

Status of PhD students at the University of Montenegro

What is the legal status of PhD student?

All students in Montenegro, at all levels, may have double status: being a student and at the same time they may be employed (being a student and work at the same time).

Before 2003

Full time students (unemployed)

Part time students (employed)

After 2003

There is no difference between employed and unemployed students

- a) Employment status and student status are not correlated: Status of PhD student does not provide you benefits of employed person. But sometimes being a PhD students is prerequisite to be employed.
- b) Most of the PhD students are already employed, but their everyday work has nothing to do with research.

Being employed as a teaching assistant at UoM and being a PhD student at the same time: downsides

- Large number of PhD students are employed at the UoM as teaching assistants. They do not see themselves as students, they do not see themselves as researchers. They are teaching assistants whose primary duty is to give practical lectures. They will do research in spare time.
- The level of teaching assistant salary depends on the number of lectures. More lectures means more money. Most of the teaching assistants, PhD students, ask for more lectures. Bottom line: teaching assistants has limited time for research.
- There is no clear benefit for finishing PhD studies on time.

Tuition fees for PhD studies

- Realization of PhD studies cost some money. Important question is: who is going to pay the real cost of studies: students, University, government?
- Until 2017 all teaching assistants at the UoM were exempted from paying tuition fees.
- New Higher education law, article 69a: All PhD students are paying the tuition fees.
- Teaching assistants/PhD students at UoM are paying 1/3 of full price, but nevertheless we need better solution, article 69a should be changed
- Solution a) best PhD students should have status of employed person at the university (status of research assistant and salary)
- Solution b) best PhD students should study for free, as long as they are the best

How present/future employment status of PhD student affects the number PhD students at the UoM?

- “Why do I want to become PhD student?”
- a) I want a career at the university (research institute, faculty). Typically, the only way to become professor/researcher at the UoM, is to start your career as a teaching assistant. Otherwise chances to find first job at the UoM at latter stage, after finishing PhD, are slim. I will enroll PhD studies only if I have a chance to be employed as a teaching assistant
- Conclusion: fewer vacancies for new teaching assistants means fewer new PhD students at UoM
- b) I want a research career in the industry (This is rare in Montenegro)
- c) PhD diploma It is important for my present job (PhD diploma is the end of their research career)
- d) I love science, I love doing research, I am not thinking right now how PhD will reflect my professional career