



Carrying out classes at the doctoral school and professional work



Professional work, under the Polish Act of July 20, 2018 - Law on Higher Education and Science (publication: Journal of Laws of 2023, item 742, as amended; hereinafter referred to as the Act), does not constitute an obstacle to education at a doctoral school. There are no limits to working hours, remuneration or place of work.

However, it should be noted that the regulations regarding employment in science and higher education entities of persons studying at a doctoral school have changed. In 2018, the legislator introduced a ban on employing a doctoral student as an academic teacher or researcher. There were several exceptions to this ban. The legislator assumed that the ban would eliminate the risk associated with excessive teaching, research and organizational burdens (justification for the government bill – Law on Higher Education and Science, parliamentary form no. 2446/VIII term, [LINK](#)).

Initially, the provisions of the Act did not specify the consequences of violating the ban. They were only indicated by the Act of January 13, 2023 amending the Act - Law on Higher Education and Science and certain other acts (publication: Journal of Laws of 2023, item 212), because a violation by doctoral student is prohibited from being employed as an academic teacher or research worker (Article 203, paragraph 1, point 5 of the Act). The above prohibition has been criticized both in the doctrine and by the doctoral community. The National Representation of Doctoral Students, which is a statutory entity representing all doctoral students in Poland, has repeatedly raised the need to lift the ban on employing doctoral students as academic teachers or research workers. Low amounts of doctoral scholarships, which did not allow for independent support, and at the same time the impossibility of employing doctoral students as academic teachers or researchers prevented many doctoral students from achieving financial security and constituted an obstacle to their professional development. The ban was repealed by the Act of July 28, 2023 amending the Teacher's Charter and certain other acts (publication: Journal of Laws of 2023, item 1672), which entered into force on October 1, 2023. From that date, people studying at the doctoral school may be employed without any consequences also as an academic teacher or researcher.



Despite the lack of a statutory prohibition on combining professional work with education at a doctoral school, it should be noted that entities running doctoral schools do not provide any relief for professional work. The education of doctoral students is conducted on the basis of an educational program established by the senate or the scientific council and an individual research plan (Article 201, sections 3-4 of the Act). A participant of the doctoral school participates in, among others: in lectures, exercises, seminars. It is worth familiarizing yourself with the internal regulations of a given doctoral school in advance. The Act obliges a doctoral student to act in accordance with the regulations of the doctoral school and to implement the educational program and individual research plan (Article 207, paragraph 1, point 2 of the Act), and failure to comply with these obligations is an optional ground for removal from the list of doctoral students (Article 203, paragraph 2, point 2 of the Act). It should be held in mind that some classes are held irregularly and, moreover, that preparing a doctorate often requires study trips or researches. As W. Kiełbasiński and B. Pietrzyk-Tobiasz point out, "As part of its autonomy, the entity running the doctoral school may establish additional obligations in the regulations of the doctoral school. In this respect, it should be noted that this entity should create conditions for doctoral students to enable them to complete them. (...) Very often, in practice, requiring doctoral students to perform specific activities or duties is borderline legal, based largely on established principles of functioning of the academic community in a given entity. Therefore, the basis for the obligations of doctoral students at the doctoral school are the provisions of the regulations (within the limits provided for by generally applicable regulations), and issuing other types of orders should be applied taking into account the principle of proportionality, purposefulness and respecting academic customs. (...) The workload of a doctoral student should result from the need to implement the educational program and individual research plan (W. Kiełbasiński, B. Pietrzyk-Tobiasz [in:] W. Kiełbasiński, B. Pietrzyk-Tobiasz, M. W. Kuliński (ed.), Law on higher education and science for students and doctoral students – practical commentary. Comment. Judgment line, Warszawa 2024). Moreover, in accordance with Art. 201 section 5 of the Act, the education program may provide for professional internships in the form of conducting classes or participating in them, not exceeding 60 teaching hours per year. The method of fulfilling this obligation and the actual number of internships should be specified in the education program of a given doctoral school. However, if it has not been specified, a doctoral student may pursue professional practice in any form.



Undoubtedly, education at a doctoral school, which ends with the submission of a doctoral dissertation, is time-consuming and may prove difficult to reconcile with full-time professional work. When choosing the topics of your future scientific research, it is worth considering whether they will be compatible with the scope of tasks performed in professional work. Moreover, let us not forget that free time is a valuable good and should be considered in the so-called the „economy” of your life. Overwork may contribute to a decline in creativity and willingness to act, which are so important for young scientists. However, the way we spend our free time is also important. The prospect of well-spent free time makes us more motivated to work. Not only good work time organization is crucial, but also health care. It cannot be denied - even if we like our job very much, we simply need to rest.



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Published:
13.03.2024