

A summary overview of doctoral training and qualification system in the Russian Federation

In Russia, only some leading universities have PhD programs and can award their own PhD degree. Most universities have *aspirantura* where professionals of the highest qualification (scientific-pedagogical personnel) are trained. *Aspirantura* programs graduates who successfully defend their dissertation and pass the defense results control in the Higher Attestation Commission of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation ([VAK](#)) get the academic degree *Candidate of sciences* (equivalent to PhD), which is awarded in a concrete strictly regulated field of science, for example, biological, geographical, etc.

The educational process in *aspirantura* is organized in accordance with the following regulatory documents:

[Federal Law of the Russian Federation of December 29, 2012 N 273-FZ "About Education in the Russian Federation"](#)

[Order of the Ministry of Science and Education of the Russian Federation of November 19, 2013 №1259](#)

[Order of the Ministry of Science and Education of the Russian Federation of September 12, 2013 № 1059](#)

[Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation of December 10, 2013 № 1139](#)

[Order of the Ministry of Science and Education of the Russian Federation of September 12, 2013 № 1061](#)

[Letter of the Ministry of Science and Education of the Russian Federation of November 6, 2013 № AK-2589/05 от 6.11.2013](#)

Students can be enrolled either on a budget-financed or a self-financed *aspirantura* program (through contracts with legal or natural persons). The length of study depends on the program and the mode of study: full-time study – 3-4 years; part-time study – 4-5 years.

Each student has an individual study plan. It is designed in line with the Study Plan of the specific *aspirantura* program and contains a comprehensive list of subjects, information about the duration of courses and internships, duration and scope of research and teaching practice, terms and criteria of interim and final assessment.

Aspirantura program students must undergo all types of continuous and interim assessment in line with the individual study plan and complete all the requirements prescribed by the subject syllabi. Qualifying examinations are a type of interim assessment for students on the *aspirantura* program. Interim assessment is carried out by examination boards created in line with the requirements set forth by the applicable legislation of the Russian Federation. Examination boards issue a letter of verification certifying that the candidate has passed the qualifying examinations.

Aspirantura program students who have achieved the individual study plan and have passed interim assessment are eligible for final assessment. Individuals who have passed final state assessment get a State Graduate Diploma of *aspirantura* program. To be awarded the academic degree *Candidate of sciences* one should successfully defend his dissertation in one of the officially [recognized dissertation councils](#) and get approval of the defense results in the VAK.