify candidates for research and other work requiring high levels of scientific insight and analytical thinking.”⁵

In accordance with the national qualification framework, set criteria for knowledge, skills and generic abilities have been specified. To meet these demands, the PhD-program requirements specify a set of activities and areas of knowledge and skills that are obligatory for all candidates. The program consists of a course component (usually 30 credit points or one semester of course work) and 2,5 years of independent research. The economics specialization has a requirement of 45 credit points of coursework and a smaller research part. Specifically, the course component of the program must include training in scientific theory/philosophy of science, scientific methods, relevant theory and academic dissemination. There is a total of 10 credit points of courses that candidates from all tracks have to take together and that are offered by the Faculty, the rest of the courses is offered by the different departments or centers. The centrally offered courses include: research ethics, philosophy of social science, introduction to the PhD program, research communication, and international publishing.⁶ In addition, there are voluntary courses offered by the Faculty focusing on academic writing, how to register research projects with the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD), PhD candidates and stress, career planning, and qualitative data analysis in Nvivo.⁷

The number of candidates vary considerably between the tracks (see table 1 below for a breakdown in subject fields), and the specializations are also quite different in how the course component is structured. Economics has, as mentioned, a larger course component (45 credit points) than the other specializations. Psychology has 15 credit points of obligatory courses (of which 10 are the courses offered by the faculty), sociology and human geography have 12 credit points of obligatory courses (incl. the faculty courses), political science has only the 10 credit points of obligatory courses from the faculty the rest PhDs can choose rather freely in the areas of methods and theory, social anthropology has 22 credit points of obligatory courses (incl. the faculty courses), and TIK has 18 credit points of obligatory course work (incl. the faculty courses). Economics is different than the other specializations in that the amount of mandatory course work also depends on the course work that has been taken on the MA level, meaning that the amount of obligatory courses can vary between 24 and 40 credit points.⁸ Obligatory courses are usually a mix of methodology and theory courses, and attendance in seminars and workshops.

The formal responsibility for the PhD program resides in a PhD program council, made up of the PhD leaders from all the tracks, representatives for the PhD candidates and it is led by the vice-dean for

³ 406 candidates still have the right to fulfil their degree (*studierett*) of these 297 candidates have active PhD agreements, meaning they are still in the process of finishing their course component.

⁴ See: <https://www.sv.uio.no/english/research/phd/resources-tools/programme-description.html>

⁵ <https://www.sv.uio.no/english/research/phd/resources-tools/programme-description.html>

⁶ See: <https://www.sv.uio.no/english/research/phd/structure/index.html>

⁷ See: <https://www.sv.uio.no/english/research/phd/structure/requiredfacultycourses.html>

⁸ See: <https://www.sv.uio.no/english/research/phd/structure/OI.html>

research of the faculty. The program council has wide responsibilities for the PhD program including making decisions about the overall development of the program, the study plans for all specializations, regulations of admission to the program, regulation of independent study plans, organization of joint courses and activities, evaluation activities and more.⁹ Each specialization track has a PhD leader who has the main responsibility for the specialization and all PhD candidates in it (and who also serves on the program council), as well as administrative staff. There is also an administrative coordinator at the Faculty, who among other things is the secretary of the program council.

Major changes implemented in the program since the last evaluation in 2016

In response to the last external evaluation report, the faculty undertook five major changes to the program. First, they reformed the common faculty-level courses that are obligatory for all PhDs. In addition to the academic input the PhD candidates will gain from these courses the faculty also wants these courses to be a networking arena for the candidates. In order to facilitate this, the faculty has introduced a part in the “Introduction to the PhD Programme” course where each candidate presents his / her project followed by mingling with coffee and snacks. Most of the other courses include group exercises in order for the PhD candidates to get to know each other and possibly create a cohort / class feeling. Second, the faculty has improved the visibility especially of externally employed PhDs. Previously only PhD candidates employed by the University of Oslo had personal profiles on the UiO website. This has now been changed and the faculty encourages all PhD candidates admitted at the Faculty of Social Sciences to create profiles on the university’s website. Third, the faculty started to offer skills courses. They are offered in connection with the obligatory courses and aimed to provide the candidates with generic skills. These courses are not compulsory and do not grant ECTS. The courses include:

- Academic Writing for Doctoral Students
- PhD candidates and stress (Digital course)
- Career planning workshop
- NVivo – qualitative analysis
- How and why to register your project with the Norwegian centre for research data (NSD)

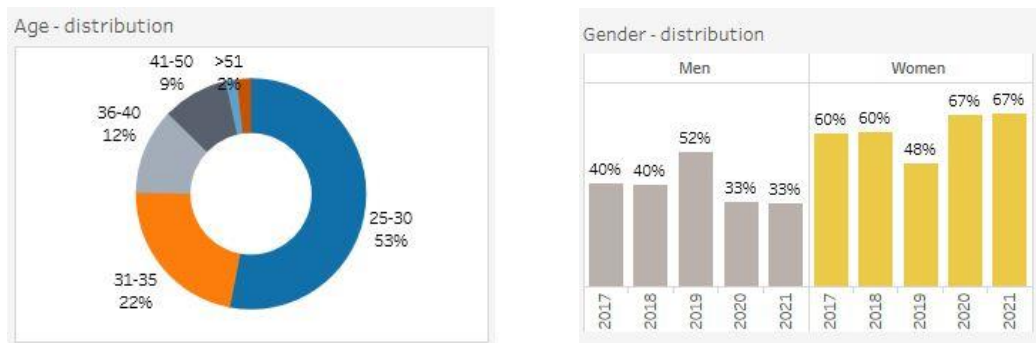
Fourth, in order to provide a cohort / class feeling the faculty has introduced two admission deadlines a year for externally employed PhD candidates. This means that the PhD candidates admitted in the spring will attend the faculty courses the following autumn. It also allows the Departments to hold common introduction days for externally employed PhD candidates if they wish. Fifth, the faculty has introduced a seminar for PhD supervisors at the faculty. The PhD program board made the seminar compulsory for all PhD supervisors at the Faculty of Social Sciences. The seminar runs two times a year, once in Norwegian and once in English. The overall aim of the PhD program has also been made more visible on the web site.

Basic information about candidates, enrollment, and graduation over time

The data describing the PhD candidates has been collected from the administrative register of the university (the FS-system). Figures 1-6 present an overview of some background information of the intake over the last five year.

⁹ See: <https://www.sv.uio.no/forskning/phd/programrad/oppgaver-mandat.html>

Figure 1. Age distribution PhD intake (2017-2021) Figure 2. Gender distribution PhD intake (2017-2021)

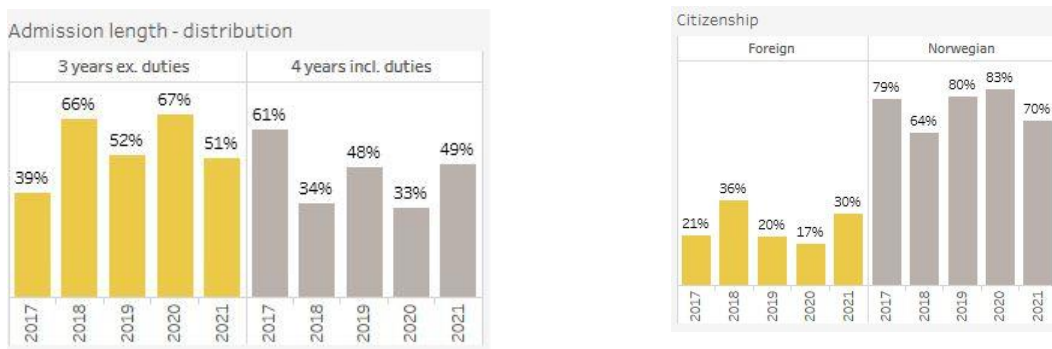


Figures 1 and 2 show that most PhD candidates are 30 years or younger and 75% are 35 or younger. Except for the year 2019, PhD candidates starting at the faculty are overwhelmingly female with the last two cohorts having a 2/3 to 1/3 gender ratio.

While there is some variation over time, most PhD candidates starting at the faculty have a 3-year contract without teaching duties (see figure 3). Those candidates are usually linked to research projects. Candidates with a 4-year contract have teaching duties equivalent to 25% of their time. The fluctuation of the ratio between 3-year and 4-year contracts is most likely linked to varying success in acquiring external research funding. Figure 4 clearly highlights that the overwhelming majority of PhD candidates have Norwegian citizenship and that PhD intake with foreign citizenship is limited.

