



# **DOCTORAL STUDY GUIDE 2025-2027**



University of Lapland, Faculty of Law

## Contents

1	GENERAL INFORMATION .....	3
2	APPLICATION PROCESS .....	4
2.1	Application deadlines .....	4
2.2	Eligibility .....	4
2.2.1	General.....	4
2.2.2	Eligibility of applicants holding a degree in a field other than law.....	5
2.2.3	Eligibility for admission based on a foreign degree.....	5
2.3	Admission, Approval of plans, and Appointment of Supervisor(s).....	5
3	SUPERVISION AND PERSONAL STUDY PLAN .....	6
4	STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF STUDIES.....	7
4.1	General .....	7
4.2	Degree structure .....	7
4.3	Content of Studies.....	8
4.3.1	Mandatory Studies (15 credits) .....	8
4.3.2	Elective studies (15 credits) .....	9
4.4	General credit equivalence table .....	9
4.5	Certificate of a doctor's degree.....	10
5	DOCTORAL DISSERTATION .....	10
5.1	General .....	10
5.2	Preliminary examination and permission to defend the dissertation.....	11
5.2.1	Starting the pre-examination process .....	11
5.2.2	Selecting the pre-examiners.....	12
5.2.3	Pre-examination .....	12
5.3	Public examination and assessment of the dissertation.....	15
5.3.1	Opponent, custos and assessment board .....	15
5.3.2	Public examination .....	15
5.3.3	Assessment .....	15

# 1 GENERAL INFORMATION

The postgraduate degree offered by the Faculty of Law is **Doctor of Laws** (LL.D. or LLD). The students who have been granted a study right to pursue a **Licentiate of Laws** (LL.Lic) before 19 May 2021 must complete their degree by the end of the year 2025. These study guidelines only apply to the Doctor of Laws (LLD) degree. Students currently pursuing the LL.Lic degree must refer to the study guide dated 10 June 2020.

The LLD degree requirements compliant with this study guide (2025–2027) enter into force on 1 January 2025. Doctoral students who have been granted the right to study for an LLD degree before this date may choose whether they complete the degree according to the previous (2022–2024) study guide or whether they transfer into the new LLD degree structure. Doctoral students announce which degree requirements they wish to follow when they request the commencement of the pre-examination process. The right to complete the degree according to the previous (2022–2024) study guide ends on 31 December 2027). Thereafter students transfer into the new degree structure even if the pre-examination process is ongoing or permission for public defence of the dissertation has been granted.

Pursuing an LLD degree at the Faculty of Law comprises supervised research and researcher education based on the student's doctoral study plan (DSP). Completing an LLD degree requires self-management and a considerable amount of independent work on the part of the student. During doctoral studies, the student will participate in researcher training such as seminars and doctoral courses and will write a doctoral dissertation. The studies included in the LLD degree promote the development of independent scientific thinking and the ability to conduct independent research.

According to the Government Decree on University Degrees, the objective of postgraduate degrees is that the student

- becomes profoundly familiar with his/her own field of research and its social significance and gains the knowledge and skills needed to apply scientific research methods independently and critically and to produce new scientific knowledge within his/her field of research
- becomes conversant with the development, basic problems and research methods of his/her own field of research
- gains a knowledge of the general theory of science and other disciplines relating to his/her own field of research that enables monitoring of progress in them.

The Doctor of Laws (LLD) degree is intended for those pursuing a career in research or as a legal expert. The normative time frame for completing a doctoral degree is three years of full-time doctoral study (180 ECTS credits).

## **2 APPLICATION PROCESS**

### **2.1 Application deadlines**

There are two application periods for doctoral degree programmes per year: one in spring and one in autumn. For students who have been granted a doctoral study right in autumn, the study right takes effect as of 1 January. For those who have been granted a doctoral study right in spring, the study right takes effect as of 1 August.

On special grounds, the right to pursue an LLD degree may be granted outside the official application periods.

Applications are to be submitted via the Studyinfo (Opintopolku) portal, which contains more detailed information on the application deadlines.

Before submitting the application, prospective LLD students are advised to discuss the research topic with a professor or university lecturer who is a member of the staff of the Faculty of Law at the University of Lapland. Based on the discussion, it is possible to make a justified proposal concerning the supervisor(s) of the doctoral research.

