

Unofficial translation



**Lao People's Democratic Republic
Peace Independence Democracy Unity Prosperity**

Ministry of Education and Sports

No.: 4127/ME.HE/2011

Vientiane Capital, dated: 03 November 2011

**Decision
on the National Curriculum Standards for Doctoral Degrees**

- Pursuant to: Law 04/NA, dated 3 July (07) 2007, on Education of the Lao People's Democratic Republic;
- Pursuant to: Decree 282/PM, dated 7 September 2011, on the Organization and Operations of the Ministry of Education and Sports; and
- Pursuant to: The request of the Department of Higher Education;

The Minister of Education hereby issues a Decision:

**Chapter I
General Provisions**

Article 1 Objectives

This Decision defines the regulations, principles, and measures for the management of curricular and reference documentation for higher education institutes in their creation and development of curricula for doctoral degrees so as to achieve nationwide uniformity.

Article 2 Name of Curriculum Standards

These standards shall be referred to as the "National Continuing Curriculum Standards for Doctoral Degrees".

Article 3 Scope of Application

The National Curriculum Standards for Doctoral Degrees shall be used in the research and creation of doctoral curricula at higher education institutes wishing to open courses at this level.

Article 4 Organizing Learning and Teaching Using the Credit-Based System

- 4.1 Programs for doctoral degrees at higher education institutes must be taught according to a credit-based system.

- 4.2 In the event that learning and teaching is established according to a system of hours and modules, the learning results shall be calculated according to a credit-based system.

Article 5 Educational Qualifications

Persons completing a curriculum at doctoral degree level in a given branch shall receive a bachelor's degree certificate of ... in the branch of ... stating "Doctor of Philosophy in ...".

Article 6 Permission to Teach Curricula

Higher level institutes wishing to open a doctoral degree program must receive permission from the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) and if wishing to close the learning and teaching of an existing program, they must also receive permission from the MoES.

Article 7 Issuance of Certificates

Higher education institutes shall have the right to issue Certificates for Doctoral Degrees for a program for which they have received permission from the MoES in accordance with all conditions and stages specified in the curriculum.

Chapter II Creation of Curricula and Conditions for Teaching

Article 8 Creation of Curricula

The creation of curricula for doctoral degrees by a State and private higher education institutes must be structured as follows:

1. Name of curriculum: (Lao and English);
2. Name of certificate: (Lao and English);
3. Responsible unit;
4. Philosophy and aims of the curriculum;

4.1 Philosophy

Specification of background and reasoning for creating the curriculum, importance and vision of the curriculum, demand from society and the labor market, and the skills of its students after having completed it; and

4.2 Aims

Specification of methods and student training in accordance with the three characteristics and five pillars of education and the skills of its students after having completed it;

5. Specification of the time teaching commences;
6. Expectations of plan for what students are to receive;
7. Criteria for enrollees;
8. Student selection methods;
9. Organization of learning and teaching;
10. Duration of curriculum;
11. Content and structure of curriculum:
 - Specification of credits used in the curriculum;
 - Classification of subjects into each subject area;

- + For Format 1: Classification into stages of research and activities; and
- + For Format 2: Classification into subjects in accordance with the subject groups, research, and activities;
- Learning and teaching plans for each area of study and for each year; and
- Brief content of subject(s);

12. Enrolment;

13. Criteria for assessment and evaluation of study results and graduation;

14. Teachers: (full-time, guest, and consulting, teachers and dissertation inspectors);

15. The location of the building(s), library/ies, laboratory/ies, and learning and teaching equipment and materials; and

16. Budget.

Article 9 Conditions for Opening a Curriculum

The opening of a doctoral degree curriculum by a higher level institute must take place as follows:

9.1 It must be consistent with the policies of the Party and government, the three characteristics and five pillars of education, national socio-economic development, and the scientific, technological, and environmental growth trends of the region and the world.

9.2 It must be aimed at catering to the needs of human resource development in various sectors, the socio-economic structure, and the labor market.

9.3 The buildings and locations, learning and teaching materials and equipment, library/ies, laboratory/ies, personnel, teachers, and budget must all be ready beforehand.

9.4 The institute must have taught a master's degree in a related field with two generations of students having graduated.

9.5 In order to ensure the quality of the learning and teaching, the higher education institute may invite external guest teachers to teach but these must not comprise more than a third (33%) of all the teachers teaching a given curriculum.