Figure 3. Admission length PhD intake (2017-2021)

Figure 4. Citizenship PhD intake (2017-2021)



The majority of PhD candidates is funded through external sources such as research funding from the Research Council of Norway (see figure 5). Except for the year 2021, the trend correlates with the data displayed in figure 3 regarding contract length. It seems that in 2021 several of the PhD candidates that are not funded through internal sources also received an extra 4th year of funding through their respective department with the addition of a 25% teaching duty. There are some departments (e.g. Political Science) who often add a fourth year to the three year contracts of externally funded PhDs to provide them with teaching duties (and thus also teaching experience). This can explain some of the variation between figures 3 and 5. Figure 6 displays data on where the PhD candidates obtained their MA degrees. The majority of PhD candidates have gotten their degree from the University of Oslo, and over 70% have received their degree from a Norwegian higher education institution. This data correlates rather well with the data presented in figure 4 and shows again that the faculty mainly trains Norwegians in their PhD program. The large percentage of own graduates among PhD candidates can be explained with the University of Oslo's position in the Norwegian higher education system being the strongest research environment for social sciences and thus also producing many strong MA students.

Figure 5. Funding PhD intake (2017-2021)

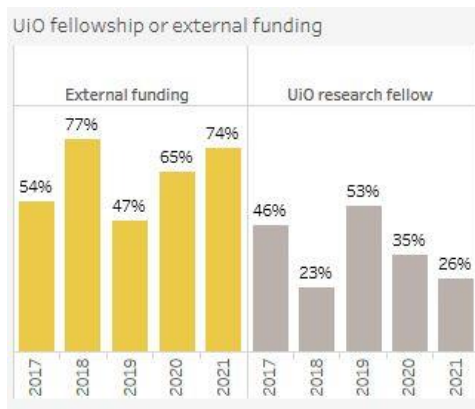


Figure 6. Previous university (MA degree) (2017-2021)

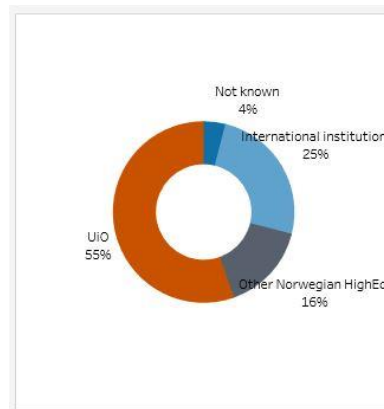


Table 1 provides an overview of the distribution of enrollment across the different tracks of the PhD program throughout the last five years. It is very clear that psychology has by far the highest intake of all tracks and except for political science in 2021, no track even comes close to their numbers. Historically enrollments have been rather stable at around 70 candidates in the years 2007-2012, while the years 2013 and 2014 have seen a downturn to 43 and 47 new enrollments respectively. The last five years have also seen some fluctuation of enrollment and the lower numbers in 2017 and 2019 correlate with a smaller percentage of PhD candidates being funded through external sources, which indicates that this can be explained by less success in acquiring research funding. An additional indicator that a large part of the fluctuation can be explained with varying success in acquiring research funding is that the spike in political science enrollments in 2021 coincides with the start of two ERC projects and several large research projects funded by the Research Council of Norway at the department.

Table 1. Enrollment in the last five years by track of the PhD program

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Sociology & human geography ¹⁰	10	12	7	8	13
Political science	8	6	9	7	21
Economics	10	6	5	4	5
Psychology	21	30	19	38	35
Social anthropology	5	14	2	0	4
TIK	4	9	2	3	4
Total enrollment	58	77	44	64 ¹¹	82

In addition to the yearly enrollment, table 2 presents an overview over all PhD candidates with active PhD agreements per year. This gives an idea of the overall size of the PhD program over the last five years, but as outlined in footnote 2, it needs to be kept in mind that there are more PhD candidates than the ones listed in table 2 who still have the right to finalize their degrees. Thus, the number of PhD candidates in the program is even higher. Overall, table 2 shows that the PhD program at the faculty has a sizable number of candidates in each track ensuring an active academic community.

¹⁰ Sociology and Human Geography are two separated tracks of the PhD program, but both are offered by the same department. Therefore, in some statistics they will be reported jointly.

¹¹ There are four enrollments in 2020 who have been registered under the Faculty and not one of the specific tracks.

Table 2. Total number of PhD candidates with active PhD agreements (see footnote 2) in the last five years by track of PhD program

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Sociology & human geography	65	70	70	65	60
Political science	50	45	50	45	40
Economics	35	35	35	35	35
Psychology	135	135	135	140	140
Social anthropology	20	25	25	25	25
TIK	25	25	25	25	20
Faculty-level	0	0	0	5	5
Total enrollment	335	330	335	335	325

Table 3 unpacks the numbers presented in figure 3 by breaking them up by track of the PhD program. While it is the norm for five of the seven tracks to enroll PhD candidates on a 4-year contract, both TIK and the psychology track use 3-year contracts more often.

Table 3. Percentage of newly enrolled PhD candidates that are on a 4-year contract

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Sociology & human geography	70%	42%	86%	75%	62%
Political science	63%	67%	56%	57%	76%
Economics	100%	83%	100%	100%	60%
Psychology	35%	15%	16%	13%	26%
Social anthropology	80%	29%	50%	n/a	100%
TIK	50%	33%	50%	33%	25%

A specific characteristic of the PhD program is that it not only trains PhD candidates who are employed by the faculty but that it is also open for externally employed candidates. External in this context does not refer to the funding source for the PhD candidate, but rather the place of employment. Thus, internal candidates who have a work contract with the faculty could be either funded from internal funds or external research grants. Contrary to that, externally employed candidates have an employer who is not the Faculty of Social Sciences. This could, for example, be research institutes that are situated in Oslo or centers that are part of the university but not the faculty (e.g. Centre for Development and the Environment - SUM). These employers have to agree that the candidate will be able to work on the thesis as part of her/his work contract and candidates often continue to have their workplace at their respective employer. Thus, they can be less integrated into the day-to-day activities in the different departments. This was one of the issues addressed in the last evaluation of the PhD program in 2016.¹² Table 4 provides an overview of the number and percentage of newly enrolled externally employed PhD candidates. Given the numbers, the issue of integration of externally employed PhD candidates remains a relevant topic for the different tracks. Moreover, since the University of Oslo has the social responsibility to provide PhD training also for candidates who are not employed by the university, there will be continued enrollment. Unfortunately, recent changes in the administrative register of the university (the FS-system) make it harder to get detailed data comparing externally employed and internal candidates (e.g. regarding time to degree), but based on some of

¹² See: <https://www.sv.uio.no/forskning/phd/kvalitetssystemet/dokumenter/external-report-final.pdf>

the feedback from the survey (see below), the question of how to best integrate externally employed candidates is an ongoing challenge that demands continued attention.

Table 4. Number and percentage of newly enrolled externally employed PhD candidates per track

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Sociology & human geography	2 (20%)	5 (42%)	1 (14%)	4 (50%)	2 (15%)
Political science	1 (13%)	4 (66%)	5 (56%)	1 (14%)	9 (38%)
Economics	2 (20%)	3 (50%)	0 (0%)	1 (25%)	2 (33%)
Psychology	16 (80%)	25 (89%)	16 (70%)	17 (46%)	23 (64%)
Social anthropology	2 (40%)	5 (36%)	1 (50%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
TIK	2 (50%)	4 (44%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Looking at dropout and the time it takes PhD candidates to submit their thesis, table 5 displays the average and median time it takes candidates to submit their thesis by the year of submission. For the years 2017-2020 the trend was rather positive with declining average and median times to submission, but theses submitted in 2021 have a higher average and median time until submission. This could still be an effect of the pandemic, but one should have a close look at how this data continues to develop in 2022 and 2023. Generally speaking, it becomes clear though that PhD candidates regularly take longer than the three or four years that their contract provides them funding for. This is especially relevant as there are only very limited possibilities to prolong contracts or provide candidates with additional funding to continue their work after the end of their PhD contracts. At the same time, the time measured in table 5 is “brutto time” meaning that it includes periods of leave (e.g. sick leave or parental leave), which accounts for some part of the additional time. Moreover, the data does not allow to assess the average time to degree separately for externally employed and internal PhD candidates. However, based on the feedback from some track coordinators (see below) and the PhD candidates focus group, it seems that especially externally employed candidates seem to take longer to submit their thesis. More detailed data on this would be helpful to properly identify which PhDs struggle most with timely completion. Finally, it became clear in the focus group debate with the PhD candidates that the pandemic had an adverse effect on the progress of many candidates be it because of limitation regarding data gathering or increased mental or physical health issues. If the faculty wants to ensure that the average time to submission further decreases, it will be necessary to think about possibilities through which pandemic disadvantages can be evened out (e.g. additional support structures, prolonged contracts etc.).