### **2.2 Eligibility**

#### **2.2.1 General**

The right to pursue an LLD degree may be granted to applicants holding a Licentiate of Laws (LL.Lic.), a Master of Laws (LLM), or a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) degree or, where sufficient grounds can be presented, to an applicant who has completed another university degree in Finland or abroad. Eligibility for admission is presented in detail below.

Applicants must demonstrate that they fulfil the requirements necessary for completing a doctoral degree. The applications are to be addressed to the Faculty of Law and the admission decision is made by the dean.

In their application, the applicants will be required to

- designate the major subject of the doctorate and the research topic
- provide an account of their qualifications for completing the doctorate (a copy of a diploma, a CV, a tentative plan for financing the studies, etc.)
- present a research plan and a doctoral study plan (DSP).

The research plan is the most important component of the application and should be prepared carefully. A good research proposal contains not only an analytical presentation of the research theme but also an account of the methodology and implementation of the research. The research plan must state whether the thesis will be a monograph or an article dissertation.

An application can only be accepted if the Faculty can appoint a person who is suitable for dissertation supervision and willing to take on the task.

### 2.2.2 Eligibility of applicants holding a degree in a field other than law

The doctoral degree in law is based on profound legal expertise. The content of the degree has been planned in view of applicants who hold a basic degree in the field.

Notwithstanding, the right to complete an LLD degree can be granted to an applicant who holds a higher university degree or relevant higher degree from a university of applied sciences in a field other than law if the applicant is deemed to have sufficient capacity for doctoral studies in law. Based on the faculty's deliberation, persons who otherwise have the requisite knowledge and capacity to pursue an LLD may also be eligible for doctoral studies. An application for the right to complete a doctoral degree must include an account of this knowledge and capacity.

### 2.2.3 Eligibility for admission based on a foreign degree

Applicants seeking the right to complete doctoral studies based on a foreign degree must attach to their application a certified copy of their diploma and of all other certificates on which their application is based. If a certificate has been issued in a language other than Finnish, Swedish or English, the application must include an official translation of the document into one of these languages. Under special circumstances, the dean or vice-dean may accept certificates in other languages.

The doctoral-level instruction provided by the Faculty of Law is primarily given in Finnish and English. Applicants seeking the right to pursue doctoral studies based on a foreign degree are required to demonstrate that they are capable of completing the studies in question and that they have a good knowledge of Finnish or English.

The language skills are assessed in accordance with the language proficiency requirements of the University of Lapland or in another manner approved by the dean or vice-dean. Under special circumstances, the dean or vice-dean may decide that good skills or a master's degree in a language other than Finnish, Swedish or English is sufficient to fulfil the language requirement.

## 2.3 Admission, Approval of plans, and Appointment of Supervisor(s)

After an application has been submitted, the applicant will be asked to provide supplementary information, if necessary. Thereafter, the dean or vice-dean decides whether the applicant is granted the right to study.

If the decision is **negative**, the applicant should review the application and resubmit it during the following admission period. A negative admission decision may also be appealed through the procedure described in the Universities Act.

If the decision is **positive**, the dean or vice-dean

- approves the major subject of the degree
- approves the applicant's personal study plan (PSP)
- approves the applicant's research plan

- appoints the supervisor(s).

The dean or vice-dean confirms the proposed supervisor(s), or, if no proposal has been made, appoints a suitable person who has agreed to take on the responsibility. The appointment requires both the supervisor's written commitment to the task and the student's consent to the arrangement.

As a rule, **two supervisors** (a primary and a secondary supervisor) are appointed for a doctoral student. At least one of them must be employed by the University of Lapland. One of the supervisors must be appointed as the primary supervisor. In order to qualify as the primary supervisor, the person must be

- a tenured professor
- a person who has completed a doctorate and works as a professor, or
- an associate professor or docent.

The secondary supervisor can be any suitable expert with a doctoral degree.

In this study guide, a person who has been granted the right to complete the LLD degree is referred to as the *doctoral student*.

