

# Accreditation Report

Doctoral Studies in the Fields of Law and Business

Reykjavik University

Expert Committee Report

April 2009

## Table of Contents

I. Introduction .....	3
I.1 The Expert Committee .....	3
I.2 Terms of Reference .....	3
I.3 Working Method.....	4
I.4 Short evaluation of the work process .....	5
II. Reykjavik University .....	6
III. State of doctoral studies at Reykjavik University .....	7
a. Role and objectives of higher education institutions for organising doctoral studies.....	7
b. Definition of doctoral studies with regard to the National Qualification Framework issued by the Minister of Education. ....	10
c. Title of degree and duration of doctoral study programme.....	12
d. Description of admission requirements and demands for satisfactory preparation. ....	12
e. Description of application procedure.....	13
f. Information about structure of doctoral study administration, including doctorate committee, doctoral defence and qualifications requirements of examiners.....	14
g. Accreditation of the field of study by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. ....	16
h. Supervisors' position within the relevant study field, activity in research and published work. ....	16
i. Information about the structure of research activities and future strategy within the relevant field of study. ....	17
j. Information about relation between undergraduate and graduate study programmes and the number of graduated students at Masters level for the past few years. ....	20
k. Position of the higher education institution within the study and research field and its sub-fields in international comparison. Cooperation with research institutions at national and international level, higher education institutions and companies. ....	21
l. Description of financing of doctoral studies. ....	22
IV. Issues arising .....	23
V. Recommendations .....	24
VI. Signatures of the Accreditation Expert Committee .....	25
Appendix 1: Agenda of site visit of Expert Committee to the Reykjavik University 14 January 2009 .....	26
Appendix 2: List of documents received.....	27

## **I. Introduction**

### ***I.1 The Expert Committee***

Dr. Christian Thune, Past Executive Director of the Danish Evaluation Institute, Denmark  
(chair)

Prof. Dr. Maurice P. Boland, Principal, College of Life Sciences, University College Dublin

Prof. Dr. Raimo Hiltunen, Dean of the Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Helsinki

M.A. Magnus Lyngdal Magnusson, Head of Division for Science and Innovation, The  
Icelandic Centre for Research – RANNIS, Reykjavik, Iceland (Liaison Officer).

### ***I.2 Terms of Reference***

The Expert Committee is appointed according to Article 4 of Rules No. 37 on Doctoral Studies in Higher Education Institutions to provide reference of the ability of higher education institutions to provide Doctorate Degrees. The Committee is to base its reference on the components of Article 3 of the same act. They are:

- a. Role and objectives of higher education institutions for organising doctoral studies.
- b. Definition of doctoral studies with regard to the National Qualification Framework issued by the Minister of Education.
- c. Title of degree and duration of doctoral study programme.
- d. Description of admission requirements and demands for satisfactory preparation.
- e. Description of application procedure.
- f. Information about structure of doctoral study administration, including doctorate committee, doctoral defence and qualifications requirements of examiners.
- g. Accreditation of the field of study by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.
- h. Supervisors' position within the relevant study field, activity in research and published work.
- i. Information about the structure of research activities and future strategy within the relevant field of study.

- j. Information about relation between undergraduate and graduate study programmes and the number of graduated students at Master's level for the past few years.
- k. Position of the higher education institution within the study and research field and its sub-fields in international comparison. Cooperation with research institutions at national and international level, higher education institutions and companies.
- l. Description of financing of doctoral studies.

There were two separate applications from the University of Reykjavik: One from the School of Law and the other from the School of Business. In writing the report the committee noted a section in the application from the School of Law, marked with an "f" that did not fit the contents of Article 3. On closer examination the committee discovered that section "f" is indeed included in the Icelandic version of the rules but is not in the English translation on which it was asked to base its evaluation. Part "f" states: "Information on facilities and theoretical resources, number of teaching staff and their education and experience". The committee decided to address this part of the application under heading "i".

### ***1.3 Working Method***

The Expert Committee received applications and documentation for doctoral programmes at the School of Business and the School of Law on 8 December 2008. The first committee meeting was held on 11 January 2009. The Committee made a site visit to Reykjavik University on 14 January 2008.

The Committee interviewed the Rector, dr. Svafa Gronfeldt and a representative of the board of directors, Dr. Finnur Oddsson, managing director, Iceland Chamber of Commerce for a general discussion of the university's research strategies including the difficulties arising out of the present state of the Icelandic economy.

The Committee had a corresponding interview on research planning and priorities with Dr. Friðrik Már Baldursson, Dean of the Science Council, Dr. Kristján Kristjánsson, Director of Research Services and Dr. Yngvi Björnsson, associate professor, from the Science Council.

