FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME STATUSES OF AALTO UNIVERSITY DOCTORAL CANDIDATES

Doctoral education may be provided in various ways, and the goal of increasing the effectiveness of doctoral education may be pursued by various means. Each Aalto school develops its operations based on its needs in accordance with the Aalto strategy and decides the measures necessary for ensuring the high quality and effectiveness of its doctoral education process. The Aalto University general policy on doctoral education is designed to provide the schools with tools based on the strategic objectives of the university and serves as a foundation for the more detailed codes of practice and guidelines prepared by the schools.

The universities’ practices of doctoral education have not in all respects furthered the efficient completion of doctoral degrees within the normative duration of studies. Aalto University has recognised that to increase the effectiveness of doctoral education and shorten studying times, particular attention needs to be paid to developing the recruitment, supervision and follow-up of doctoral candidates. The successful completion of a doctoral degree is always based on active collaboration between the doctoral candidate, thesis advisor and supervising professor. A working relationship between the supervisor and the candidate supports the smooth progress of studies throughout the process.

The Aalto University strategy directs the university operations towards supporting full-time doctoral education. The strategy states that doctoral education will be organised into educational programmes leading to a doctoral degree within a specified time period. Additionally, the strategy mentions that new funding mechanisms will be developed in order to allow the majority of doctoral students to carry out systematic and full-time studies.

On the other hand, Finnish legislation has granted those in doctoral education the right to pursue the degree for an unlimited period of time, which has contributed to a situation where universities have a notable number of doctoral students who do not pursue any studies. The wide range of personal goals and varying activeness in studying of the currently enrolled doctoral students complicates the systematic planning and execution of doctoral education. In addition, the discrepancy between the great number of doctoral students enrolled and those earning a degree leads to a distorted view of the effectiveness of the doctoral education of the university.

The classification of doctoral students into full-time or part-time students helps to highlight the four-year normative duration of studies for the doctoral degree and emphasises the importance of supervision and goal orientation for the completion of the doctoral studies.

The number of full-time students will then indicate the true volume of doctoral education, thus making its results more easily verifiable and also internationally comparable. The identification of full-time doctoral students allows the university to develop doctoral education as activities and resources may be allocated increasingly to those actively pursuing a doctoral degree.

PROPOSAL:

The doctoral students admitted to Aalto University are classified either as full-time or part-time students. The study plan of full-time doctoral students is prepared so as to allow the completion of the degree
in four years. Those working as their main occupation may be classified as full-time students if they devote at least 80% of the working time to the doctoral studies.

Students cannot change their full-time or part-time status independently. Students whose activeness in studying changes may apply for a change of student status by submitting a justified application to the school.

The decision on the change of student status is made by the doctoral programme committee or a similar body.

Full-time doctoral students who have not earned their degree within five years of the start of their studies are requested to submit a written account of their situation and their supervising professor are requested to provide a statement on the progress of studies; as necessary, the students are asked to prepare new research and study plans, based on which the doctoral programme committee or similar body will make the decision regarding the full/part time student status in accordance with the university policy. A written account is not, however, requested if the examination of the doctoral dissertation is already underway. Students who do not submit the requested details by the deadline set by the school will be assigned part-time student status by the school.

The decision is made taking into consideration, e.g. any maternity, paternity or parental leaves taken as well as conscription/non-military service.

After 5 years of studies, full-time doctoral students are annually requested to submit a written account of their situation and their supervising professors are asked to provide statements on the progress of studies; as necessary, the students are asked to prepare a new research and study plan, based on which the doctoral programme committee or similar body will make the decision regarding the full/part time student status in accordance with the university policy. Students who do not submit the requested details by the deadline set by the school will be assigned part-time student status by the school.

As necessary, the school may revise the full-time/part-time status of the student even before the five-year deadline and also issue further guidelines on full-time or part-time student status.

The schools communicate this decision to all the doctoral students currently enrolled at the university.

This policy enters into force on 1 January 2013.

**Transitional provisions:**

The doctoral students currently enrolled are classified as either full-time or part-time students in accordance with this guideline. The schools will ask full-time doctoral students who have studied for more than five years to provide a written account and their supervising professor to provide a statement on the progress of studies, and as necessary, an updated study and research plan by the student. The decision on the change of student status is made by doctoral programme committee or a similar body in accordance with the university policy. Students who do not submit the requested details by the deadline set by the school will be assigned part-time student status by the school. The schools will review the full-time/part-time statuses of the currently enrolled doctoral students who have studied for more than five years by 1 October 2013.