Table 5. Median and average time to thesis submission by year of submission

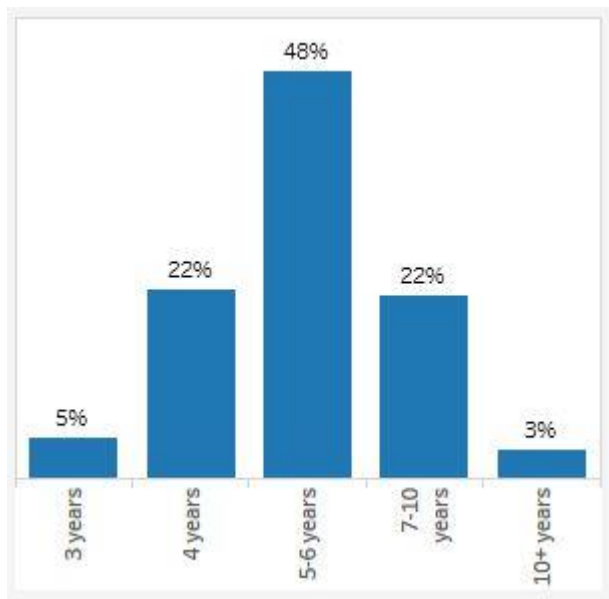
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Average	5.27	5.12	5.03	4.92	5.29
Median	4.67	4.60	4.61	4.41	4.62

Table 6. Dropout of PhD candidates over the last three years

	2020	2021	2022
Active	279	365	404
Dropped out	19	13	7
On leave	2	2	2

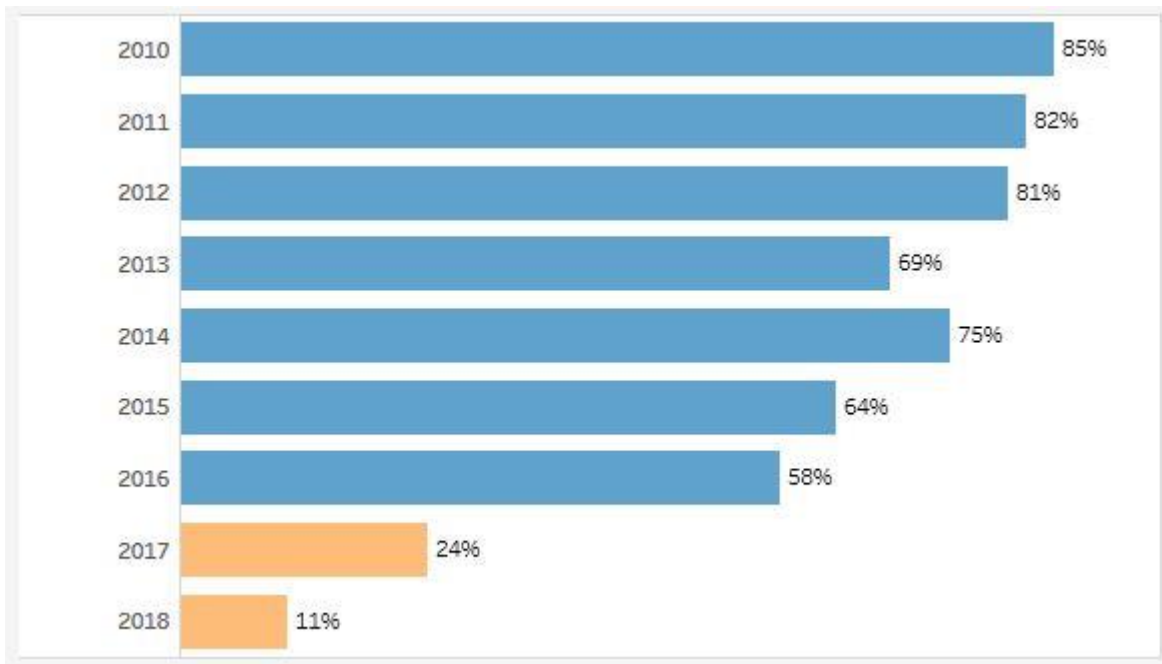
Following up on table 5, figure 7 presents a wider overview of the time to thesis submission for all candidates that started in the program since 2003. This reiterates that it is rather common for candidates to take more than four years to submit their thesis but compared to table 4 it also becomes visible that the numbers for the last five years look much better than what is displayed in figure 7. Compared to other faculties at the University of Oslo, the data from the Faculty of Social Sciences is somewhere in the middle. While the time to submission of the thesis at the Humanities faculty is much lower, PhDs at the Faculty of Education take a bit longer and candidates at the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences submit their thesis a little bit quicker than those in social science (the distributions for these faculties is added at the end of this report).

Figure 7. Time to submission of thesis of all candidates since 2003



Further unpacking completion rates, figure 8 shows the percentage of candidates who finished their degree by start year of the PhD contract. This reiterates the results presented in table 4, that there is a certain percentage of candidates who take more time to finish their degree than what their contracts provide funding for.

Figure 8. Percentage of completed PhD candidates by starting year of their contract



Figures 9 – 11 present more detailed overviews of completion rates by starting year of contract and according to different groupings. Figure 9 shows the completion rate by gender with the orange line representing women. Except for the cohorts starting from 2014-2016 gender differences are rather limited.

Figure 9. Completion of PhD degree by starting year and gender

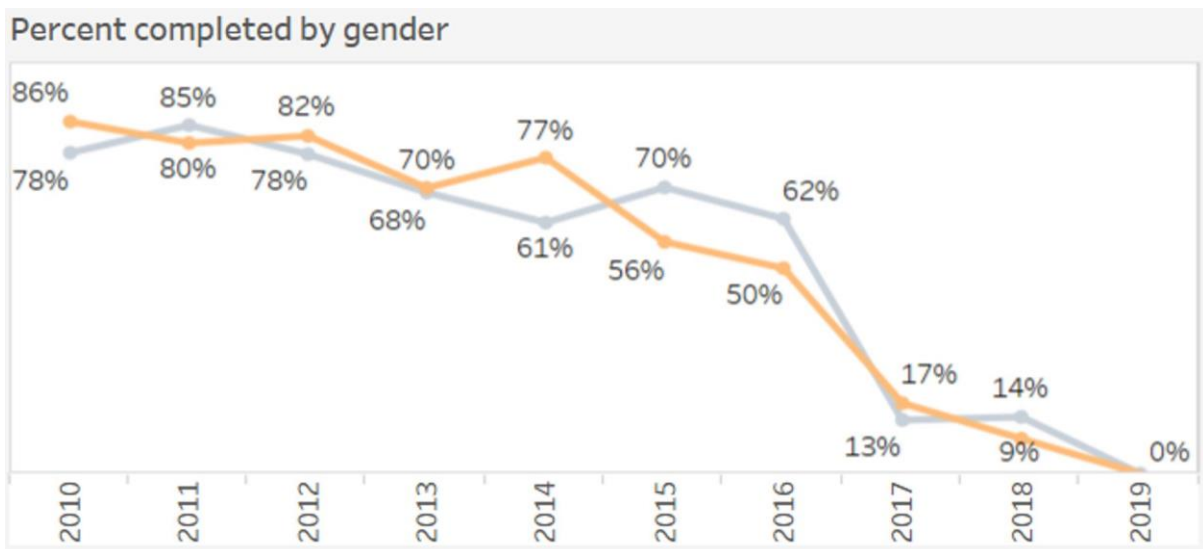


Figure 10 displays completion rates by starting year and contract length with the yellow line representing candidates on a 3-year contract. It seems that candidates on a 4-year contract do slightly better especially in the earlier cohorts, while those on 3-year contracts do a bit better in the most recent cohorts.