Article 10 Stages in Obtaining Permission to Use a Curriculum

Requesting permission to open a doctoral degree curriculum by a higher education institute shall take place as follows:

10.1 The request for the opening of the curriculum must involve the submission of various documents in accordance with Articles 8 and 9 and there must be a feasibility study.

10.2 For the creation of a curriculum in a certain branch which overlaps with some other curriculum or course at the same institute, there must be a feasibility study and an explanation in order to request permission from the MoES.

10.3 Institutes which have already received permission to open the teaching of several curricula must request permission for the opening of a new curriculum or the

alteration of an existing one, submitting a feasibility study and the criteria to be used for student assessment and evaluation.

Article 11 Setting up a Curriculum

- 11.1 A higher education institute shall not have the right to set up the learning and teaching of a doctoral degree curriculum before receiving permission for its use from the MoES.
- 11.2 In the event that Institute B wishes to teach a curriculum for which permission has been received for its use by Institute A and issue its own certificates, it must request permission from Institute A and the MoES.
- 11.3 In the event that a curriculum is the property of a given institute and permission has already been granted for its use and the institute wishes for it to be taught at another institute and certificates issued by itself, permission must be granted from the MoES.

Article 12 Curricular Evaluation

Curricula for which permission has been granted by the MoES, after having been run and studied for 1-2 generations of students, must be evaluated and revised in accordance with the Regulations on Evaluations of the meeting of the MoES National Curriculum Standards.

Chapter III Organization of Learning and Teaching

Article 13 Duration of Study

The organization of the learning and teaching of doctoral degrees at higher education institutes is specified as follows:

- 13.1 For curricula taught full-time, the learning shall take place for 3-5 years or 3-5 academic years.
- 13.2 For curricula taught non-full-time, the learning shall take place for 5-10 years or 5-10 academic years.

Article 14 Formats for the Organization of Learning and Teaching

- 14.1 Format 1: shall comprise education emphasizing scientific research.
- 14.2 Format 2: shall comprise education emphasizing the study of theory and scientific research.

Chapter IV Specification of Credits and Enrolment

Article 15 Principles for the Calculation of Credits

- 15.1 Theoretical subjects which take up one hour of presentations and lectures weekly, adding up to no less than sixteen hours per semester, shall be attributed one credit.

- 15.2 Practical subjects which take up two to three hours weekly, adding up to thirty-two to forty-eight hours per semester, shall be attributed one credit.
- 15.3 Work experience and internships which take up three to six hours weekly, adding up to no less than thirty-two to forty-eight hours per semester, shall be attributed one credit.

Article 16 Credit Specification

The two formats of doctoral degree curricula shall consist of the following subject types and credits, as follows:

16.1 Format 1: There shall be no less than 48 credits and no more than 72.

- The thesis shall be worth 48 credits or more.
- There shall be activities in other areas of specialization related to the research paper as specified by the institution.

16.2 Format 2: There shall be no less than 48 and no more than 72.

- The study of theory shall be worth no less than 12 credits.
- The thesis shall be worth 36 credits or more.

Article 17 Enrolment

Applicants shall be examined and/or selected according to study topics and the enrolment of researchers shall be as specified by the institute.

Chapter V Criteria for Teachers and Enrollees

Article 18 Criteria for Teachers

- 18.1 **Teachers:** shall have a specialized area of study related to the subject they are to teach and possess a doctoral level qualification of three years or more.
- 18.2 **Consulting teachers:** shall have a specialized area of study related to the research paper, possess a doctoral level qualification of three years or more, and hold a specialized position as associate professor or higher and there must be at least two of these.
- 18.3 **Thesis inspectors:** shall have a specialized area of study related to the research paper, possess a doctoral level qualification of three years or more, and there must be two or more of these, one of which must be an external teacher with experience in scientific research of at least three years in a field related to the research paper.
- 18.4 **Thesis committee members:** shall have a specialized area of study related to the research paper, possess a doctoral level qualification of three years or more, and hold the position of specialist or associate professor or higher and the thesis committee must consist of five or more members.
- 18.5 Other criteria specified by the institute itself shall also be met.

