



*Higher education institution vs. PAS institute in the context of
doctoral education – perspective of a doctoral student*



In the world of higher education and science, there are numerous paths that young researchers can pursue, and two main types of institutions - higher education institutions and institutes of the Polish Academy of Sciences - play crucial roles in doctoral education environments. The differences between these institutions are noticeable and impact not only the process of educating young science enthusiasts but also their subsequent experiences and professional prospects.

According to Article 198, paragraphs 3 and 5 of the Law on Higher Education and Science (consolidated text: Journal of Laws of 2023, item 742, as amended), the education of doctoral students takes place in entities strictly defined by the law. In accordance with Article 198, paragraph 3, doctoral schools can be run by academic institutions, institutes of the Polish Academy of Sciences, research institutes, or international institutes with specified scientific categories and the authority to confer doctoral and post-doctoral degrees in specific disciplines. Importantly, Article 198, paragraph 5, specifies that various entities, such as academic institutions, institutes of the Polish Academy of Sciences, research institutes, or international institutes, can also run them jointly. In the context of this article, it is essential to note that both universities and institutes of the Polish Academy of Sciences are entities that either create or co-create doctoral schools and educate a significant number of doctoral students.

It is worth emphasizing that the law regulates the functioning of higher education institutions, ensuring educational standards and determining fundamental aspects of doctoral education in the doctoral schools they operate, including the organization of regulations and educational programs. From my analysis of selected doctoral school programs, it is evident that a higher education institution is an entity that places significant emphasis not only on the research sphere but also on the educational aspect. This allows doctoral students in such schools the opportunity to develop both scientific and pedagogical skills through the possibility of conducting usually more extensive teaching practices than those provided by doctoral schools run or co-run by institutes of the Polish Academy of Sciences. Institutes of the Polish Academy of Sciences primarily focus on conducting intensified research in selected areas. Within the Polish Academy of Sciences, there are five divisions that coordinate the activities of institutes and committees, overseeing auxiliary scientific units related to specific thematic areas (divisions of humanities, biological and agricultural sciences, exact and earth sciences, technical sciences, and medical sciences). Typically, these units are less organizationally complex than higher education institutions.



Working in such an environment promotes the integration of doctoral students and staff, as well as fostering collaboration among them. From my own experience, I can say that it is inspiring - daily conversations and discussions with people passionate about exploring a particular research area.

The legal provisions in the Law on Higher Education and Science naturally also apply to the education of doctoral students in doctoral schools run or co-run by institutes of the Polish Academy of Sciences. As mentioned earlier, these institutes are characterized by a narrower scope of research areas. In practice, this means that the doctoral schools run or co-run by them offer education programs focused on equipping doctoral students with the skills and knowledge needed to conduct research in a specific area. This perspective may be attractive to individuals who want to dedicate their time and energy to acquiring specific competencies.

When making a choice between education in a doctoral school run by a higher education institution or an institute/institutes of the Polish Academy of Sciences, the candidate should consider not only individual interests but also future career goals and scientific preferences. Higher education institutions offer a wide range of possibilities and an interdisciplinary perspective on researching specific issues, whereas institutes of the Polish Academy of Sciences emphasize specialization and intensive research in a particular scientific area.

When I decided to pursue education in a doctoral school, the choice of institution was crucial for me. My heart led me towards a doctoral school co-run by an institute of the Polish Academy of Sciences, rather than a traditional higher education institution.

The Doctoral School run by the Krakow Interdisciplinary Doctoral School, where I continue my studies, differs significantly from a typical doctoral school at a higher education institution. It is focused on conducting research in specific scientific areas. I, however, conduct my research at the Institute of Metallurgy and Materials Science named after Aleksander Krupkowski of the Polish Academy of Sciences. The environment I found myself in acted like a magnet, drawing me into the realm of advanced research and specialized knowledge.

This choice turned out to be spot on in my case. Carrying out research tasks at the Institute of the Polish Academy of Sciences allowed me to develop my interests, shape myself as a researcher, and also opened doors to exciting professional opportunities. This experience showed me that institutes of the Polish Academy of Sciences have the extraordinary power to develop specific research interests and shape the working tools of a young researcher.



Both higher education institutions and institutes of the Polish Academy of Sciences are significant environments for educating doctoral students, offering diverse perspectives and experiences. The choice between them depends on the individual preferences of the candidate for doctoral education, but both entities contribute unique values to the world of science, aiding in the development of knowledge, research skills, and professional perspectives of young scientists.



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