The specific application from the School of Business was discussed with Dr. Thorlákur Karlsson, Dean of the School of Business and with Dr. Leifur Geir Hafsteinsson, assistant professor. A parallel discussion on the application from the School of Law took place with Thórður S. Gunnarsson, Dean of the School of Law and two representatives from the Committee for Accrediation Programs, Dr. Oddný Mjöll Arnardóttir, professor and Dr. Guðni Thorlacius Johannesson, assistant professor. Over lunch the Committee had the possibility to consider the future of doctoral programmes with both deans.

Finally the Committee met in two sessions with potential Ph.D. supervisors, Dr. Oddný Mjöll Arnardóttir, professor, Thordís Ingadóttir, associate professor, Dr. Guðrún Gauksdóttir, associate professor, and Dr. Guðmundur Sigurðsson, professor, from the School of Law; Dr. Oddgeir Ágúst Ottesen, member of Research Council of the School of Business, Dr. Valdimar Sigurðsson, assistant professor, and Dr. Vlad Vaiman, associate professor from the School of Business.

In a final concluding session the Committee met again Thórður S. Gunnarsson, Dr. Oddný Mjöll Arnardóttir, Dr. Thorlákur Karlsson, and Dr. Leifur Geir Hafsteinsson.

The Committee considered its conclusions and reported its first impressions to the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture representatives on 15 January 2009. Following the visit, drafts of sections of the report were circulated and the committee agreed on a final version of the report by email correspondence.

The descriptive parts of the final version were sent to the Reykjavik University for a check of factual errors and misinterpretations on 16 March 2009. The Committee received some corrections and made minor changes to sections III.a, III.c, III.g, III.h and III.i. The changes had no bearing on the recommendations.

The Expert Committee was given excellent help by Magnus Lyngdal Magnusson from Rannis in preparing and conducting the visit and most recently during the finalization of this report.

#### ***1.4 Short evaluation of the work process***

The Committee succeeded in combining the application documents and the site visit interviews to provide a satisfactory foundation for its conclusions on accreditations of the two applications from the School of Business and the School of Law. The

documentation was brief and mainly consisted of identification of the rules and other legal documents for the planned doctoral studies. To an extent the Committee was surprised that the Reykjavik University and the two schools had not prepared in a more elaborate and motivated manner for the Committee's review of the applications.

The visit, however, took place in a very forthcoming and friendly atmosphere. The Committee certainly was in no doubt as to the strategic vision or commitment in the strong and well argued statements from the Rector, and similarly the Committee met other staff members, for instance in the School of Law, with an almost enthusiastic attitude towards the prospect of doctoral programmes. In some sessions, though, the Committee met what it considered a rather lackadaisical attitude towards the issues brought up by the Committee.

However, the Committee did succeed in discussing in a constructive manner the potential risks in establishing doctoral studies such as the issue of poor critical mass in terms of available supervisors, scope of research fields, recruitment of Ph.D. students and funding. To this could be added the risk of "inbreeding" in the relatively small doctoral research entities planned.

## **II. Reykjavik University**

Reykjavik University (RU) is a young university. It was first established as a university in 1998, focussing on business, law and computer science. But ten years later it offers studies in within five different schools: School of Health and Education, School of Computer Science, School of Science and Engineering, School of Business and School of Law.

According to the RU website the university focuses on research, excellence in teaching, entrepreneurship, technology development and co-operation with the active business community. The academic programs are also based on internationally recognized models, and are continually under review and improvement.

### **III. State of doctoral studies at Reykjavik University**

*a. Role and objectives of higher education institutions for organising doctoral studies.*

Reykjavik University is a new university with a strong entrepreneurial spirit and a clear ambition in the leadership to set high standards for research, teaching and learning. It follows naturally in the development of the university that it should progress to offer research degrees.

The Rector brought to the Committee's attention her priority on enhanced international cooperation and enhanced research activities through PhD, students and postdoctoral fellows. There is no doubt that a key strength of Icelandic universities recent years has been the capacity to benefit from international cooperation in terms of attracting international scholars to Icelandic universities and to have Icelandic researches and students placed abroad in high ranking universities. This latter dimension has been especially relevant in the context of doctoral studies so that most senior staff at Icelandic universities as an almost universal rule have achieved their PhD abroad. To train doctoral students to best international practice, further development of the RU is considered essential.

It follows that Reykjavik University, like other local universities, argues the strength of its research community by identifying the high proportion of researchers with doctoral degrees from renowned international universities.