### 3 SUPERVISION AND PERSONAL STUDY PLAN

Doctoral students and their supervisor(s) agree on a **personal study plan (PSP)**, which then serves as a collaborative tool between them. The basis for the PSP is the initial study plan that is approved at the beginning of the studies. The student and the supervisor(s) agree on the content and updating of the plan. The PSP must include

- the motivation for and objectives of the student's doctoral studies
- the timetable for completing the degree
- a plan for communication between the student and the supervisor(s).

Students who intend to complete their thesis as an article dissertation must present a plan regarding the thesis as a whole and indicate the topics of the constituent articles.

Supervisory meetings are arranged as follows:

- The frequency of the meetings depends on the doctoral student's need for supervision, but they are arranged at least once per academic term.
- The purpose is to discuss the progress of the student's research, including potential challenges.
- The PSP is updated in each supervisory meeting.

Supervision is arranged in accordance with the faculty's guidelines that are based on recommendations by the university's Teaching and Research Council. The guidelines are distributed to all supervisors and they are available in PDF format on the faculty's web pages.

## 4 STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF STUDIES

### 4.1 General

Completing an LLD degree in the Faculty of Law requires initiative and a considerable amount of independent work on the part of the doctoral student. The doctoral dissertation is a demonstration of the student's ability to independently and critically apply the methods of scientific research and to create new scientific knowledge.

During their studies, doctoral students attend lectures and/or seminars, participate in other education organized by the Faculty or complying with the degree requirements, and write their dissertation. Doctoral education supports the students' academic development and ability to conduct research independently. An additional aim is to prepare the students to work in expert duties in the field of law outside of the university.

### 4.2 Degree structure

1. Mandatory Studies <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Research ethics, 2 cr.</li><li>• Theoretical and methodological questions, 5 cr.</li><li>• Research seminar, 5 cr.</li><li>• Midway review, 3 cr.</li></ul>	15 credits
2. Elective studies	15 credits
4. Doctoral Dissertation	150 credits

## **4.3 Content of Studies**

### **4.3.1 Mandatory Studies (15 credits)**

#### **Objectives**

The aim of the mandatory studies is to help the doctoral student learn how to conduct research independently. The studies focus on theoretical, methodological and ethical questions involved in conducting research.

It is recommended that doctoral students complete the mandatory module at the beginning of their studies, as they provide a basis for the upcoming research.

#### **Requirements**

*Research ethics*, 2 cr.: Completed by participating in courses organised by the Doctoral School of the University of Lapland. The course may also be completed by means of credit transfer based on a corresponding course completed elsewhere or skills acquired otherwise.

*Theoretical and methodological questions*, 5 cr.: Completed by participating in courses organised by the Faculty of Law of the University of Lapland. The course may also be completed by means of credit transfer based on a corresponding course completed elsewhere or skills acquired otherwise.

*Research seminar*, 5 cr.: Completed by participating in a seminar for doctoral students organised annually by the Faculty of Law at the University of Lapland. In the seminar, doctoral students present their own research and produce a written work according to instructions. The course may be completed by taking a corresponding course organised by the Doctoral School of the University of Lapland or by participating in some other legal seminar where the doctoral student presents his or her own research. After the seminar, the student produces a written work according to instructions.

*Midway review*, 3 cr.: Completed by organising a midway review of the doctoral student's dissertation research. An external legal expert in the topic of the research is invited to the review to comment on the manuscript or some part of it. Further information on the midway review is available on the web pages of the Faculty of Law.

#### **Responsible teacher**

Director of the doctoral programme. As regards the midway review, the responsible teacher is the doctoral student's primary supervisor.



### 4.3.2 Elective studies (15 credits)

#### Objectives

The purpose of elective studies is to acquaint doctoral students with academic life and scientific practices. The studies also enable them to delve into the topic of their research.

#### Requirements

You can earn the required 15 credits as follows:

- by completing courses that are specifically offered to doctoral students by the Faculty of Law
- by completing courses organised by the Graduate School or through credit transfer for courses completed elsewhere and aimed specifically at doctoral students
- according to the **general credit equivalence table** by participating in academic activity (seminars, publication, teaching, etc. See section 4.4)
- by completing exams, in which case the content of the exams is to be determined with the primary supervisor. The requirements of a written exam are defined according to the individual needs of each doctoral student. When planning the requirements, the principle is that one credit is commensurate with 200 pages of reading material
- through practice (up to 5 credits). In the implementation of the practice, the description of the course ONVAL9997 Practice is applied where applicable

If you accrue credits for elective studies according to the credit equivalence table, you must personally keep a record of the learning activities based on which you will apply for a credit registration. Do not request credit registration until you have collected all 15 credits. In the request, describe the activities that in your opinion add up to the required number of credits. Having approved the attainments, the primary supervisor contacts the faculty office and requests their entry in the credit record. You may accrue all 15 credits or only part of them using attainments complying with the credit equivalence table.

