



Norwegian University  
of Life Sciences

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# **PhD Programme in International Environment and Development Studies**

Fields of study:

**Development Studies  
and  
Environment and Development Studies**

Within the following research areas:

- Environmental governance (ENGOV)
- Conflict, Human Security & Development (CHSD)
- Climate Change, Agriculture and Development (CC-AD)
  - Rights and Power in Development (RAPID)

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## **NORAGRIC**

Noragric aims to contribute towards equitable development, sustained well-being of women and men, and sound environmental practices through collaborative activities that generate and exchange knowledge and provide education in the area of agricultural development, livelihood security and natural resource management.

Established in 1986, Noragric is the Department of International Environment and Development Studies at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU). Noragric's activities include research, education and assignments, focussing particularly, but not exclusively, on developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

With a staff and candidate body from around the world, Noragric is a meeting place of people from different societies. Professional backgrounds range from wildlife ecology to social anthropology and from resource economics to plant breeding, in highlands, drylands and coastal zones.

Noragric's academic focus:

Globalisation (and "anti-globalisation") are among today's hottest development issues. Development studies and Environment and Development Studies alike need to address new contexts, relations and challenges such as global governance, accountability, rights, transformation of the world economy, social movements, conflicts and peace-keeping, citizenship, the role of consumers, genetic engineering of food sovereignty, etc. Taking globalisation issues into account, Noragric focuses on these overlapping areas of concentration and expertise, organised in the following research clusters:

- Environmental governance
- Conflict, Human Security & Development
- Climate Change, Agriculture and Development
- Rights and Power in Development

Several cross-cutting themes tend to bridge overlapping areas of study at Noragric: policy, ecological zones (drylands, coastal zones, highlands), gender, participation, inter- and cross-disciplinary, community development, urban/rural relations, partnership and capacity building. Interdisciplinary studies on such cross-cutting themes are encouraged at Noragric.

## **PHD PROGRAMME IN INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES**

The PhD Programme in International Environment and Development Studies has a clear interdisciplinary profile both in recruitment of candidates and in the topics and problem areas investigated.

*Definition of Development Studies in a Noragric context:*

The field Development Studies is concerned with the processes, constraints, and opportunities for social, political, cultural, economic, ecological, institutional and technical change,

progress and development in different societies and settings. Development aims at improving the life (livelihood security, environmental well-being, quality of life etc.) of people and it is most appropriately defined with their active participation. At Noragric, particular emphasis is placed on Development Studies as relates to agriculture and the environment. The wise management of natural resources is both a prerequisite to and key component of sustainable development. The factors involved in development are complex and interrelated. At Noragric, development studies is typically:

- holistic in its analysis, yet problem-oriented and practical in aim
- pursued through interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches which make use of the specialised expertise offered by various academic disciplines
- undertaken in partnership with other academic institutions, local governments and civil society organisations
- concerned with sustainability, equity and empowerment.

Development studies relate to problem-oriented studies at processes of change aiming at providing knowledge and increasing our understanding of the complexities of development processes. Based on increased knowledge and understanding, development studies are committed to contributing towards solving the problems being studied. Environment and development studies, development studies can be defined as the study of the interface of society and nature with the intention of contributing to the improvement of environmental sustainability. Both Development Studies and Environment and Development Studies focus on the linkages between social and political processes and the challenges of global and local environmental problems, aiming at sustainable resource management and global justice.

### **International Environment and Development Studies and Inter-disciplinarity at Noragric**

Noragric provides a hospitable, interdisciplinary academic environment in which candidates and staff can pursue research unfettered by the intellectual constraints sometimes imposed by individual disciplines and university departments. It is Noragric's belief that many of the most critical problems facing the world today cannot be adequately understood or addressed from the confines of a single academic discipline. Consequently, some of the most exciting and relevant research takes place at the confluence of traditional disciplines, and benefits from an atmosphere in which topics can be explored from different angles, but without loss of scientific rigor and standards.

While virtually all potential research topics could be said to be relevant in some way to development, not all can be considered as appropriate for a "International Environment and Development Studies" programme such as Noragric's. Moreover, research undertaken in a developing country is not necessarily "development studies." This means that PhD candidates must be prepared to acquire the necessary and relevant expertise in different disciplines – whether in the social or natural/biological sciences – in order to complete and successfully defend their dissertations at the PhD level in the field of *Development Studies* or *Environment and Development Studies*.

"Inter-disciplinarity" lies at the foundation of Noragric and its PhD Programme. Candidates whose background is predominantly in the social sciences will gain expertise in the natural/biological sciences relevant to their dissertation topic. Candidates coming from the natural/biological sciences will learn to assess and factor in the social and development features of a particular research problem.

### **Prioritization of Applicants**

Noragric welcomes candidates from all countries. At present we have PhD candidates from a variety of countries, including: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cameroon, Canada, Ethiopia, Germany, Malawi, Norway, Pakistan, Sweden, and Tanzania.