Article 19 Criteria for Enrollees

Enrollees shall meet the following criteria:

- 19.1 Format 1: Students must have graduated with a master's degree in the same field of study and achieved a grade point average (GPA) of 3.5 or higher or have accumulated at least two years of experience.
- 19.2 Format 2: Students must have graduated with a master's degree in the same field of study and achieved a GPA of 3.5 or higher.
- 19.3 Those who have graduated with a master's degree in a similar field of study and wish to enroll in Format 1 or 2 must take an additional bridging course of 15-30 credits in the fundamentals of the specialized area of study. These credits shall not contribute to the credits accumulated for the doctoral degree itself. Following this, they shall follow that specified in Article 13.
- 19.4 Students must have a high level of English and be able to present research papers at domestic and overseas conferences.
- 19.5 Students shall also comply with any other specifications issued by the institute.

Chapter VI Student Assessment and Graduation

Article 20 Principles for Student Assessment

The student assessment for each subject shall be conducted according to the following scoring system:

Grade		Meaning		Grade-point equivalent
Lao symbol	English symbol	Lao	English	
ກ	A	ດີເລີດ	Excellent	4.0
ຂ+	B+	ດີຫລາຍ	Very Good	3.5
ຂ	B	ດີ	Good	3.0
ຄ+	C+	ດີພໍໃຊ້	Fairly Good	2.5
ຄ	C	ພໍໃຊ້ໄດ້	Fair	2.0
ງ+	D+	ອ່ອນ	Poor	1.5
ງ	D	ອ່ອນ ຫລາຍ	Very Poor	1.0
ຕ	F	ຕົກ	Fail	0

Article 21 Thesis Defense

Those who meet the conditions to defend their thesis must also meet the following criteria:

- 21.1 At least two papers must have been published in a domestic or overseas journals and a further two papers must have been presented at regional or international conferences.

- 21.2 The thesis must have been inspected and verified as being accurate and of quality.
- 21.3 The thesis must have at least 30 doctoral degree level references related to the content of the thesis.

Article 22 Conditions for Graduation

- 22.1 The thesis must have been successfully defended and the results must have been approved by the committee.
- 22.2 Those graduating must have accumulated a number of credits equal to that specified for the curriculum, have achieved a GPA of 3.5 or higher, and be of good character.

Chapter VII Final Provisions

Article 23 Responsibilities

23.1 Macro-Level

For the Department of Higher Education to study and issue additional specifications concerning the implementation of the curricula in practice in order to ensure quality and correctness; and

23.2 Micro-level

For the higher education institute to improve, adjust, and create their own curricula along with evaluation and assessment specifications so that they are correct and consistent with this Decision.

Article 24 Implementation

The relevant offices and departments of the MoES and higher level institutes shall acknowledge and implement this Decision in accordance with their respective duties and responsibilities.

Article 25 Effectiveness

This Decision is effective from the date of signature.

Minister of Education and Sports

To be delivered to:

1. Government's Office	1 copy
2. Ministries	1 copy each
3. Department of Higher Education	3 copies
4. Departments under the MoES	1 copy each
5. Universities	1 copy each
6. State and private sector higher education institutes	1 copy each
7. PESSs	1 copy each
8. To be kept	3 copies

Annexes

National Curricula for Continuing Bachelor's Degrees

Definitions:

- **Curricular standards:** shall refer to the quality standards specified for a curriculum in order that it may achieve its learning and teaching objectives and aims.
- A **doctoral degree curriculum:** shall refer to teaching and learning of a student in a highly specialized subject.
- A **credit:** shall refer to a volumetric unit of learning and teaching for each subject [in a curriculum].
- An **academic journal** shall refer to a paper summarizing scientific research issued on a periodic basis.
- A **paper** shall refer to a piece of research within a thesis.
- **Doctoral degree level education** shall refer to education leading on from a master's degree and into which a scientific problem has been researched in detail.
- A **senior teacher:** shall refer to a person who is responsible for work experience and leading [students] through the writing of their dissertation.
- A **consulting teacher:** shall refer to a person who instructs and leads in the writing of dissertations to graduate.
- A **thesis inspector:** shall refer to a person who checks the accuracy and quality of a dissertation to graduate.
- A **full-time or internal teacher:** shall refer to a teacher who teachers under the authority of their institute.
- A **guest or external teacher:** shall refer to a teacher who has been invited [to teach] by another institute.

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