Figure 10. Completion of PhD degree by starting year and contract length

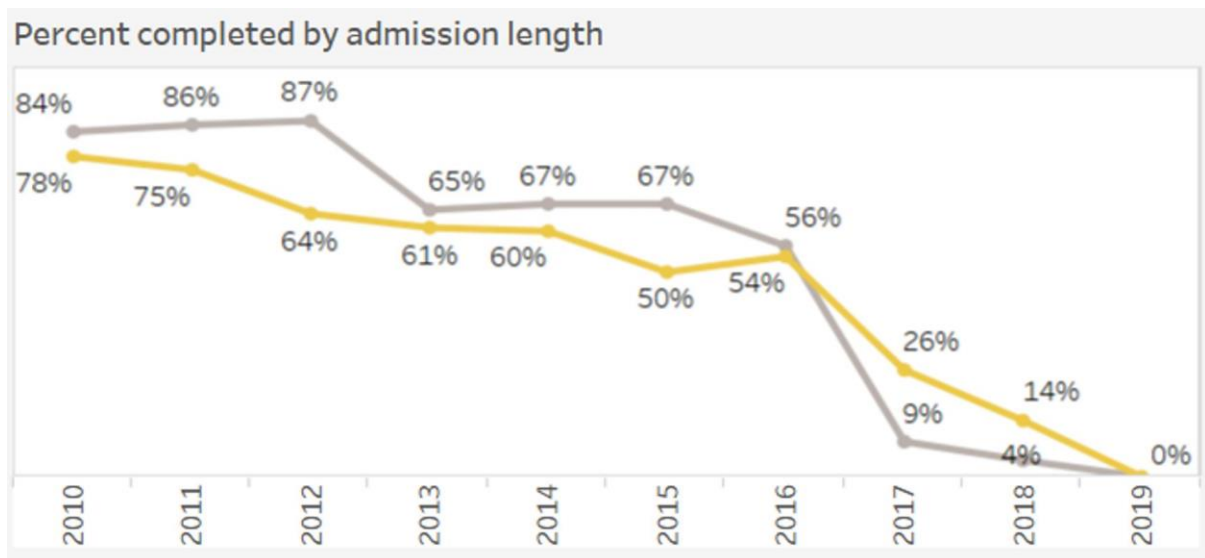
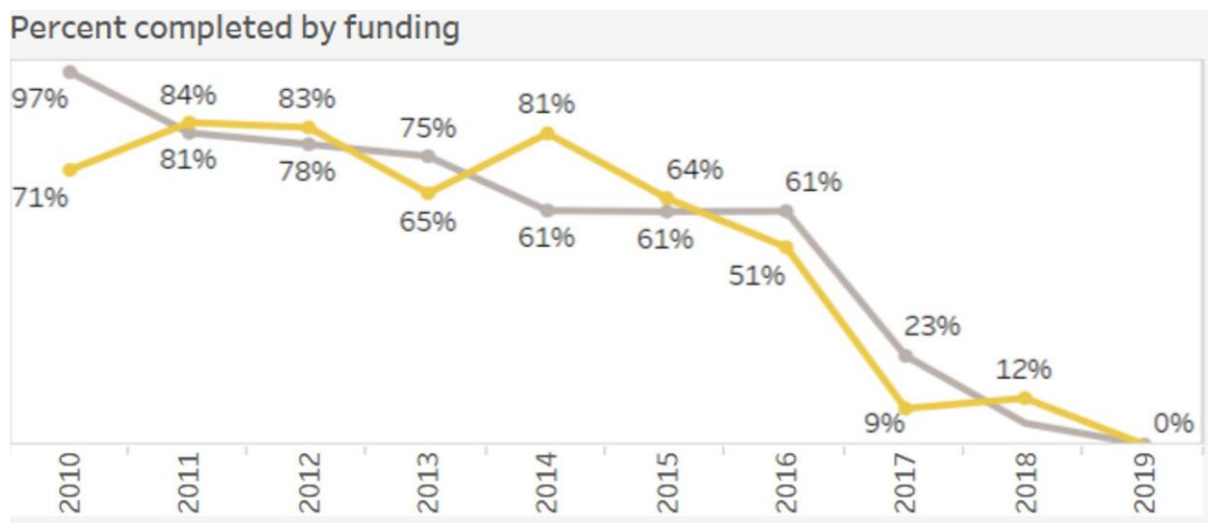


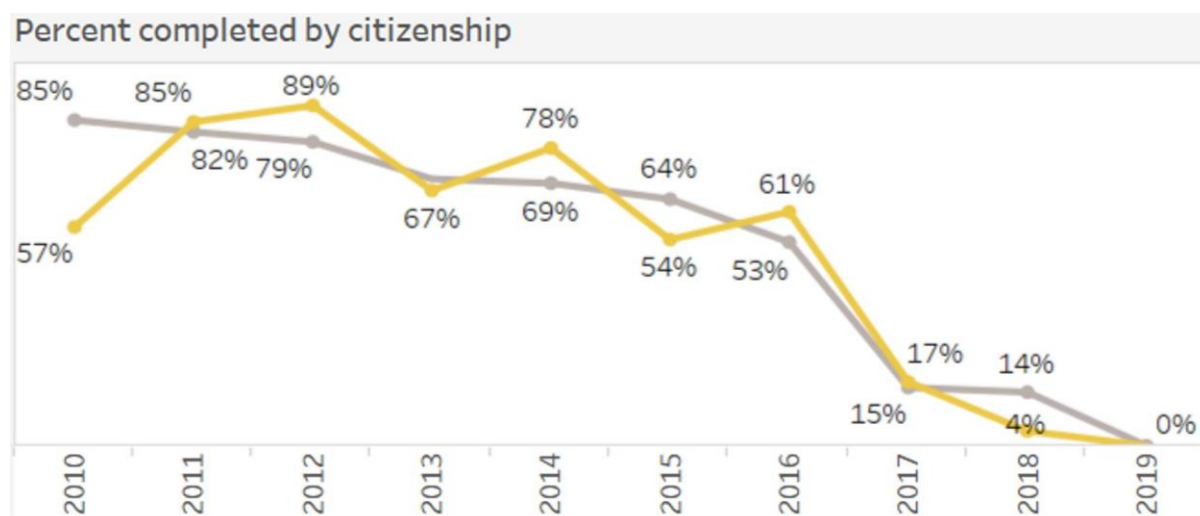
Figure 11 shows completion rates by starting year and funding source with the yellow line representing candidates funded through external sources (e.g. research council projects). For the starting years up to 2015 project-based candidates complete at a higher rate, but for the years 2016 & 2017 internally funded candidates complete at a higher rate. The most recent data shows again project funded candidates completing at a somewhat higher rate.

Figure 11. Completion of PhD degree by starting year and funding source



Finally, figure 12 displays completion rates of PhD candidates by starting year and citizenship with the grey line representing Norwegian candidates. In general, differences between the groups are limited.

Figure 12. Completion of PhD degree by starting year and citizenship



Overall, enrollment in the program has stabilized in the last years after a dip in 2019 and there is a stable intake and a sizable group of PhD candidates in the program as a whole and the different tracks. Variations in intake are to a large extent driven by success in research funding and except for psychology and TIK it is most common for PhD candidates to have 4-year contracts. There are differences in size between the tracks with psychology being by far the largest. The time to complete the PhD degree is longer than the three- or four-year contract length. While average and median time to degree have decreased over the last years, there was a slight increase again in 2021. Factors such as gender, citizenship, contract length or source of funding do not seem to create larger inequalities regarding graduation rates, but there are single cohorts where larger differences exist.

Candidates' experience and satisfaction with the PhD program and central elements of their training

To further illuminate the experience and satisfaction of PhD candidates we conducted a survey that has been sent out in April 2022 to all candidates registered at the faculty. 103 candidates answered the survey. Given the somewhat low response rate the answers have to be treated with some caution as we do not know how representative the sample is. The gender distribution of the respondents as well as their citizenship matches the overall population rather well (60% female, 74% Norwegian). All tracks are represented among the respondents and the relative size matches the enrollments of the tracks. 55% of respondents were internal candidates and 45% externally employed candidates. The questions for the survey have been taken from a similar survey which formed the basis for the 2016 self-evaluation report. Thus, it is possible to compare responses in 2022 with those in 2016.¹³ Thematically the focus of the survey is on the educational component of the PhD program, supervision, access to resources / networks, and international mobility.

Candidates were asked to rate their overall assessment of the taught part of the PhD training. 61.2% stated that the training has either high or medium quality (with 20.4% stating the quality is high). 18.4% stated that the quality of the training is low and 20.4% stated that the quality is varying. In 2016 80% stated that the training quality is medium or high, 13% stated the quality is low and only 8% stated the educational component is of varying quality. This shows a reduction in the overall satisfaction of PhD candidates with the training with a significant increase in the number of people who judge the

¹³ See: <https://www.sv.uio.no/forskning/phd/kvalitetssystemet/dokumenter/04.11-internal-evaluation-of-the-phd-program-at-the-faculty-of-social-science.pdf>

training to be of varying quality. However, the changes to the obligatory courses have only been implemented in the last two years and the survey might still partly measure the (dis-)satisfaction with the previous course design as we don't know when PhDs who answered the survey took their courses.