Priority is given to applicants from institutions in developing countries and countries with economies in transition with which Noragric or the Norwegian University of Life Sciences has collaborative or project-based agreements. All applications, however, are given serious consideration.

Applicants nominated by collaborating institutions and projects will ultimately be considered on their individual merits. Noragric gives priority to nominations involving applicants of a high academic quality, but also taking into consideration the level of congruence between the needs of the institution and the applicant, and Noragric's professional profile, capacity and requirements.

Noragric seeks to recruit candidates who clearly demonstrate interest in and experience/ capacity to undertake inter-disciplinary research combining elements from the social and natural/biological sciences. PhD candidates are expected to take responsibility for their own learning. A high degree of independence is therefore required. Strong emphasis has been put on research methodology in the development of the PhD proposals. In the selection of the PhD candidates, the academic capacity and originality are important criteria. Preference, in most cases, is given to younger applicants (i.e. those below 35 years of age).

### **Applying for Admission**

Admission to the Programme is competitive and places are limited. In order to be considered for admission to the PhD Programme, an applicant must have a relevant Master's Degree with a minimum overall GPA of B, an above average scholastic record in previous education, excellent facility in the English language, sufficient funding, and present a research proposal of high quality that falls within one of Noragric's areas of concentration and expertise. Noragric normally admits candidates to begin studies in the autumn semester when the core course for the PhD programme is given. This facilitates the PhD candidates' integration to Noragric's research and teaching, and contributes to a sense of group identity among the candidates.

### **Admission of PhD candidates at Noragric**

The application to the PhD Programme consists of the following:

- Letter of Application outlining professional plans and ambitions and describing why the applicant is interested in the programme in Development Studies / Environment and Development Studies.
- Curriculum Vitae (CV) and copies of relevant scientific publications.
- Certified Transcript of Grades/Marks for *all* previous university work.

- TOEFL Scores. Proficiency is demonstrated (if one's mother tongue is not English, or the applicant has successfully completed Norwegian secondary education with English grade 5 or better) by a TOEFL score of 523/193 (paper/computer) or higher. Scores above 500 *may* be considered *if* the Listening sub score is not below 50/16 and the Essay Writing sub score is not below 4.0.
- Letters of Recommendation from three persons, at least one of which addresses the applicant's interest in and capacity to undertake interdisciplinary studies.
- Project Proposal, a project description of max 8 pages presenting the research the applicant wishes to undertake for dissertation. It will include a short introduction to the topic, an exploration of the questions/hypotheses the research is intended to address, and a brief elucidation of the methodologies likely to be employed. If this research is to be conducted "in the field," the description should note whether it will be undertaken in conjunction with an existing project or in cooperation with another institution. The research project should be written in an academic style, and be footnoted and include key references as appropriate.

If the application is not related to an announced PhD position at Noragric one should also include:

- Funding Plan and Proof of Funding. PhD studies require funding to meet both personal and research-related expenses. The securing of funding is the ultimate responsibility of the candidate, as Noragric does not have its own funding for stipends. This shall include funds to cover necessary expenses for the candidate while in Norway. The *minimum* funding in addition to living expenses, is 470.000 Norwegian Kroner for a four year PhD period. This amount does not include costs associated with travel expenses and fieldwork, which vary considerably with different types of research, and must be budgeted according to the needs in each PhD project.
  - the funds to the department is paid upfront and placed on a closed account at Noragric.
  - Noragric receives a confirmation/ guarantee for the coverage of the funds needed for costs of living.

**Application deadline April 1** (not applicable in the case of institutional funding sources such as university and government scholarships).

See also regulations for a PhD degree at the University: [http://www.nmbu.no/en/studies/phd\\_studies/regulations-guidelines](http://www.nmbu.no/en/studies/phd_studies/regulations-guidelines)

## **Funding**

Acceptance of PhD candidates at Noragric requires external funding, as Noragric has no funds at its discretion to provide stipends, research grants, or extensions in the case of expiring grants. The applicant is responsible for securing the necessary funding. Funding sources may include: Norwegian Research Council scholarship, University Scholarship, NUFU scholarship

(Norwegian Universities' Committee for Development Research and Education), NORAD or similar scholarships, "Quota scholarship" (Norwegian State Education Loan Fund), project funding, home country/ home institute funds. Applicants holding a scholarship can only be accepted if adequate funds for field research, travel and other running costs have been secured. Applicants from collaborating institutions should preferably apply through the institutional agreement to secure additional funding.

### **Application deadlines**

April 1<sup>st</sup> each year with study start in August/ September.

Initial admission to the Programme is granted with certain reservations. Final admission is contingent on the approval by Noragric's Research Committee of a fully elaborated project description and final study plan within 8 months after the candidate is provisionally admitted to the Programme.