#### Responsible teacher

The doctoral student's primary supervisor.

### 4.4 General credit equivalence table

Doctoral students may complete all or part of the elective studies by accruing credits according to the table below.

#### Seminars and other forms of attainment

- participation (up to 10 hours) in a seminar, lecture, study circle, etc. and writing a learning diary, 1 credit
- participation (up to 10 hours) in a seminar and your own presentation, 2 credits
- participation (up to 10 hours) in a seminar or a corresponding event, 2 credits

- participation (up to 10 hours) in a seminar and your own presentation, 3 credits
- conducting research abroad, 2 credits per week, up to 10 credits

#### **Articles (up to 8 pages) that *are not* part of the doctoral student's dissertation**

- a non-peer-reviewed scientific article that has been published in an academic journal or an article manuscript deemed ready for publishing by your supervisor, 3 credits
- a peer-reviewed article that has been published in a Finnish academic journal, 5 credits
- a peer-reviewed article that has been published in an international academic journal, 7 credits

### **4.5 Certificate of a doctor's degree**

Apply for the doctor's degree certificate using the form available on the university's website.

## **5 DOCTORAL DISSERTATION**

### **5.1 General**

The most important component of the doctoral degree is the doctoral dissertation (150 ECTS), which can be either a monograph or an article dissertation. The dissertation must demonstrate the author's ability to independently apply scientific research methods, the author's good knowledge of the chosen field, and the author's profound familiarity with the topic of his or her research. Prior to the grading of the doctoral dissertation, the doctoral candidate must defend it publicly.

The recommended length of a monograph is 200 text pages (ca. 100,000 words, including footnotes). The table of contents and the list of references or potential appendixes are not counted as text pages.

Alternatively, the doctoral dissertation may be composed of peer-reviewed scientific articles, the number of which is defined by the faculty. In such cases the following apply:

- The articles must deal with the same problem setting from different perspectives.
- As for quality and the amount of work required, the articles must fulfil the requirements concerning dissertations.
- The recommended number of publications is three, of which at least two articles have been published or approved for publication, in which case the third one may be undergoing the review process in an academic journal or some other publication channel.
- The articles may be co-authored.
- An article is a peer-reviewed text that has been published in an academic journal or an edited compilation. You must strive to publish your articles in established publication channels that are relevant in view of the field your work and considered credible and eminent by the scientific community. A good indication of this is if the publication channel measures up to at least level 1 of the Publication Forum classification.

- You are to write a chapter summarising the articles, presenting a synthesis of the dissertation as a whole. The recommended length of the summary is 50 pages of text. The table of contents and the list of references are not counted as text pages

If the article dissertation contains co-authored articles, you are to deliver to the Faculty Council an account of your contribution to each article and a request to start the pre-examination process. Each co-author must sign this account. You may want to refer to the list below when writing the account. Make sure that you also study the instructions in *Agreeing on Authorship. Recommendation for Research Publications* issued by the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK).

### **Tasks of the authors**

- planning the research setting and conceptualising the phenomenon
- writing a literature review
- forming the research questions
- planning the theoretical and methodological frame
- collecting research material
- analysing the research material
- forming the research results and conclusions
- writing the article
- editing the text
- carrying out the publication process

## **5.2 Preliminary examination and permission to defend the dissertation**

### **5.2.1 Starting the pre-examination process**

The pre-examination process must be set apart from the supervision process. The examination is an external quality control method carried out by the academic community. Its purpose is to ensure that the research fulfils the criteria of scientific research and writing. The process begins as follows:

- 1) The student should first seek approval from the supervisor(s) that the dissertation is ready for examination. Where two or more supervisors have been designated, the primary supervisor typically judges whether the examination may begin.
  - The supervisor has an obligation to make sure that the work fulfils the requirements set for a doctoral dissertation.
  - The supervisor makes sure that the doctoral student runs the manuscript through a plagiarism detection system and thereafter inspects the report.
  - The supervisor is to ensure that the quality of the language in thesis is of the standard required in a doctorate. If necessary, the supervisor must also advise the student to ensure that the language is checked and proofread appropriately.