There is therefore an element of the slightly paradoxical in the fact that Reykjavik University and others now plead for accreditation of their own doctoral programmes because this opens the question of the job market for eventual local PhD's if the premium would still be on recruiting staff with international PhD's. Another issue in this context is that of potential "inbreeding" in a university system with low staff numbers and a limited tradition of cooperation between related departments in the different universities.

INSERAT

The Rector recognized this as a key challenge, but pointed to the number international staff members (19 percent) and the priority on studies abroad, which would include doctoral students.

The Committee recognized these arguments, and that the proposed doctoral programmes aim to reduce this problem by requiring doctoral students to carry out a part of their doctoral studies outside Iceland. Still the Committee considers the number of planned doctoral students, especially in Law, to be so low as to enhance the issue of negative critical mass.

When the Rector was asked by the Committee about the possibility of enhancing critical mass by cooperation with other local universities, especially the University of Iceland, her response was positive and pointed to the financial crisis as a catalyst for a changed atmosphere for cooperation between universities – at least at the leadership level. As the Rector put it, the times of luxury are over and Icelandic universities have to work closer together. It should be added that at the other extreme in an interview with potential supervisors, the Committee obtained the view that there is no need for research collaboration with the University of Iceland – “International collaboration is more important.”

However, the Committee also noted that Reykjavik University is prepared to place considerable resources behind doctoral programmes. The Rector indicated that Reykjavik University has set aside 1 billion ISK to enhance research activity and 20 million ISK will be allocated to the support of doctoral students. The Rector took a realistic view of the present financial difficulties at the national level, but felt confident that Reykjavik University would be able to sustain its financial planning for research.

### *School of Business*

The role and objectives of doctoral studies at the School of Business are addressed in Article 1 of the School’s rules on doctoral studies. The School of Business emphasizes three main pillars in its activities: research, teaching and ties with the business community. The doctoral programme is intended to strengthen research within the School of Business while at the same time training young scientists for the benefit of the Icelandic economy and securing the status of Reykjavik University as an internationally recognized university. From the interviews during the site visit it became evident that a major objective for setting up doctoral studies is the need to achieve academic credibility with international partners by having in place their own doctoral students.



The Committee focused on the number of doctoral students envisaged in the first phase of operating doctoral studies and received the impression that for the School of Business the ideal would in a longer perspective be that each professor supervise a team of two-three doctoral students each. However, in the short and realistic perspective there is a limitation on the number of supervisors and potential lack of funding is also a decisive factor. The planning range therefore indicates that initially around 5-10 students would be the lower and upper bounds in number of students and that perhaps an equilibrium state of 10 students could be achieved within the next four years.

### *School of Law*

The organization of the doctoral programme at the School of Law is planned as a natural continuation of the development of the School and the University. A doctoral programme should therefore become a natural sequel to studies from a Master's degree by those students who may be interested in a career in research.

The principal objective as stated in the application, however, is to strengthen legal research in general. In the words of the application: "The admission of PhD candidates to the School would stimulate studies in jurisprudence in Iceland in keeping with the University's view of its mission as that of training young scientists to do research work for the benefit of Icelandic society. The development of a PhD programme at RU will also serve to make Iceland an increasingly attractive option for foreign students wishing to study outside their own countries". At the same time it is stated that only a few Icelanders have completed a PhD in Law, but the need is perceived now to be great "both in the rapidly growing university sector and in the industries in general".

A point made in the interviews at the School of Law echoed that of the School of Business namely that the objective for setting up doctoral studies is the need to achieve academic credibility with international partners by having in place their own doctoral students.

In terms of the planned number of doctoral students, the School of Law planning range is for the present a realistic goal of one or two students in the initial phase. The school recognizes that the number (five) of supervisors is a limitation. Further funding is also a limitation. Internal funding at Reykjavik University is available for about two PhD

students in Law, even if there is the possibility for external funding if the doctoral programme is accredited.

The second limiting factor is the number of students that might be interested in joining the doctoral programme. Even if the School of Law will welcome interest from abroad, realism is necessary, not least in terms of local demand. There is not a strong tradition for taking a doctoral degree in Law in Iceland and it is noteworthy that no graduates in Law from the Reykjavík University have yet gone on to doctoral studies abroad. It was also indicated in one of the sessions with representatives from the School of Law that the limited fields covered by supervisors might constitute a problem in itself.

*b. Definition of doctoral studies with regard to the National Qualification Framework issued by the Minister of Education.*

#### *School of Business*

The specifications and substance of the doctoral studies are clearly set out in the supplied documentation on the rules on and in the criteria for doctoral studies in business administration. It is specified that doctoral studies at the School of Business provide students with training in the application of scientific methods in acquiring, using and communicating new knowledge.

