

# Inspiration for planning of PhD courses

As part of the efforts to ensure PhD courses of high quality and in an attempt to give course organisers inspiration and thus facilitate their work, the board of JurForsk has decided to prepare this brief memo which contains not only a template for description and announcement of the course, but also ideas for how PhD courses *may* be designed and for elements that *may* be part of the courses. Of course, the memo is not exhaustive, and it is important for the board to stress that the organiser alone decides how a PhD course is designed and which elements are to be part of it.

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## 1. Template

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### *Title*

### *Time/place*

### *Purpose*

PhD courses can have various purposes, such as presentation of new knowledge within specific branches of jurisprudence or presentation of general knowledge which is considered a prerequisite for acquisition of the PhD degree. The purpose of a course can also be to generate new knowledge through co-operation, discussion and reflection or through development of competences supporting research. The purpose could also be described with focus on learning targets.

### *Programme*

It will be an advantage, if the programme contains a description of the format of the course, including working form and any involvement of the PhD fellows. Inspiration can be sought in item 2 of the memo.

### *Preparation*

Preparation – as regards both material and form – can be indicated – in preliminary form. Support for considerations concerning material and the preparation by the PhD fellows can be found in item 2 of the memo.

### *ECTS*

The organiser's assessment of ECTS obtainable for participation should be indicated; the final ECTS will be fixed by JurForsk and by the individual PhD school; see also item 2 of this memo.

### *Practical information*

Deadline for registration, any payment, etc. (The JurForsk agreement implies that no course fee will be charged to the PhD fellows, only any payment for food, etc.).

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## 2. Inspiration

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### *Choice of course format:*

The course formats below may be combined, but it should be kept in mind that the course format should be determined by the objective of the course.

#### *Courses with presentations:*

- May be particularly relevant if the material to be communicated is rather comprehensive.
- The disadvantage of this course format is that the PhD fellows generally are not involved, but remain passive listeners.

#### *Courses with facilitated discussions:*

- The courses may be combined with presentations on selected topics.
- The course format creates a framework for involvement of the PhD fellows.
- The use of discussions increases the likelihood of the PhD fellows feeling that they achieve an immediate learning outcome from the course.
- The course format will often require that material for discussion is made available well in advance of the course to enable the PhD fellows to relate the course topics to their projects and thus prepare for the discussions.

#### *Master classes:*

- Experience has shown that master classes work best with a limited number of participants.
- The course format is ideal for focusing on a specific academic area or topic.
- PhD fellows are given a chance to engage in in-depth discussions of their own project and projects on closely related topics.

### *Courses focused on project presentations:*

- This course format is probably most suited for presentations by PhD fellows who have come relatively far with their projects. Other participants in early stages of their projects could certainly derive great benefit from such presentations and the subsequent discussions.
- Courses with this focus are particularly valuable for PhD fellows who are preparing for their defense.
- The course format offers them the chance to receive criticism, the quality of which will necessarily be higher if material on the project can be sent out prior to the course.

### *Involvement of PhD fellows:*

Experience shows that PhD fellows want to be involved in the courses. The 'banking' approach to communication is thus not in demand, but presentations can be combined with elements that ensure PhD fellow involvement.

In the section on course formats, ideas are provided for elements which may contribute to ensuring PhD fellow involvement. Another example are courses where the core element is the writing of an article. This could take the form of a number of courses (e.g. four or five) distributed over a relatively long period of time, e.g. five months. As part of the courses, presentations could be given on topics of relevance to the writing of articles, and the participants' work and experience may be included and discussed. Between the courses, the PhD fellows work on their own articles.

### *Presentations by others than VIPs:*

PhD courses are to be educational in research, which has an impact on the level and on the activities that can be carried out, if the courses are to entitle the participants to ECTS credits for participation. This does not necessarily prevent courses from including presentations from persons who are not employed as academic staff in research institutions. Such presentations are often in demand by PhD fellows and may offer new perspectives on the research work.

### *Course duration:*

The duration of the course must, of course, be determined on the basis of the course content. The overall impression that PhD fellows want to be involved means that time must be allocated for such involvement – and this can often take quite some time. It is also a good idea to describe the element of involvement in the course programme in order to ensure that involvement is prioritized.

It might be worth considering spreading the course over a period of time, with several sessions combined with periods for 'homework', see the example of courses on writing articles.

### *Courses of relevance for foreign PhD fellows:*

The PhD fellows enrolled at Danish institutions include a relatively large number of persons who do not speak and/or understand Danish. In view of the obligation to ensure qualified courses also for these PhD fellows, it should be considered arranging relevant courses in English.

For several reasons, it may be a good idea to advertise a course outside Denmark. For one thing, it contributes to the internationalisation of the research programme, which may increase the number of potential participants. In connection with these course formats, it may be worth organising longer courses (e.g. three to four days), as some participants will probably have to travel far.

### *ECTS credits:*

Pursuant to the Danish PhD Order (Ph.d.-bekendtgørelsen), traditional PhD fellows are required to complete courses corresponding to approx. 30 ECTS credits. For this reason, ECTS values are set for courses offered through JurForsk. In accordance with the applicable rules, the individual institutions are responsible for deciding the number of ECTS credits granted for the individual course. However, for courses offered under the auspices of JurForsk, the course organisers provide their assessment of the ECTS value of their courses, which is subsequently approved by JurForsk prior to the course being offered. The JurForsk institutions have agreed to generally follow the ECTS value determined by JurForsk.

JurForsk has prepared guidelines for setting ECTS values, which are available on JurForsk's website. Course organisers are asked to follow these guidelines with a view to obtaining uniform ECTS values conforming to the generally accepted standards.

### *Payment:*

It is part of the JurForsk co-operation that PhD fellows from the participating institutions will not be charged a fee for participation in a course. Payment for food during the course may be charged. PhD fellows (their institutions) must pay travel and accommodation expenses themselves.

### *Registration:*

The registration for the individual course should take place according to the instructions of the organiser. The organiser chooses how to register and the deadline for registration. JurForsk is not involved in this.

With a view to the planning of a course, it is preferred, of course, that the number of persons who have registered corresponds to those actually in attendance. Experience shows that cancellations can be minimized through an active handling of the registrations. This could be in the form of a personal mail to all who register immediately after their registration, continuous information about the course (particularly, if the course is announced long time before it is held), and a reminder about the course shortly before the course is held (e.g. 1 month). The communication should be combined with the circulation of material concerning the course.

### *Combined courses:*

PhD courses may be combined with academic conferences. If ECTS credits are to be allocated for such courses, however, it must be ensured that the courses are relevant to the research programme. This may be ensured, for instance, by offering PhD fellows the possibility of handing in papers and giving presentations or by facilitating workshops where the PhD fellows can work on relevant topics.

### *Date/time of the course:*

In order to give as many PhD fellows as possible a chance to participate in the course, it is recommended that the organisers examine when other courses are held. This can be done by visiting the JurForsk website at [www.jurforsk.dk](http://www.jurforsk.dk), where all PhD courses in law taking place in Denmark are announced.

**Odense, May 2013**

**The JurForsk Board**