To further unpack the assessment of the training component, we invited participants in the survey to state their level of agreement to several statements regarding the educational component (see table 7). Also with these responses it should be considered that the faculty implemented some changes in the last two years (e.g. regarding additional skills courses) and that it is not possible to assess whether respondents used these new courses or not. Thus, part of the critique could be remnants of the previous courses.

From the data it seems most PhD candidates would agree that they receive a thorough training in theories of science, research ethics, research dissemination, collaboration in a research group, and that they receive thorough follow-up from their supervisor (the latter aspect will be further unpacked below). In the areas of literature search, research management and theory there still seems to be room for improvement at least based on the respondents of the survey. The assessment regarding teaching experience needs to be qualified to the extent that a part of the respondents is on three-year contracts which do not come with obligatory teaching activities. At the same time, the university pedagogy courses at the University of Oslo are centrally organized by the LINK Center and their introductory course that is the pre-requisite for all their advanced and specialized courses (e.g. on supervision of students) is in very high demand, which creates long waiting times especially for PhDs who (contrary to permanent staff) are not contractually obliged to take this course. In addition, the LINK Center is, for various reasons, running on lower capacity than usual, which exacerbates the situation. If the faculty wants to increase the teaching competence and training for PhDs it might be necessary to create a separate (maybe shorter) course for them (possibly in cooperation with LINK), which could include some pedagogical basic competence and some supervision training and which could be offered as part of the voluntary generic academic skills training. Some form of teaching experience and training can be very important for the future careers of PhDs and therefore not only focusing on research-related skills in the generic skills course will be helpful to train PhDs with a more encompassing profile. Another area where there seems to be room for improvement is the possibility to gain academic contacts in Norway and abroad. This will be a reoccurring theme in the part of the survey addressing international mobility. Finally, PhD candidates do not seem to get a lot of knowledge about alternative careers or collaboration with the private sector.

Table 7. Agreement to statements regarding the educational component of the PhD program¹⁴

	Agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Too early to tell
I have received a thorough training in theories of science	62.2%	25.2%	7.8%	6.8%
I have received a thorough training in theory	43.7%	31.1%	9.7%	15.5%
I have gained insight into questions of research ethics	87.4%	4.8%	5.8%	1.9%
I have gained insight into research management	34%	39.8%	15.5%	10.7%
I have gained insight into project planning	20.4%	49.5%	21.4%	8.7%
I have been trained to do literature searches and use library services	36.9%	38.8%	15.5%	8.7%
I have been trained to disseminate research results	58.2%	17.5%	7.8%	16.5%

¹⁴ Highlighted rows have more than 50% of agreement.

I have gained teaching experience	47.6%	32%	6.8%	13.6%
I have gained experience of collaborating with a research group	55.4%	32%	5.8%	6,8%
I have gained experience of interdisciplinary collaboration	42.7%	35.9%	13.6%	7.8%
I have gained experience of collaborating with the business sector	4.9%	81.5%	1.9%	11.7%
I have gained experience of commercializing / technology transfer of research results	6.8%	71.8%	4.9%	16.5%
I have gained good academic contacts in Norway	48.5%	29.2%	13.6%	8.7%
I have gained good academic contacts abroad	47.6%	30.1%	12.6%	9.7%
I have received thorough follow-up from my supervisor	78.7%	13.6%	6.8%	1%
I have gained knowledge of alternative careers	19.5%	49.6%	18.4%	12.6%

We also suggested several areas in which the faculty could offer additional training and asked PhD candidates in how far they would feel that such training would be relevant for them. Table 8 gives an overview over their responses, and it seems that there is a strong demand for more training in transversal academic skills such as project management, academic writing, communication, or time management. Also courses on starting and completing a PhD are seen as relevant. In an open text field respondents could also suggest additional courses that have not been listed and several respondents expressed the wish for courses on stress management, work-life balance or self-care during the PhD. In addition, others suggested more methods courses, more training on science communication and data visualization, as well as how to deal with administrative tasks and procedures at the University of Oslo. Some of these courses are offered as part of the voluntary courses that the faculty started to provide following the last evaluation, but it seems there might be demand for a further expansion here. Finally, some respondents commented in an open field that several courses that they were interested in have only been offered in Norwegian, while they would have needed an English version of the course. Several respondents used the open answer field to voice rather strong critique of the obligatory philosophy of science course organized by the faculty, an issue that also some of the PhD track coordinators report (see below). However, one has to keep in mind the caveats mentioned above regarding whether candidates took the old or revised version of the courses. One suggestion that came up in the focus group debate regarding his course was to include more group work which would allow PhDs with similar research designs to work together and discuss issues related to philosophy of science in addition to joint overarching lectures.

Another challenge that was highlighted in the focus group is that the deadlines for signing up for courses (both obligatory and voluntary) are perceived to be not flexible enough to allow students who just started to easily join a course that has not started yet but for which the application deadline has passed, which can lead to PhDs having to wait for the next iteration. Moreover, the timing of the courses was highlighted as an issue as PhD courses can collided with teaching creating very high peaks of workload. Having dedicated teaching slots for PhD courses that do not overlap with the regular BA / MA teaching weeks was highlighted as a possible solution. The faulty is already aware of the issue and is working on ways how to improve the situation. Finally, the information flow regarding course offerings and the visibility of the courses offered at different levels or organizational units of the university was highlighted as an issue in the focus group. Suggested solutions included a central course

web site where all voluntary and obligatory courses are collected, a regular newsletter on courses at UiO and the faculty, or more links between the web sites of the different tracks.

Table 8. Relevance of potential courses for PhD candidates

	Relevant	Not relevant	I don't know
Publication skills	93.20%	4.90%	1.90%
Project management	93.20%	3.90%	2.90%
Research management	92.30%	4.90%	2.90%
Academic writing	91.30%	7.80%	1%
Written / oral communication	89.30%	8.70%	1.90%
Completing a PhD	85.50%	7.80%	6.80%
Time management and planning	83.50%	13.60%	2.90%
Research project application writing	83.50%	11.70%	4.90%
Academic supervision	83.50%	12.60%	3.90%
Getting started with a PhD	82.50%	12.60%	4.90%
Efficient literature searches and use of sources	80.60%	14.60%	4.90%
Teaching skills	79.60%	15.50%	4.90%
Career guidance	77.60%	16.50%	5.80%
Language skills including English for academics	71.90%	27.20%	1%
Team collaboration	68.90%	24.30%	6.80%
Job application writing	57.20%	37.90%	4.90%
Entrepreneurship	36.90%	58.30%	4.90%

In the survey we also asked PhD candidates about their supervision and supervisors. There is no rule that candidates need at least two supervisors prescribed in the regulations of the faculty, thus there can be candidates with just one supervisor. The mean number of internal supervisors (meaning supervisors working at the University of Oslo) was 1.41 and the mean number of external supervisors (not employed at the faculty) 0.82. Tables 9a and 9b give an overview of the number of supervisors in both categories. From the data it becomes clear that nearly all have at least one internal supervisor and that many PhD candidates have two or more supervisors. It is also common to have at least one external supervisor, which could be linked to those candidates employed outside of the faculty. Most respondents (53.4%) also stated that they are connected to their main supervisor's research project. This is an increase compared to 2016 when only 40% were connected to their supervisor's project.

Table 9a. Number of internal supervisors per PhD candidate

Number internal supervisors	Number PhD candidates
0	1
1	64
2	33
3	5

Table 9b. Number of external supervisors per PhD candidate

Number external supervisors	Number PhD candidates
0	41
1	45
2	14
3	1
4	2

Most PhD candidates have supervision meetings at least 1-3 times per month and only very few meet their supervisors only once every semester (see table 10). These numbers are very similar to the numbers from the 2016 evaluation, and it seems to be the case that by-and-large candidates receive proper supervision. An assessment that is also backed up by the high agreement with the respective statement in table 7. Along the same line, over 80% of candidates are satisfied with their supervisors (see table 11), which is an increase compared to the 2016 evaluation. However, in the open answer field of the survey some respondents highlighted conflicts with their supervisors and suggested a need for more regulation ensuring a minimal quality / frequency for supervisory meetings and feedback. Moreover, some of the criticism voiced in the open answers of the survey highlights the question whether there should be a rule that each candidate has at least two supervisors, as having more than one supervisor could be an easy way to moderate potential tensions between candidates and supervisors.