The procedural steps indicated in the application and annexes must be considered compliant with university regulations and with international practice.

On the conclusion of doctoral studies, candidates should have acquired the following knowledge and skills:

- General knowledge of all the basic principles of their academic fields and expert knowledge of the specialist field or research field forming the subject of their study.
- Knowledge of the methodology of research in the field and skills in the use of scientific working methods.
- Skills in formulating, planning and carrying out independent academic research.
- Skills in making independent and original contributions to the creation of knowledge in their field.

- Skills in critical analysis and assessment of the subjects of their field.
- Skills in presenting the conclusions of their research and preparing them for publication in peer-reviewed publications.
- Skills in doing scientific work and practical work in areas requiring the use of scientific method.
- Skills in promoting innovation and entrepreneurship in their respective academic or professional areas of work.

These learning goals must be considered in compliance with the National Qualification Framework issued by the Minister of Education.

### *School of Law*

The School of Law presented outlines and description of the planned doctoral studies. This programme description seems fit for purpose and includes a description of the doctoral programme's academic content, its continuity and quality control aspects. The steps planned for the procedure stand as compliant with regulations and comply with international practice.

Accordingly, the Expert Committee considers the substance of doctoral studies as outlined in the programme description for the PhD programme compliant with the rules issued by the Ministry and the Bologna Process.

At the end of doctoral studies, candidates must have acquired the following knowledge and skills:

- General knowledge of and overview over the field of jurisprudence and all the principal fields of law.
- Specialist knowledge of the field or fields of law forming the subject of study.
- Knowledge of the methodology of legal research and mastery of applying the research methods.
- The ability to conceive, design and implement independent academic research in the field of law.

- The ability to make independent and original contributions to the creation of knowledge in the field of law.
- The ability to perform critical analysis and assessment in the context of the subjects of law.
- The ability to communicate the conclusions of research and prepare them for publication in peer-reviewed publications.
- The ability to work within an academic or professional context that requires the application of scientific method.
- The ability to promote innovation and entrepreneurship in their respective academic or professional areas of work.

These learning goals must be considered in compliance with the National Qualification Framework issued by the Minister of Education.

*c. Title of degree and duration of doctoral study programme.*

*School of Business*

The name of the degree will be either PhD in Business Administration or PhD in Economics. The duration of doctoral studies is normally expected to be 3-5 years and the thesis defense must take place no later than six years after enrollment in the doctoral programme. The programme comprises 180 ECTS credits at the minimum.

*School of Law*

The name of the degree is PhD in Law (Philosophiae Doctor) is based on three years of full-time study and corresponds to 180 ECTS credits. The length of study may be expected to be four years if the candidate is concurrently engaged in teaching or other work, but PhD candidates are expected to complete their studies no later than five years after enrolment.

*d. Description of admission requirements and demands for satisfactory preparation.*

*School of Business*

Only students who have completed Master's studies at the university level or comparable studies are permitted to enroll in the doctoral programme. Students who

have completed undergraduate studies at the university level may begin research-related graduate studies for a doctorate degree, but need to have completed studies comparable to a Master's degree before they can formally apply for admission to the doctoral programme.

The Rules on doctoral studies specify and elaborate the necessary qualifications of applicants to be assessed by the Research Council.

#### *School of Law*

A university Master's degree in law or related fields (with an ML or comparable degree) is the basis for admission of a doctoral student at the RU School of Law. Applicants must have demonstrated outstanding performance in their studies and/or work and be viewed as capable of showing initiative in the advancement of scientific or professional knowledge.

If an applicant has not completed a first and a second degree in law (i.e. both a BA and an ML degree in law) or if warranted by special circumstances, the supervisor and the Research Council may require the applicant to complete up to 30 ECTS credits in specified courses in addition to those credits which all doctoral candidates are required to complete as part of their doctoral programme.

#### *e. Description of application procedure.*

##### *School of Business*

Applications shall be submitted to the Dean of the School of Business and may be submitted at any time during the academic year; the School is also permitted to post advertisements for doctoral candidates with a specific application deadline. The Research Council of the School of Business shall assess the qualifications of applicants and submit a written opinion to the Dean. If a student meets the admission requirements, the Research Council shall list the eligible supervisors in its written opinion.

##### *School of Law*

The Research Council evaluates the applicant's qualifications based on the application and additional supplied documentation, and then makes a recommendation to the Dean of the School concerning admission to the doctoral programme. A response to an

application for admission to the doctoral programme shall be made within two months of its submission.