- 2) Having received approval, the student is to request the supervisor(s) to start negotiating on suitable pre-examiners with the head of administration and other relevant parties. The student is reserved a possibility to comment on the selection.
- 3) The head of administration asks the student to submit a request to the Faculty Council to appoint the pre-examiners for the manuscript. The student must note in the request that (s)he has no objections to appointing the proposed examiners.
- 4) The primary supervisor issues a statement to the Faculty Council recommending that the thesis be examined.
- 5) Having received the request and the statement, the Faculty Council decides on appointing the pre-examiners.

As a rule, the request to appoint the examiners is not be processed until the supervisor's statement has been issued. If the student so insists, the pre-examiners may be appointed even if the primary supervisor has not approved starting the pre-examination. In such cases, the Faculty Council will request a statement on the matter from the supervisor(s).

## 5.2.2 Selecting the pre-examiners

The principal criterion in appointing pre-examiners is to find persons with the requisite expertise for the task. Their common expertise must cover the field(s) of research of the manuscript left for pre-examination.

The pre-examiners must also fulfil the following criteria:

- Only those who have completed a doctoral degree or a foreign degree of comparable standard may act as pre-examiners.
- Both examiners must be members of an institution other than the Faculty of Law at the University of Lapland.
- Interaction between the Finnish and international scientific communities should be promoted in the examination process, and it is therefore recommended that foreign experts act as pre-examiners.
- At least one of the examiners should nevertheless be familiar with Finnish academic practices and the assessment criteria for doctoral dissertations. However, both examiners may be from universities outside Finland if suitable experts cannot be found in Finland or if the engagement of two international pre-examiners can be justified on other grounds.

## 5.2.3 Pre-examination

The pre-examiners' task is to determine whether the manuscript submitted for approval as a doctoral thesis is of the required standard. Each examiner delivers an assessment of the manuscript to the Faculty Council in the form of a written pre-examiner statement. A joint statement is also possible.

In their statement the examiners should discuss **whether and to what extent** the dissertation

- demonstrates knowledge of the field of law and the research topic;

- presents new scientific information;
- is academically convincing and contains justified results;
- demonstrates independent and critical research;
- demonstrates an ability to apply scientific research methods in the field;
- is structured appropriately;
- is delimited appropriately;
- is written in clear, correct, and appropriate language;
- is finalized appropriately; and
- complies with the ethical standards of scientific research.

#### The pre-examiner statement

- must express unambiguously whether or not the manuscript fulfils the criteria for a doctoral dissertation;
- must express unambiguously whether or not the pre-examiner recommends granting permission to publicly defend the thesis; and
- must present grounds for both a positive and a negative statement.

The statement may suggest changes to the manuscript. However, making the suggested corrections cannot be set as a prerequisite for a statement recommending permission to defend the thesis. A pre-examiner statement cannot be conditional.

Comments specifying the statements can be directly presented to the doctoral candidate.

A formal statement on whether or not the pre-examiner recommends granting permission for a public defence is submitted to the Faculty Council for decision making.

The pre-examination statement must be submitted to the Faculty Council within two months from the time that the manuscript was delivered to the pre-examiners. The faculty office must be informed of any delay in submitting the statement. If the pre-examiner statement does not arrive by the deadline, it may be postponed within reasonable limits.

It is forbidden to make any changes to the dissertation manuscript when it is in the pre-examination process.

If the pre-examination results in statements recommending approval, the procedure is as follows:

- 1) The doctoral student must request the Faculty Council to grant permission to defend the dissertation. In the request, the candidate must indicate that the pre-examiner statements recommended permission to proceed to a defence and that the student has no objections to the statements.
- 2) Upon receiving the request, the Faculty Council decides, on the basis of the pre-examiner statements, whether or not to grant permission to defend the thesis. If permission is granted, the student is entitled to defend the manuscript in a public defence.
- 3) Having been granted permission, the student must request the Faculty Council to set the date of the defence and to appoint the opponent, the custos, and an assessment board.

