



Is it necessary to have a doctoral student self-government in the entity administering a doctoral school?



In accordance with art. 215 of the Law on Higher Education and Science (Journal of Laws 2023, item 742 as amended), doctoral students shall establish a doctoral student council in the entity operating the doctoral school. On this basis, we can conclude that the self-government should be functional wherever there is a doctoral school and all PhD students studying at this school are automatically members of the doctoral student council. It should be noted that regardless of the number of doctoral schools in the entity, the doctoral community constitutes one self-government [I. Florczak, in: K.W. Baran (ed.), *Akademickie prawo zatrudnienia*, kom. do art. 215].

In accordance with art. 215 section 2 of the Law on Higher Education and Science, provisions of art. 106 and art. 110 section 2-9 regarding student council also apply to doctoral student council. Doctoral student council, like the student council, takes action and is represented through its bodies. The provisions of the Act indicate only two obligatory bodies: the president and a resolution-passing body (Council or Parliament). The regulations of the doctoral student council may, of course, also provide for other bodies and structures, e.g. a management board, an audit committee or an electoral committee.

Doctoral student council is the sole representative of all PhD students of a higher education institution. It is difficult to imagine the functioning of a doctoral school without an active doctoral self-government body. The tasks carried out by the doctoral student council are, first of all, defending the rights and interests of doctoral students and participating in decisions concerning the organization of the teaching process. In accordance with art. 205 of the Law on Higher Education and Science, the regulations of the doctoral school require consultations with the doctoral student council. The regulations of the doctoral school include the most important issues for doctoral students, which establish the organization of education: the manner of appointment and change of the supervisor or assistant supervisor, the manner of documentation of the course of education, the method of conducting the mid-term evaluation and the conditions for the extension of the deadline for submitting a doctoral dissertation. The doctoral student council also participates in making other important decisions for doctoral students: it gives opinion on the distribution of material funds intended for doctoral students, supports the development of doctoral students by organizing scientific, cultural and sports activities. The scope of activities and the exact functioning of the doctoral student council may vary from one entity to another.



The resolution-passing body of the doctoral student council shall adopt regulations specifying the organization and method of operation of the council. The regulations should also specify the procedure for the manner of appointment of representatives to the bodies of the higher education institution (e.g. senate and in a public higher education institution also to the electoral college).

To sum up, the doctoral student council should unconditionally exist within the facility administering a doctoral school, but the actual functioning of bodies not specified in the Act depends on the willingness and engagement of the PhD students studying at a specific doctoral school. It is hard to imagine the smooth functioning of a doctoral school without an active PhD students' self-government body, which is why it is vital to properly encourage representatives of the doctoral student community to participate in the doctoral student council structures and look for new ways to promote their activities. It is worth noting that in accordance with art. 110 section 9 of the Law on Higher Education and Science, a higher education institution shall provide all conditions necessary for the functioning of the doctoral student council, including the infrastructure and financial resources made available to the council within the framework of its activities.



AUTHOR:

Joanna Smolarczyk, PhD

Published:
15.03.2024