*f. Information about structure of doctoral study administration, including doctorate committee, doctoral defence and qualifications requirements of examiners.*

#### *School of Business*

The School of Business Rules on doctoral studies set out in detail the administration of these studies. Key elements are the following:

The Research Council and the Dean of the School of Business are responsible for the affairs of the doctoral programme at the School. The Dean shall decide on the admission of doctoral candidates with reference to the Research Council's assessment of applications. If accepted into the programme, an applicant shall be assigned a supervisor by the Dean in accordance with the recommendations of the Research Council.

- A supervisor shall have a doctoral degree.
- A supervisor shall have a permanent position as an assistant professor, associate professor or full professor at Reykjavik University.
- It should be ensured that the respective candidate's research pertains to the field of specialization of the supervisor and that the supervisor has published work in the field in recognized academic publications.
- Supervisors shall be active participants in the research community and recognized experts in their respective fields. Assessment of this qualification shall take account of academic publications and the supervisor's experience of international research co-operation and funding of research projects. A doctoral candidate may be assigned more than one supervisor.

A thesis committee shall evaluate a candidate's research plan, determine whether a doctoral thesis is acceptable for defense, and make a final decision on the award of a doctoral degree. In addition to the supervisor, each thesis committee is composed of two other scholars. They are appointed by the Dean on the recommendation of the supervisor and with the approval of the Research Council.

The thesis committee shall submit a reasoned opinion to the Research Council as to whether the candidate should be permitted to submit his or her thesis for defense. A public doctoral defense takes place if the Research Council considers the thesis acceptable for defense. The supervisor shall appoint an examiner with the approval of the Research Council. Following the doctoral defense, the thesis committee shall decide on the award of a doctoral degree on the basis of the thesis, on the one hand, and the candidate's defense, on the other hand.

### *School of Law*

According to the application the School of Law's Research Council has the administrative responsibility for supervising issues relating to the School's doctoral programme and monitoring the quality thereof.

The Dean of the School shall appoint a supervisor for a doctoral candidate on the recommendation of the Research Council. The demanded qualifications for supervisors at the School of Law are parallel to those of the School of Business quoted in the preceding section.

The Dean will appoint a thesis committee (examination committee) for each doctoral student. The role of the thesis committee is to evaluate the final research proposal, provide a reasoned view of whether a doctoral thesis is acceptable for defence, and make a final decision on the award of a doctoral degree. The thesis committee may be assigned other tasks in consultation with the supervisor and the Research Council. The thesis committee shall consist of three scholars who are active participants in the research community and recognised experts in the field of study concerned.

The Expert Committee notes that it is specified that at least one member of the doctoral thesis committee must have completed a doctoral degree. One member of the thesis committee should work outside the School and another should work abroad, if at all possible. A supervisor or supervisors, if more than one, do not sit on the thesis committee.

*g. Accreditation of the field of study by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.*

*School of Business*

On 20 April 2008, Reykjavik University was accredited by the Ministry of Education for teaching in the field of social sciences, which is the field in which the School of Business at Reykjavik University operates.

*School of Law*

The School of Law states in its application that it has not yet received the Ministry of Education's accreditation certificate, but that the accreditation phase is in its final stages as this application is written. However, the Ministry of Education had in fact on 22. April 2008 accredited Reykjavik University in the field of social sciences.

*h. Supervisors' position within the relevant study field, activity in research and published work.*

*School of Business*

At the present time the School of Business employs approximately 120 permanent and part-time teachers, of which 44 are permanent teachers and managers. Of the permanent teachers, 2 are full professors, 11 are associate professors and 16 are assistant professors. At the time of this application, the School is of the opinion that 10 of these teachers are qualified to serve as supervisors in the doctoral programme.

The School of Business has submitted its Research Report for 2008. It is encouraging that the report states that research at the School of Business is progressing in the right direction and that this is clearly indicated by the increase in the number of peer-reviewed articles and the large increase in the number of articles presented at domestic and international conferences. The report concludes that continued attentiveness in appointing staff and the development of the School's research environment will hopefully result in a continuing improvement in the quality of research conducted at the School.

*School of Law*

The School of Law was launched on 22 August 2002. At present the School has 11 permanent academic staff members. Of these, five have PhD degrees and thus qualify as supervisors of doctoral students. It must be noted that one staff member with strong



research credentials is finalising her PhD degree at Helsinki University and will thus in a few years qualify as supervisor. It should also be noted that the School of Law stresses the importance of the many local and foreign part-time teachers with extensive education and experience.

The documentation submitted by the School of Law indicates an indeed small, but very active research environment with good national and international contacts and a satisfying ratio of international publications.

*i. Information about the structure of research activities and future strategy within the relevant field of study.*

#### *School of Business*

The School of Business currently operates three research centers and plans further centers in the near future. The research centers are expected to play a key role in creating a reliable framework around the proposed doctoral programme at the School of Business.

