



NTNU

Norwegian University of
Science and Technology

Cross-country cooperation on doctoral education

Experience of the Norwegian University of Science and Technology
(NTNU) with cotutelle supervision

Cotutelle agreement

- Bilateral enrollment at two universities for a specific PhD-candidate
- Joint supervision
- Joint evaluation of dissertation
- Must fulfill formal requirements at both universities
- Degree from both universities

- Some places use the term to primarily describe joint doctoral supervision

Doctoral education in Norway

- Three years full-time study
 - Coursework of 30 ECTS
 - PhD-candidates are not students, most are employed at a university as a PhD research fellow
 - Regulated by Act relating to Universities and University Colleges
 - Each institution has its own PhD-regulations governing the doctoral education in more detail
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- NTNU has nearly 3000 PhD-candidates
 - 429 defences in 2023

Cotutelle agreements at NTNU

Included in Regulations since 04.12.2008

Current Section 25-3 of the PhD-regulations:

The term cotutelle agreement is defined as the joint academic supervision of PhD candidates and cooperation on doctoral training for PhD candidates. A cotutelle agreement is entered into by the institutions in the agreement for each candidate and must be based on stable academic cooperation between the institutions.

Cotutelle agreements cont.

- Requirements:
 - Agreement must cover admission, funding, required coursework, supervision, residency requirements at the institutions, reporting requirements, the language and structure of the thesis, its evaluation, conferral of the degree, the diploma and the intellectual property rights to the results
 - Agreement cannot grant exceptions from the following:
 - Admission qualifications
 - PhD-thesis must be made available to the public
 - Public defence assessed by an impartial evaluation committee (supervisor cannot be involved in assessment)

Experiences from NTNU

- Around 160 cotutelle agreements over the years, most in STEM
- Clear guidelines are no guarantee for straightforward processes
- The university wants cotutelles to build on existing collaborations, but more often the initiative comes from the candidate
- First-time cotutelles take a lot of work from the administrative side
- Evaluation is usually the trickiest part to agree on

Experiences cont.

- Leadership and the administration sometimes consider the cost-benefit of cotutelles to be less beneficial while individual scholars generally appreciate them more
- The agreements are often not finalized until well into the candidate's doctoral period
- Quality control throughout the process can be complicated
- Most faculties and departments generally try to encourage other forms of international collaboration
 - Externally funded projects
 - Co-supervision without degree from both institutions
 - Peer-to-peer collaboration

In conclusion

- International collaboration is valuable and important and can take many forms
- Cotutelle agreements primarily benefit the individual candidate
- Consider what the goal is and then consider what would be the best way to reach that goal