### **Structure and requirements in Noragric's PhD Programme**

Noragric seeks to provide basic infrastructure and academic resources constituting a facilitating institutional environment during the agreed-upon time frame of a PhD project. Successful applicants will be provided with office space, a computer, library privileges, and other benefits. Noragric counts on PhD candidates working full time with their research project. The time frame for completing the programme and finalizing and defending a PhD thesis is maximum 4 years (including fieldwork).

During these 4 years Noragric provides academic supervision and advice. Furthermore, Noragric will provide an academic environment that presents PhD candidates with a number of the professional challenges inherent to inter-disciplinary approaches to development, e.g. through organising seminars that give each PhD candidate the opportunity to expose his or her work to critical discussion from different angles and professional perspectives. It is also Noragric's responsibility to give PhD candidates timely and realistic feedback on project progress and on the academic quality of each candidate's work.

It is the PhD candidate's responsibility to present a convincing study plan, carry out the research required, and write up and finalise a thesis that can be defended in front of a thesis committee of high international standard. Each PhD candidate is also expected to contribute to a dynamic, fruitful and challenging inter-disciplinary professional environment in the evolving field of development studies.

### **Course requirements and programmed milestones in the PhD studies**

The PhD programme in International Environment and Development Studies at Noragric follows the general criteria and requirements defined by the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU) and is undertaken in collaboration with the University departments. According to the University requirements, each PhD study plan should include between 30 and 60 study points of coursework, which is between half a year and one year. These study points should cover courses in:

- EDS430 Environment and Development Studies for and by PhD students – core course.
- EDS415 Qualitative Methods in Development Studies
- Research Ethics and Philosophy of Science (PHI402 recommended)
- Problem-oriented courses of relevance to the topic of each dissertation

In addition to the required course work, a PhD candidate at Noragric will give 3 major presentations associated with his/her research project. At each point, Noragric will provide academic advice and realistic feedback on the research project and project progress. Three milestones exist for the PhD candidate on his/her route to defending a dissertation at Noragric. All have important pedagogical functions, while the first also plays a significant administrative role: as explained below, continuation of PhD studies at Noragric is *contingent* on a candidate's satisfactory and timely completion of a Project Proposal and Study Plan. The second milestone provides an important intermediate evaluation and check of progress. The third milestone – a Late-Term Seminar – is meant to provide the candidate with a simulated thesis defense experience.

**1. Start Seminar – and final approval of Project Proposal and Study Plan.** All successful applicants for PhD studies are first admitted on a provisional basis. Final and formal admission to the PhD programme is contingent on Noragric's approval of the candidate's Project Proposal and Study Plan. This study plan, together with an elaborated research proposal should be submitted within the first six months of initiating PhD studies. The research proposal will be presented by the candidate and commented upon by two discussants in a Start Seminar, organised by the scientific cluster to which the PhD candidate is assigned. Within eight months after initiation, the complete study plan with the final research proposal must be submitted for approval by the Research Committee at Noragric and finally by the director of Noragric. If in Noragric's opinion, the proposal has sufficient scientific rigour and if there is little doubt that the candidate can successfully complete and defend a thesis based on research outlined in the proposal, Noragric will approve the Project Proposal and the candidate will be formally admitted to the Programme. If such approval is not given, admission cannot be granted. In this situation, Noragric's institutional support to the PhD project will be withdrawn, and the candidate's institutional affiliation with Noragric will come to an end.

**2. Mid-Term Seminar.** At the seminar, the candidate will present his or her thesis research, as a work-in-progress. Compulsory course work should be finalised and approved before this seminar is held. One or more discussants are assigned to engage the candidate in a critical revision of research methodology and findings, and to consult with the candidate and supervisor about any needed changes to the research strategy at this mid-point in the candidate's work towards a finished thesis. The mid-term seminar is seen as an essential milestone for feedback to the PhD candidate on progress towards finalising a PhD thesis within the given time frame. Acceptance of the Seminar by Noragric signifies that Noragric believes the candidate is making satisfactory progress towards the PhD and that the quality of work and data do not present major or insurmountable barriers to an ultimate successful thesis defense.

**3. Late-Term Seminar.** The candidate is expected to present professional work very close to a finished thesis at this seminar. One or more discussants will be appointed to probe, challenge and help prepare the candidate for the type of opposition their thesis is likely to encounter in the formal thesis defense. This Seminar should be scheduled by the candidate and his/her supervisor so as to afford the candidate time to make the final, critical improvements necessary to submit the thesis to the PhD Evaluation Committee and defend it within the established time limit.

## **Defense of the Doctoral Thesis**

When the candidate's thesis has been approved internally for the doctoral defense, an Evaluation Committee will be established. On the day of the defense, the candidate will give a lecture on a topic chosen by the Committee and conveyed to the candidate. If the lecture is judged acceptable by the Committee, the defense of the thesis will begin. Immediately following the defense, the Committee will meet to decide whether it will formally recommend to the University that the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) be awarded.

Candidates typically celebrate the completion of their thesis defense with a festive party attended by the Committee, fellow candidates, friends and family!

**Inquiries about the PhD Programme / Applications can be sent to:**

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