The School's research plan for the period 2005-2010 emphasizes the systematic development of research activities at the School by increasing the number of published articles in high impact, peer-reviewed journals and improving performance in obtaining research funds from competitive funds and the business sector. It also gives special priority to establishing research centers around the School of Business's fields of specialization, as well as offering doctoral studies in at least three fields before 2010.

However, a key point in the research strategy is presented as the preparation and submission of the School's application for doctoral studies. An active doctoral programme is argued as a necessary premise for strengthening research activities to a significant extent in the longer term.

#### *School of Law*

The School of Law Research Council is charged with strengthening research activity within the School of Law in an Icelandic and international context and shaping the School's research policy. It is established School policy to develop robust research activity whose quality is recognised both at home and abroad. In this connection special emphasis is placed on maintaining an operational infrastructure at the School of Law

which will serve to attract researchers of first rank as staff members of the School and guarantee them an open and creative research environment, in addition to which emphasis is placed on active participation in the local and international scientific community, publication of research findings in recognized peer-reviewed publications, and on mobilising students for research work.

In sum, the positive accreditation of a doctoral programme in Law at the School of Law is considered an important factor in the School's future policy formulation in the field of research.

The application lists a number of fields where research is being conducted. The fields identified are: Constitutional law, international law, European law, human rights, legal history, procedural law, commercial law, company law, intellectual property law, private property law, natural resource law, insurance law, tort law, maritime law, administrative law, criminal law, social security law, employment law and health law. The total number of fields indicated are 19, but the PhD programme at the School of Law aims to involve only those fields in which research work at the School is robust and where qualified principal supervisors are available. Accordingly the application identifies three principal areas of research where the research environment and the availability of qualified principal supervisors have reached the maturity to enable the School of Law to offer a quality doctoral programme in those areas. These areas of research are a) constitutional law, international law and human rights, b) legal history and constitutional history and c) social security law, tort law, insurance law and maritime law.

*Facilities and services, number of teachers in the academic field concerned, their education and experience.*

#### *School of Business*

According to the application from the School of Business doctoral candidates will be offered research facilities comparable to those provided to permanent staff members. This includes a work space with a computer, access to all software purchased by the University, as well as access to the Reykjavik University's classrooms and computer halls/laboratories for research purposes. In addition, doctoral candidates have access to the University library and electronic databases.

The application presents research at the School of Business and the allocation and activities of staff members. Research takes place primarily in the two research centers for Innovation and Entrepreneurial Studies and for Human Resource Management respectively, but a number of other fields are included such as economics, finance, international trade, international relations, accounting, marketing and research methodology.

### *School of Law*

The School of Law's application states that doctoral candidates will have the necessary working facilities and will be able to use relevant meetings and conferences, all according to the regulation for doctoral programmes at Reykjavik University. These arrangements include the possibility for doctoral students to spend a part of their term of study at universities abroad. Though the School of Law has no formal partnership arrangements for doctoral studies with other universities, it is confident that it can build on the tradition in the Nordic countries and elsewhere in Europe for courses or seminars given at the doctoral level in any one university, or within a given network of researchers, to be open to doctoral candidates from other universities.

Reykjavik University has a good library access to relevant electronic databases and journal collections in the field of Law.

It must be added that Reykjavik University's new planned building in Vatnsmyri will offer offices for doctoral students in the same areas as the other Law staff members.

The application states that doctoral candidates will "obviously conduct research in the fields of expertise of those staff members of the School of Law who are considered qualified to serve as principal supervisors". As stated above under item I the present number of potential supervisors is five. The Committee notes that the School of Law has as a strategy for the future to increase the number of staff members who qualify as principal supervisors and thereby the number of fields of study where doctoral candidates can be admitted.

*j. Information about relation between undergraduate and graduate study programmes and the number of graduated students at Masters level for the past few years.*

*School of Business*

According to the application from the School of Business a BSc programme for a degree in business administration was organized in the autumn of 1998 which is the year of the founding of Reykjavik University. Since the beginning of the programme 1006 students have earned a BSc degree in business administration from the University, and 668 students are enrolled in the programme as at October 2008.

In 2001, the School of Business offered studies at the Master's level for the first time. Since that time, 352 students have completed Master's studies, and 326 students are enrolled in such studies as at October 2008. The University offers Master's studies in finance (corporate finance and investment management), accounting, international business, in addition to an MBA programme. Students have the option of completing research-related Master's studies in finance, on the one hand, and international business, on the other hand.