Table 10. Frequency of supervision meetings

	Percentage of PhD candidates
Weekly or more frequently	17.5%
1-3 times a month	41.7%
2-5 times every 6 months	37.9%
Once every 6 months or less frequently	2.9%

Table 11. Satisfaction with supervisor

	Percentage of PhD candidates
Yes, to a large extent	56.3%
Yes, to some extent	24.3%
To a certain extent	13.6%
Somewhat dissatisfied	3.9%
Not at all satisfied	1.9%

In the last thematic block of the survey, we asked PhD candidates about their international mobility and in how far they plan to be mobile during their PhD. In line with the earlier finding that there seems to be a need for gaining academic contacts, table 12 highlights that while some PhDs feel involved in the Norwegian research community, only few PhDs feel that they are part of an internationally research community and nearly one third state that they are part of neither a national nor international research community. While this could still be an effect of the pandemic in so far as most conferences did not take place in a physical space, these numbers highlight a challenge as an involvement in an international research community can be important for future careers but also the pre-requisite for international mobility of PhDs.

Table 12. Involvement in research community

	Percentage of PhD candidates
Yes, nationally	41.7%
Yes, internationally	14.6%
Yes, both nationally and internat.	13.6%
No	30.1%

Along these lines, 42.7% of respondents state that they are not planning a longer international travel as part of their PhD program, while 23.3% state that they plan to go for up to 3 months and 23.3% that they plan to go for 3-6 months. Only 9.7% state that they plan to be abroad for more than 6 months. The satisfaction of the respondents with the support and facilitation provided by the Faculty of Social Science for international visits is also not very high. 25.3% of respondents are satisfied, 41.7% are to a certain extent satisfied and 33% are dissatisfied. Most respondents also state that Covid-19 influenced their international travel plans to some extent (53.4%) and only 35.9% state that Covid-19 had no effect at all on their travel plans. Of those who are not considering an international visit during their PhD 58.2% stated that family, children or their partner are an important reason for not going, 53.4% stated that insufficient facilitation by the faculty or the department are an important reason for not going, 48.6% stated that they are afraid going abroad would delay their project, 48.5% indicated that they lack an international network, and 43.7% stated that they do not have sufficient financial support for going abroad.

In the final part of the survey, we asked the respondents to provide a self-assessment of the likelihood that they will deliver their dissertation on time. Table 13 shows that 63% of respondents rate it as likely or somewhat likely that they will deliver on time and only 28.1% rate it as unlikely or have already passed the timeframe of their contract. Of the respondents 42.8% already had a leave of absence (e.g. sick or parental leave), which would prolong their contracts but which could still be a factor explaining why a significant amount of respondents might not deliver their thesis on time. Among the main reasons for a likely delayed submission were factors such as personal health or family issues, but also problems with the dissertation, problems with supervision, workload related to compulsory duties or teaching, and poor training courses.

Table 13. Likelihood of delivering the dissertation on time

	Percentage of PhD candidates
Likely	44.6%
Somewhat likely	18.4%
Unlikely	15.5%
I have already passed the timeframe of my contract	12.6%
I have already submitted within the timeframe of my contract	2.9%
I don't know / I don't want to answer	5.8%

Finally, we also wanted to know how satisfied the respondents were with the overall PhD program. 35% state that they are very satisfied, 49.5% are to a certain degree satisfied and only 15.5% are not satisfied with the program. Thus, it seems that the overall satisfaction with the program is high.

The PhD leaders, the program leadership, and the administration's perspectives

To complement the view of the PhD candidates, we also send out a short survey to the coordinators of the different PhD tracks and had an interview with the vice-dean responsible for research as well as the faculty administration responsible for the PhD program. As it is visible in Table 14 (attached at the end of the report), most PhD coordinators are satisfied with the working of the PhD program. Most tracks have made some changes recently in response to feedback or challenges they identified. Moreover, there seems to be a well-functioning coordination between the faculty and the different tracks and the program committee on the faculty-level that brings together the different coordinators of the tracks is highlighted as an important forum for discussion. Generally speaking, five areas are highlighted regarding room for further improvements.

First, it seems that the relevance of the mandatory courses, especially those organized by the faculty, is still an issue of concern. Some tracks have highlighted the lack of relevance of the approaches used in some of these courses for their PhDs with some stating that there is too much of a focus on issues relevant for specific tracks (e.g. psychology or economics). In addition, several tracks report challenges in creating enough demand for courses geared specifically towards PhD candidates within the track. This seems to be especially relevant for theory courses. Third, several tracks report Covid-19-related challenges. This includes the inability to travel, e.g. to other universities for PhD courses, or to invite external speakers, but also challenges regarding the creation of a fruitful academic and social environment for PhDs. It seems that there is a need to re-establish a strong academic and social environment for PhDs especially for those who started since the start of the pandemic. This was also echoed in the focus group with PhDs where all participants highlighted the need a.) to establish more social ties, but also b.) to implement initiatives that balance out negative effects of the pandemic on PhDs' progress. The fourth area for further development that is highlighted by the track coordinators is the workload of PhDs, partly related to their teaching duties, and the ability to keep track of the workload and potential over-fulfillment of the obligatory duties. Several track coordinators highlight that they see the amount of obligatory work that PhDs on a four-year contract have to deliver as too high and some also point out that it is hard for them as coordinators to keep track of the status-quo of their respective cohort when it comes to this work, especially as they are often not the ones responsible for measuring obligatory work at the departments. This was also highlighted in the focus group with PhDs. They pointed out that sometimes the time allocated to certain teaching activities is not equal to the real workload especially for PhDs who do these tasks for the first time and who won't be able to profit from the time investments as much as senior staff given their shorter contract duration. This can lead to overburdening of PhDs even in situations where all work hours are assessed according to the rules because the de-facto workload differs depending on the level of academic experience / seniority. Finally, several tracks highlighted the challenge that externally employed PhD candidates experience specific difficulties in e.g. accessing some courses or delivering their thesis on time. This has also been a major topic in the 2016 evaluation, and it seems that some challenges in this area are persisting and need continued attention. Maybe more physical meeting points between internal and externally employed candidates (e.g. academic seminars or social events) can be one way to improve inclusion of those PhDs who do not have their place of work at the faculty.

In the interview with the vice-dean and the faculty administration responsible for the PhD program it was highlighted that satisfaction with the program is in general high. Several of the reforms that have been implemented after the last evaluation were emphasized as having a positive effect on the program (e.g. the onboarding seminar). Three overall challenges have been identified in the discussion that the program struggles with, but which are hard if not impossible to solve. First, there is continued debate (as it has been highlighted above) about the quality and relevance of the joint obligatory courses that the faculty organizes for candidates in all the tracks. This has already been an issue in the 2016 evaluation and even after changes have been implemented critical feedback about the relevance of these courses for the candidates remains. It might be that a certain level of frustration about these courses is unavoidable given that they are taking place on the faculty level and also have the aim to create an overarching umbrella across the tracks of the program. In this context, any obligatory course might be seen as a not relevant enough by some candidates at times as it is not closely linked to their specific thesis project. However, this should not mean that the critique should be dismissed but rather that there is a need for continued evaluation and incremental adaptation of the courses (and potentially course content / teachers) to ensure that as many candidates as possible see the courses as relevant.

The second general challenge that was highlighted in the talk with the faculty leadership, which is tightly coupled to the first, is that the PhD program exists in the constant tension between being a unitary Social Science PhD program and having multiple disciplinary tracks that have a high level of autonomy. While this general structure is nothing that the faculty wants to change, it can create challenges at times regarding coordination and how to create a common umbrella across the tracks (as visible in the debate regarding the obligatory PhD courses). In this context, the common obligatory courses create a certain cost both for the individual candidate and the track, but in turn they are a key element in creating the overarching umbrella of a PhD program in Social Sciences that opens for more inter-disciplinary interaction between the candidates. The candidates in the program are also seen to lack the feeling of being a common cohort and while the onboarding seminar has created more of a social meeting space for candidates, there might be an increased need for events that allow for cross-track mingling that help to create a social atmosphere. The tension between the unity of the PhD program and the autonomy of the different tracks also becomes visible regarding the regulations for the PhD program. While there is a common regulation for the entire program, each track has some specific rules to cater to their disciplinary needs. These have somewhat grown over time and created the challenge to keep track of these track-specific regulations and the reasons why they exist. All of this leads to increased rule density and some coordination challenges. In general, the ability of the faculty administration and leadership to instigate change is limited. While they are formally responsible for the PhD program, they rely on the departments and tracks to implement change and cooperate with them in bringing the PhD program to life. The key arena for these debates and for starting change process is the program committee for the PhD program, which has been highlighted as well-functioning and central for all reforms. Moreover, the institutionalization of program committees in the different tracks was highlighted as a good way to create local forums that allow for discussing issues on multiple levels.