In the same request, the student may request the dissertation to be published in the University of Lapland's Acta electronica Universitatis Lapponiensis series.

- 4) The Faculty Council sets the date of the defence and appoints the opponent(s), the custos and an assessment board, and decides whether the dissertation is accepted for publication in the Acta electronica Universitatis Lapponiensis series.

If the statements contradict each other or fail to specify whether or not the dissertation should be accepted, the Faculty Council may

- request the pre-examiners to specify their statements further;
- obtain a third statement; or
- acquire additional information to support its decision.

If neither statement recommends that permission should be granted to defend your thesis or if either of the examiners does not deliver the statement within the prescribed time and no other arrangement is made, the examination procedure will lapse. In such a case, you may turn to the Faculty Council and request a new examination to be carried out when the changes to the manuscript indicated in the statement rejecting the work or other changes have been made.

You must make sure that the dissertation is publicly distributed before the public examination. Dissertations written at the University of Lapland are primarily published in the university's Acta electronica Universitatis Lapponiensis series as follows:

- Dissertations are mainly published in electronic format as open web publications in ULapland's Lauda platform.
- This form of publication is free of charge for doctoral students, but you may also have printed copies made of your dissertation.
- By the faculty's decision, the dissertation can also be published in print format in the Acta Universitatis Lapponiensis series. The Faculty Council makes a separate decision on the incurred printing expenses.

Furthermore, you may offer the dissertation to be published by some other actor. In this case, you are responsible for the potential publication costs, public distribution, the university copies to be delivered to the faculty.

If the dissertation is only published electronically, the publication platform must be an electronic publication series approved by ULapland, another university or a commercial publisher. The publication practices of this platform must also have clear and publicly accessible rules.

The doctoral student must always submit a specified number of dissertation copies to the university. If you have published the dissertation electronically only, the faculty will let you know the format in which you are to submit the university copies to the faculty before the public examination.

## **5.3 Public examination and assessment of the dissertation**

### **5.3.1 Opponent, custos and assessment board**

The criteria for selecting the opponent to the public examination (defence) are the same as those for selecting the pre-examiners. Normally, one of the pre-examiners is appointed as the opponent. Two opponents may be appointed where necessary. Interaction between the international and domestic scientific communities should be promoted in the assessment of the dissertation. In assessing the academic level of the doctoral dissertation on the basis of the examination and the defence, the criteria used in Finland must be considered.

As a rule, a supervisor of the work or a professor of the academic subject or a related subject is appointed as the custos of the defence.

Unless special reasons exist for proceeding otherwise, the following persons are appointed to the assessment board: the opponent(s), the pre-examiners, the custos, the student's supervisor(s), and the tenured professor of the relevant academic subject at the University of Lapland.

### **5.3.2 Public examination**

The practicalities relating to the public examination of the dissertation are explained in detail on the web pages of the University of Lapland.

The custos opens and closes the public examination. The custos also functions as the chair and makes sure that the doctoral student is allowed an immediate reply to each remark. The custos ensures that the discussion does not deviate too much from the subject. If the examination lasts more than two hours, it is the duty of the custos to announce a break.

The opponent's role in the is to examine the dissertation orally, paying attention to the different themes of the work. At the beginning of the examination, the opponent usually focuses on theoretical, methodological and general questions. This is followed by a more detailed analysis. The public examination of a dissertation may last a maximum of six hours.

### **5.3.3 Assessment**

The custos is in contact with the opponent(s) and attends to the progress of the assessment process. Within six weeks of the defence, the opponent must submit to the Faculty Council a statement either approving or rejecting the dissertation. The opponent must present the grounds for this statement. The assessment criteria are the same as the ones used in the pre-examination.

The assessment board appointed by the Faculty Council makes a proposal either supporting or opposing approval of the doctoral dissertation.

No grade is awarded for an approved doctoral dissertation. If a dissertation is proposed to be approved and can be considered of particular merit, the assessment board may, by presenting the grounds in its statement, propose that the Faculty Council grade the dissertation "approved with distinction".

Before assessing the dissertation, the candidate is reserved an opportunity to reply to the opponent's statement.

Based on the statements, the Faculty Council makes the final decision on the approval of the dissertation.