The School of Business stresses that every effort will be made to attract candidates with Master's degrees from other universities in Iceland and abroad to the doctoral programme.

*School of Law*

According to the application from the School of Law the school was established in 2002, and by the spring of 2008 the School of Law will have graduated 4 classes of students with BA degrees and two classes with ML degrees. In 2007, 54 students graduated with an ML degree, 50 in 2008 and it is estimated that 52 students will graduate with an ML degree in 2009 (in January and spring, according to additional information from RU). The number of students at the School of Law each year has been about 360.

A Master's programme leading to an ML degree was instituted in the fall of 2005.

Those who complete the Master's programme at the School following an undergraduate BA degree in Law and thus complete at least 240 ECTS credits in legal subjects are considered to have completed a full programme of study in Law and, therefore, to satisfy

the general requirements under Icelandic law for holding positions as judges and advocates.

*k. Position of the higher education institution within the study and research field and its sub-fields in international comparison. Cooperation with research institutions at national and international level, higher education institutions and companies.*

#### *School of Business*

The School of Business considers itself a full participant in the international research community. The application indicates a number of international research projects with participation of staff members from the School of Business and in some cases in a leading role. The research of the two centers is well integrated in international research cooperation. Most staff members have also individual research contacts with international colleagues.

Especially in relation to doctoral programmes a number of relevant international partnerships have been established, for instance partnerships specifically on doctoral studies with Copenhagen Business School and the School of Business at Aarhus University. Under these partnerships the School of Business may accept doctoral students who will pursue their studies at Reykjavik University under the guidance of an assistant supervisor from the School of Business, but with the principal supervisor coming from the partner School of Business, which will also award formally the degree.

Further the School of Business aims to make full use of the tradition for cooperation on doctoral courses among Nordic universities.

#### *School of Law*

The application presents the School of Law as a small university faculty which has been rapidly built up in a short period of time, but with good academic standing and its research environment are good.

The Expert Committee finds this statement credible in the light of the submitted documentation, which gives evidence that all staff members of the School of Law who qualify as principal supervisors are active participants in local, Nordic and international research communities in their respective fields. Further they have extensive connections, both formal and informal, with faculties of Law and other researchers in the Nordic countries, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Canada. The

Committee on the other hand finds it more difficult to judge the validity of the application's statement "that the School of Law's position is fully comparable with that of corresponding foreign schools of law and superior in the Icelandic context".

*1. Description of financing of doctoral studies.*

*School of Business*

As stated in section III.a of this report the School of Business plans for a number of ten doctoral students as the maximum in the start of phase.

The School of Business will carry the financial responsibility for the studies. A minor part of the funding will be the teaching by students as is traditional in research-related graduate studies. Doctoral candidates and supervisors are expected to apply for grants from Icelandic and foreign competitive funds to support the research activities.

Doctoral candidates will not be expected to pay tuition fees. Research funding is addressed in further detail in the description of the School of Business's research environment.

*School of Law*

As stated in section III.a of this report the School of Law plans for a number of two doctoral students as the maximum in the start of phase.

The School of Law is financially responsible for the programme. It is anticipated that doctoral candidates will be invited to teach at the School of Law while pursuing their doctoral studies. In these instances they will not pay tuition fees and their studies will instead be partly financed by their work contributions as is often the case with doctoral studies. It is also anticipated that doctoral candidates will apply for grants to local and foreign competitive funds in support of their research projects, in addition to which doctoral candidates may possibly join in funded projects of teachers at the School of Law. As it was stated by a potential supervisor in Law, she had access to funds (salaries and travel allowances) and important international network, but without the possibility to take on doctoral students that can benefit from this situation.

#### **IV. Issues arising**

The Expert Committee has over all received a positive impression of the strong commitment of Reykjavik University towards establishing doctoral studies at the Schools of Business and Law respectively. A major motivating element in this process is the need seen to keep or advance the standing of research in a national, but not least international perspective.

The Committee does not doubt that many people at Reykjavik University from the Rector and to the two schools have been doing very good work towards making doctoral programmes credible and well founded at this planning stage. However, in some cases we also encountered a somewhat leaned back attitude.

Key issues raised by the Committee in discussions during the site visit were the risk of “inbreeding” and the risk of a too limited critical mass in the doctoral programs.

Concerning “inbreeding” the main response was that the strong international contacts and networks of departments and supervisors opened up a broad research environment, but it was at the same time partly accepted that if the primary supervisor and the students were both recruited from the same departments and some care was necessary.

Concerning critical mass we recognize the quality and international dimension of research undertaken at the two schools; however, in the School of Law the number of qualified supervisors is still very limited.

We did point to the advantages of a closer cooperation between the two schools and relevant research partners in other local universities, not least the University of Iceland. Our understanding is that this form of research cooperation may have better conditions today than only two or three years back, but that there may still be a tendency among some research staff to look at broader cooperation as implying only universities outside Iceland.

The Committee must take special notice of the caution demonstrated by the two schools in setting up goals for the future number of accepted doctoral students. The limitations in terms of available funding and qualified supervisors must be accepted. On the other hand we consider a planned number of one or two students in the initial phase – as is the case in the School of Law – to lack sustainability in terms of creating an acceptable

environment of discovery and personal and professional development for the prospective doctoral students.

The Expert Committee is fully aware that its stated reservations may eventually be less relevant once doctoral programmes are under way and doctoral students are in place at the two schools. The Committee is further aware that in the case of the School of Business and the School of Law applications two years ago had been cut off by the government decision for an accreditation process. Both schools may see the introduction of doctoral studies as having been unnecessarily postponed by the government regulation on accreditation of doctoral studies and expect now full and unconditional accreditation.

However, the Committee considers it in the best interest of Reykjavik University, the School of Business, and the School of Law and not least the incoming doctoral students that the first phase of the doctoral programmes are reviewed after a four year period as the condition for a permanent authorization.

## **V. Recommendations**

The Expert Committee recommends a positive, but conditional, accreditation for a 4-year initial period, so that the PhD programmes at the School of Business and at the School of Law at the end of this period must apply for and be submitted to a re-accreditation process before a final authorization approval is given by the Ministry of Education.



## **VI. Signatures of the Accreditation Expert Committee**

---

Dr. Christian Thune, *Denmark*  
Chairman

---

Prof. Dr. Maurice P. Boland, *Ireland*

---

Prof. Dr. Raimo Hiltunen, *Finland*

## **Appendix 1: Agenda of site visit of Expert Committee to the Reykjavik University 14 January 2009**

- 09:00 – 09:45** Meeting with the Rector and a representative of the Board of Directors
- 09:50 – 10:20** Meeting with the Dean of the Science Council, the director of research services and representative from the Science Council
- 10:20 – 10:30** Coffee break
- 10:30 – 11:30** Meeting with the Dean of the School of Business and a representative from the Committee for Accrediation Programs
- 11:30 – 12:30** Meeting with the Dean of the School of Law and representatives from the Committee for Accrediation Programs
- 12:30 – 13:10** Lunch
- 13:15 – 14:00** Faculty of Law and Graduate Study Council – Scientists – potential Ph.D. advisors
- 14:05 – 14:50** Faculty of Business and Graduate Study Council - Scientists – potential Ph.D. advisors
- 14:55 – 15:30** Wrap up

## **Appendix 2: List of documents received**

### **From the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture**

Higher Education Act 63/2006 (draft translation)

Rules on Doctoral Studies in Higher Education Institutions according to art. 7 of the Higher Education Act no. 63/2006 (draft translation)

### **From the Reykjavik University** (in addition to the separate applications in Law and Business)

#### **School of Law**

- Appendix 1: Reykjavik University regulations on Ph.D. programmes
- Appendix 2: Doctoral studies at the Reykjavik University School of Law, programme description
- Appendix 3: Criteria for the study of law (Ph.D.) at the Reykjavik University School of Law
- Appendix 4: Overview of teachers and other staff members of the School of Law
- Appendix 5: CV's of permanent academic staff members of the School of Law
- Appendix 6: Faculty research reports 2003-2007
- Appendix 7: School of Law's research policy 2006-2008
- Appendix 8: List of electronic databases and journal collections in the field of law open to researchers at RU
- Appendix 9: Description of courses and seminars for ML studies 2008-2010

#### **School of Business**

- Appendix 1: Rules on doctoral studies at the Reykjavik University 2008
- Appendix 2: Rules on doctoral studies at the School of Business at the Reykjavik University 2008
- Appendix 3: Research-plan. Reykjavik University School of Business 2005-2010
- Appendix 4: Research environment at the Reykjavik University School of Business 2008
- Appendix 5: School of Business' Research Report 2007

- Appendix 6: Criteria for doctoral studies at the Reykjavik University School of Business 2008
- Appendix 7: Fridrik Mar Baldursson – CV
- Appendix 8: Gudni Th. Johannesson – CV
- Appendix 9: Jon Ormur Halldorsson – CV
- Appendix 10: Rognvaldur J. Saemundsson – CV
- Appendix 11: Sverrir Olafsson – CV
- Appendix 12: Thorlakur Karlsson – CV
- Appendix 13: Valdimar Sigurdsson – CV
- Appendix 14: Vlad Vaiman – CV