The final challenge that has been highlighted and which seems especially hard to overcome is the time it takes candidates to finish their degree. While the numbers have been getting better in the last years, this is seen by the faculty as an ongoing area of concern. At the same time, the faculty only has limited ability to address this problem as it is the tracks and departments who implement the day-to-day workings of the PhD program and the faculty administration is too far removed from the process. Moreover, it is not easy to track the progress of candidates and there are very little early-warning systems that could provide data to spot problems early on. The central statistical data does not

provide information on this, and the yearly progress reports of candidates take place on the department level. Thus, the faculty can mainly be active in providing guidance and support to candidates. One idea could be (as highlighted above) to develop and offer courses on how to finish a PhD, time / project management or similar topics that could help candidates who struggle with progressing their thesis.

Finally, the faculty leadership and administration highlighted four concrete areas in which they would want to be more active in the coming years. First, they want to further improve the onboarding process at the faculty level and facilitate that candidates get the feeling of being social cohort also across tracks. In addition, the inclusion of externally employed candidates remains high on the agenda and needs special attention in the coming years. Second, the obligatory seminars for supervisors at the faculty will be further developed to improve the quality of supervision and work against negative supervisory experiences. Third, the faculty wants to work towards more harmonized and clearer admissions criteria for externally employed PhD candidates to ensure that there is a more common practice across tracks regarding the prerequisites for a candidate to be able to pursue a PhD while being employed externally. Finally, a key challenge that needs concrete improvement is the communication especially between the faculty and the candidates. As some of the survey results have highlighted not all activities of the faculty are widely known among PhDs, which obviously limits the impact of the faculties work. Moreover, the faculty already provides a lot of information (e.g. on its web sites) and it is unclear in how far this is being used (e.g. there are tips for how to structure a first supervision meeting to avoid conflicts later on in the process and clarify expectations).

One issue that came up in the survey was also addressed in the interview with the faculty leadership and administration, namely, how to handle potential conflicts between candidates and supervisors. While these seem to be rare events, when they take place, they seem to have strong effects on the candidates. The key problem is that these conflicts have to be handled locally in the departments and that the faculty's role is mainly one of providing information about processes, rights and obligations, and maybe preventing these conflicts from happening by training supervisors, suggesting a structure for the first supervision meetings, or assuring that each candidate has at least two supervisors. For very serious and legally relevant cases the University of Oslo has the "si fra!" system¹⁵ but everything below that is in the responsibility of the departments to address.

Internal assessment of the program

The PhD program at the Faculty of Social Science is a heterogenous PhD program with seven distinct thematic tracks. The tracks have rather different approaches and needs regarding their PhD training and enrollment / size of the tracks also varies substantially. There is a common set of courses that PhDs need to take no matter the track they are enrolled in, but this common umbrella of training is somewhat limited in size. So, the program is a common program mainly regarding the fact that it has a common regulatory framework, some joint courses, and a common coordination arena (the program council), while the different tracks function partly in an independent way. This balance between independence of the tracks and a common umbrella is the desired structure and with proper coordination between the tracks and the program committee as an arena for the exchange of good-practices and suggestions for future development, it seems to offer a good balance between a common program and disciplinary specificities. However, this structure also creates some frictions which are mainly visible regarding the assessment of the common courses offered by the faculty, and the lack of a communal social feeling among PhD candidates. This assessment of the program must be partly seen in the context of Covid-19 and the effects of the pandemic on the work-life of PhD

¹⁵ See: <https://www.uio.no/om/hms/si-fra/>

candidates and academic institutions. The last years have created some exceptional challenges for everyone involved in the program and some of the effects of the pandemic might still be visible even after lockdown measures have ended. There is a need to closely monitor those areas that have been particularly affected by the pandemic (e.g. time to degree, social work environment, international travels / networks) to make sure that there won't be any lasting effects now that most academic life is back to normal. Moreover, the faculty might want to consider targeted initiatives to balance out negative effects from the pandemic to enable as many PhDs as possible to submit their thesis on time.

The faculty implemented several reforms in response to the previous evaluation in 2016 and most of the changes have been described as positive by the different tracks as well as the faculty and they also seem to respond to the needs of PhDs (e.g. offering generic skills courses). There are some tensions build into the program which are hard if not impossible to solve (see above), and some frustration with particular courses might just be the price to pay for a joint PhD program in social science with very different tracks. However, this should not mean that these areas of tension should not be constantly monitored and activities addressing these tensions should undergo regular incremental improvements to limit the effects of these tensions.

Based on the data presented in this report, it is clear that the program has several strengths. It has a stable (and in some areas even increasing) number of enrollments and most of the fluctuation in enrollments seems to be linked to success in acquiring external funding. Coordination and collaboration among the tracks and track coordinators seem to work well and the cooperation between the faculty and the department seems to function well with the program committee as a central arena for exchange. The assessment of supervision is overall positive and better than in 2016 and it seems the majority of PhD candidates is satisfied with their supervisors and the feedback they receive. Finally, also the overall assessment of the PhD program is positive, and most candidates are satisfied. The same can be said for the overall assessment of the education component of the program, but here the satisfaction is somewhat lower compared to the satisfaction with the overall program.

While the program has many positive aspects, there are also several challenges and areas for further improvement. First, the courses that are offered on the faculty level have been improved following the 2016 evaluation but there is still substantive criticism towards them (especially the philosophy of science course). This might be the result of the ongoing tension between having a PhD program on the faculty level which provides a general social science umbrella and the different thematic tracks with their own disciplinary traditions. Moreover, also the pandemic and teaching some of these courses only digitally could have been a factor. At the same time, several tracks report that they struggle in offering specific theory courses for their PhDs given the sometime small number of candidates per track. Thus, the relevance of the obligatory courses on the faculty level for the different tracks might be one of the areas for future development and further external evaluation. Moreover, ideas on how to enable tracks to offer more theory courses to their PhDs while ensuring enough participants should also be an issue for further evaluation.

Second, the average time to degree of PhD candidates in the program is higher than even the longer four-year contracts. As both respondents to the survey and PhD track coordinators highlight a need for a better monitoring of PhD workload regarding teaching or other obligatory work this is definitely an area that the external evaluation could focus on. Some changes following the 2016 evaluation (e.g. the obligatory introductory seminar to the PhD program) might have already helped addressing this, but there could be other measures that could provide further support to PhDs to ensure a more timely submission of their theses. A special focus in this should be on externally employed PhD candidates who still seem to face challenges of integration into the academic community. Better data on both internal and externally employed PhDs progress could help establish early-warning systems (either on

the faculty or department level) that help to prevent long delays or problems with too high workload (e.g. regarding teaching). Moreover, some adjustments to the timing of PhD courses and an assessment of the de facto workload connected to teaching might help prevent overburdening of PhDs.

Third, besides working on the obligatory courses the faculty started offering generic skills courses. These seem to address a need by the PhD candidates and the results from the survey indicate that this area could even be further expanded, especially given that issues related to alternative careers outside of academia and employability seem to be still somewhat nascent. However, in the focus group PhDs highlighted that the limited demand for this kind of training could also be linked to a lack of awareness by PhDs of the relevance of considerations regarding non-academic careers. Therefore, a more open debate about alternative careers for PhDs could also lead to increased demand for related skills courses. At the same time, it seems that some of the work by the faculty does not arrive with the individual candidates as several have indicated the need for courses which do already exist. Moreover, in the focus group issues related to communication and accessibility of information have been highlighted as key problems. Thus, there is a need to improve the communication between the faculty and the candidates on what is being offered (not only by the faculty but also by UiO centrally or the different departments) and also what kind of information and tips the faculty already provides e.g. through its web sites. Moreover, the generic skills courses could also help addressing the challenges regarding time to degree or the lack of a social community among PhD candidates that have been highlighted above. Finally, a dedicated teaching skills courses as part of the generic skills offering could address the problems PhDs face when trying to access the courses offered by the LINK center. Thus, this area could also profit from an external evaluation to provide input for further development and discuss on which aspect the faculty should focus on.

Finally, it seems that international mobility and developing international networks is a challenge for PhD candidates at the faculty. This is in stark contrast to the self-image of the faculty and its international visibility. This could still be an effect of the pandemic but given the increased importance of international mobility and international research networks in academic careers it might be helpful to include a focus on this aspect in the external evaluation to ensure that there won't be any lasting negative effects and that those who want to be mobile and collaborate internationally will have the chance to do so. Moreover, this could also be an area that is affected by the challenge in communication between the faculty and the candidates as it seems that PhDs are rather dissatisfied with the faculty's facilitation of international mobility.

