



*Is it possible to be a doctoral student at several
doctoral schools at the same time?*



As stated in Article 200 paragraph 7 of the Law on Higher Education and Science (consolidated text: Journal of Laws of 2023, item 742, as amended), one can only be a doctoral student at one doctoral school at a time. The legislator has included in the current legislation an absolute prohibition on training in several doctoral schools at the same time. Therefore, it is not possible to simultaneously pursue education in two separate scientific disciplines, such as chemical sciences and biological sciences or legal sciences and sociological sciences, at different doctoral schools.

A doctoral student who prepares dissertation at a particular doctoral school must be aware that it is possible to restart education at the doctoral school only after losing doctoral status (e.g. as a result of graduation or withdrawal from education). It should be noted, however, that the total duration of a doctoral scholarship at a doctoral school cannot exceed four years, which follows directly from Article 209 paragraph 2 of the Law on Higher Education and Science. This means that if a person received a doctoral stipend at a doctoral school for 4 years and then wishes to start education at the another doctoral school, doctoral student will no longer be entitled to the said benefit. On the other hand, in the case where doctoral student resigned from education at a particular doctoral school after two years, re-entry into education at the doctoral school reinitiation of education at the same or another doctoral school will entail the possibility of receiving a doctoral stipend for two more years. Of course, it should be remembered at the same time that, in accordance with Article 209 paragraph 1 of the PSWiN, a doctoral scholarship is only awarded to a doctoral student who does not hold a doctoral degree.

The rule expressed in Article 200 paragraph 7 of the Law on Higher Education and Science did not apply in the earlier legislation covering higher education and science. Third-degree doctoral students could prepare several dissertations in different disciplines as part of concurrent doctoral studies thus pursuing multiple educational programs. It seems that the elimination of such a possibility in the new model of doctoral education may affect its effectiveness and the substantive quality of the scientific activity carried out in doctoral schools.



It should be noted, however, that many researchers dealing with the subject of higher education and science have doubts about the compatibility of the provision established in Article 200 paragraph 7 of the Law on Higher Education and Science with the Constitution of the Republic of Poland, and in particular the provision on the right to science (see: L. Kierznowski, *Doctoral Schools. Commentary to Articles 198-216 and 259-264 of the Law on Higher Education and Science*, Warsaw 2018, p. 41-42; M. Dokowicz [in:] *Law on Higher Education and Science. Commentary*, ed. J. Woźnicki, Warsaw 2019, Article 200, LEX). In 2019, the Ombudsman took a similar stance and requested the Ministry of Science and Higher Education to present its position on the issue. In response, a representative of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education argued that the allegation was unjustified, and that the introduction of such a solution was justified not only by requirements related to ensuring high quality and efficiency of doctoral education, but also by the need to increase the number of people holding doctoral degree and the need for rational management of public funds allocated for science.

What should additionally be noted is that doctoral school education can still be combined, however, with the paid process of preparing another doctoral dissertation in an extracurricular mode.



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