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**Academic degrees in the Polish People's Republic.
Part 1. Lower academic degrees**

Summary

In the period researched in this article (1947–1990) the principles of awarding academic degrees were far from stable (or uniform). What is more, difference between individual degrees were of multiple character. In the initial years shortly after the Polish People's Republic was formed, a lower academic degree was awarded to every higher school graduate. From 1951 on this term referred to degrees awarded to science candidates, and as of 1958 to a degree of a doctor. Secondly, the requirements needed to be satisfied in order to qualify for individual degrees differed and were changing. Thirdly, on and off there were instances where exemptions were made from the generally binding principles governing awarding of academic degrees, especially in the case of a science candidate and a doctor. Those exemptions, or exceptional treatment, was justified by a reference to an exceptional case. Fourthly, lower academic degrees could not always be obtained in every discipline, and the list of the discipline that qualified candidates for a degree was neither closed nor stable. Fifthly, the rights granted to scientific councils of institutions of higher education, and later to scientific councils of units operating within the Polish Academy of Sciences as well, were also changing, mostly to meet the conditions and requirements which those units were obliged to fulfil. Sixthly, depending on the role and position of other bodies or organs involved in the process (the minister competent for schools of higher education, the Main Council of Higher Education, or the Central Qualifications Committee) their say and role was also changing.

For the sake of a certain simplification, it may be stated that solutions adopted as a result of the reforms of 1947 and 1951 were comparable, while those implemented in subsequent years, particularly by acts on higher education of 1958, 1982 and 1985 and the act of 1965 on academic degrees and scientific titles as later amended, differed considerably from earlier solutions.

The assessment, from a legal point of view, of the conditions of awarding lower academic degrees in the period researched would, however, have been incomplete if the organisation of doctoral studies as well as the manner of their delivery leading to the preparation and submission of a doctoral dissertation by a degree candidate, had been examined as well. This issue will be the subject of the second part of this article.

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