To sum it up, the PhD program at the Faculty of Social Science is functioning well, has a growing enrollment and is being actively developed following previous evaluations. There are some inherent tensions in the program, but by-and-large it seems that candidates are satisfied with their education and especially supervision seems to work well. There are several areas that demand further attention and evaluation and hopefully the external committee can provide the faculty and the tracks with valuable input on how to further strengthen the PhD education.

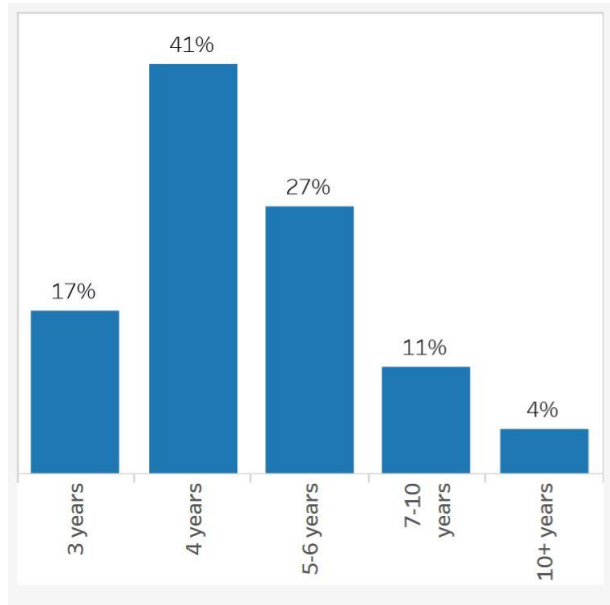
	Economics	Human Geography	Political Science	Psychology	Social Anthropology	Sociology	TIK
Overall assessment of the program	We are satisfied, but more resources would be helpful. Most candidates complete almost on time and have reasonably good access to courses. Our impression is that the joint courses at the level of the faculty can still be improved. They are often not perceived as relevant enough	It is generally well structured and organized and addresses issues of importance to the PhDs. I highly appreciate the 'Programråds'-meetings, with open discussions. I have always got prompt, friendly and useful support from the Faculty's PhD administration	My overall impression is that the program works reasonably well, although we also face some challenges, some of which have existed for a long time	Academically, the program works well. The interaction with SV's joint program works well. The scope of internal PhD is relatively limited, but most candidates manage to find relevant courses externally or through other programs at UiO (e.g. MED).	A fine cohort of candidates. Supervisory resources are good, and candidates are offered courses which include shared theory classes, writing classes, while providing them with the liberty to follow courses offered by other studies at UiO and elsewhere	Overall, the PhD program is good, both in terms of structure and organization. It improved after the revision of the philosophy of science course. Our students still think that this course has a too strong focus on economic and psychological theories	It is a unique interdisciplinary PhD track. It provides both breadth of scholarly inquiry and cutting-edge academic specialization. It has a vibrant and strong research environment.
Key challenges for the track	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resources - Short time-period compared to the US and heavy teaching load to extent to 4 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PhD students have asked for more courses, and we arranged more courses than before the pandemic. It is, however, still a challenge to offer theory courses that can attract a sufficiently number of PhDs. - Another challenge which the Faculty is 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Many students find it challenging to find relevant theory courses. - We have a challenge concerning applications for admission from external departments, particularly departments at UiO. - There has been a drop in the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We are a relatively large track with about 170 candidates, of which about 2/3 are externally employed. This makes it complicated to keep track of progress and capture any 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Time pressures - mainly regarding obligatory work. Find ways of not overburdening candidates at particularly busy times. - Making sure that projects that employ PhD candidates are sustainable with the candidates' obligations to the PhD program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The timing of faculty introduction course makes it difficult for external candidates to take until very late; - Delays, due to the pandemic; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are two challenges: One refers to securing a stable administration for the track; during the past 6 years, 9 different persons have worked as administrator, which caused loss of administrative knowledge; - The second challenge is the delay in empirical

		currently trying to solve is the long time it takes for external PhDs to get access to the introductory course.	number of defended PhDs in 2019/20. However, preliminary numbers for 2021 indicate that that this drop has been temporary	delays or concerns.			research opportunities due to Covid-19.
Key initiatives taken in the last years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Launched a collaboration with BI on a joint research seminar and topic courses. - We have worked to improve information on the course schedule in order to allow the students to plan better ahead. - More systematic work on placement at the international job market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We started a seminar series for PhDs to support the writing process. This was taken over by the PhD students themselves - We have established a PhD board to improve communication between the coordinators and PhDs - In Spring 2022 we arranged a voluntary PhD seminar addressing how to be a PhD at ISS - We have arranged a writing course, which the Faculty has taken over 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhanced resources devoted to the design seminar - Enhanced resources devoted to the trial defense - Quarterly newsletter from the department to the PhD students - A novel requirement that all new students, as a condition for admission, must have at least one internal supervisor - A new annual meeting where all PhD students can voice their opinion about the program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Initiated internal evaluation of the PSI part of the program, focusing on the mandatory series of seminars. - Initiated a “Research Track” in Psychology, which is now in a pilot phase with 8 students. - Strengthened the representation of PhD candidates in our internal PhD committee. - Supported social and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We are in the process of revising our PhD program in response to a stated desire for a more methodologically rigorous and career-development focused program. - To provide all PhD candidates with the skills to research and write a solid PhD thesis on time and gain the skills to pursue a successful career – in academic or elsewhere 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We have formed a PhD board with representatives for both internal and external PhD students and the PhD directors – to improve communication; - We have started to arrange writing courses every semester; - We have started a new, voluntary PhD seminar “How to be a PhD student at ISS”; - We arrange a social evening with pizza for all the PhD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Renewal of TIK’s internal PhD seminars that are offered every semester by TIK; - encouraging diverse formats for TIK’s PhD groups for self-organizing; - running a supervisors’ forum (then replaced by the Faculty seminars on supervision); - more recently: establishing a PhD forum for discussing PhD matters within TIK’s track;

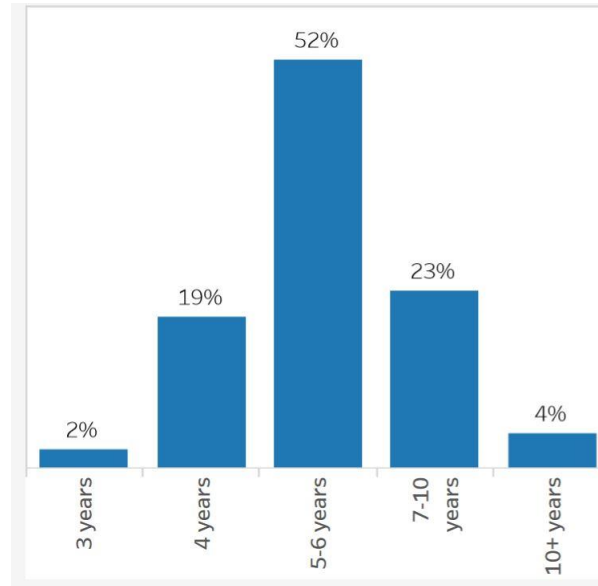
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ISS has developed a language policy to better integrate foreign faculty/staff, PhDs 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> professional initiatives organized by PhDs with both academic and social focuses. - PSI is creating several new method courses, and we would like to work more closely on interdisciplinary (possibly generic) skills courses. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students every semester; 	
Issues that need to be addressed further	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The high teaching load of PhDs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The high teaching load of the PhD students has to be further addressed at both levels (Faculty and Department) - The challenges of delays have to be continuously followed up on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The political science track: The issue of providing relevant theory courses need further attention. - The program as a whole: Several students report that the mandatory courses at the faculty level seem more directed towards students in economics and psychology than towards others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The most important thing will be to strengthen the academic and social integration of the candidates in the program and to further develop the seminar series. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As far as possible we should be planning and structuring intake of internally and externally funded PhD candidates to ensure a common entry date to make more structured training possible. - Further developing publication skills. - Job market preparation – whether in academic or elsewhere 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Faculty intro course must be arranged at a time which enables external PhD students to attend without too much delay; - The workload of PhD students must be addressed. There is a need for a better overview of the workload of PhDs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The track needs to secure continuity in administration; - The PhD program should put emphasis on securing the relevance of mandatory courses. - The PhD program could fund more self-organized academic activities (such as graduate conferences) as part of the program.

Time to submission of the thesis in other faculties at the University of Oslo

Humanities:



Education:



Mathematics & Natural Science:

