

Doctorate in Geosciences at the Faculty of Science, University of Potsdam

Some basic information and rules, typical questions and problems
(focus on thesis submission and examination process)

Jens Tronicke

Institut für Geowissenschaften
Mathematisch-Naturwissenschaftliche Fakultät
Universität Potsdam

jens@geo.uni-potsdam.de



Doctoral Seminar Geosciences (February 17, 2026)

Institute's homepage: Good starting point

The screenshot displays the homepage of the Institute of Geosciences at the University of Potsdam. The browser address bar shows the URL www.uni-potsdam.de/en/geo/study/doctorate. The page features a blue header with the university logo and the text "Institute of Geosciences". Navigation links include "Intranet", "Emergency", "Uni A-Z", "English", and a search icon. A secondary navigation bar contains "STUDYING", "RESEARCH", "UNIVERSITY", and "ONLINE SERVICES".

The main content area is divided into three columns: "Institute", "Study", and "Research". The "Study" column is highlighted in blue and contains a dropdown menu with the following items: "Overview", "B. Sc. Geosciences", "M.Sc. Geosciences", "M. Sc. Remote Sensing, geoinformation and Visualization", "Doctorate" (highlighted by a mouse cursor), "Study Commissions", "Excursion Calendar", "Student Council", "Study in Potsdam", "Erasmus +", and "Coordinators for the Federal Education Assistance Act".

The "Research" column lists various research areas: "Overview", "General Geology", "General Geophysics", "Applied Geophysics", "Sedimentary Geology", "Geological Remote Sensing", "Mineralogy", "Paleoclimate Dynamics", "Petrology", and "Thermochemistry". A "CLOSE X" button is located at the bottom right of the dropdown menu.

At the bottom of the page, a breadcrumb trail reads "Institute of Geosciences / Study / Doctorate". Below this, the "Doctorate" section is visible, featuring a sidebar with "Overview" and a list of study programs: "B. Sc. Geosciences", "M.Sc. Geosciences", "M. Sc. Remote Sensing, geoinformation and Visualization", and "Doctorate" (highlighted). The main content area of the "Doctorate" section shows a large image of a cloudy sky over a landscape.

<https://www.uni-potsdam.de/en/geo/study/doctorate>

... with contact, basic information, some links

Photo: E. Ribacki

Doctoral students within the field of Geosciences have to adhere to the regulations for doctoral degree studies of the faculty of science. Please note that only the official German version is legally binding. After successfully completing the thesis, the academic degree "Dr. rer. nat." will be awarded .

Please find more detailed information regarding the beginning of your doctoral studies, the opening of the examination process, and the completion of the procedure on the pages of the faculty concerning doctoral studies (please see link below).

Contact:

- Prof. Dr. Jens Tronicke
- Prof. Ed Sobel, PhD - Deputy
- Tanja Klaka-Tauscher - Assistant

Doctorate at the Institute of Geosciences

Each semester there will be at least one **seminar for the doctoral students** of Geosciences, which also aims at an inter-disciplinary exchange within the geoscientific community. Every doctoral student has to present his or her project at least once in this seminar. Furthermore, all doctoral students are expected to regularly attend the seminar during their studies.

Submitting a **publication-based doctoral thesis** is generally possible in Geosciences. For such a dissertation, please note the general regulations - see para. 11- as well as the specific rules of the Institute.

A certain amount of **teaching experience** is also part of the curriculum - around 2 hours per semester week (SWS) - and the main supervisor is required to confirm this in a written statement at the end of the studies.

Information on doctoral studies at the Faculty of Science

- [Doctoral studies at the Faculty of Science of the University of Potsdam](#)
- [Doctorate at the University of Potsdam](#)
- [Regulations for doctoral degree studies of the faculty of science](#)
- [Specific rules of the Institute \(writing a cumulative dissertation\)](#)
- [Current Defense Dates of the Faculty of Science](#)

Next PhD-Seminar Geosciences:

February 17, 2026, 1 pm, Campus Golm, House 27, Lecture Hall 0.01
Please register before December 1, 2025 (write to: phdseminar@geo.uni-potsdam.de)

E-mail distribution list for doctoral students

All information on websites of our faculty

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the website of the Faculty of Science at the University of Potsdam. The URL in the address bar is www.uni-potsdam.de/en/mnfakul/research/doctorate-and-post-doctoral-dissertation-habilitation. The page features a blue header with the university logo and navigation links for Intranet, Emergency, Uni A-Z, and a search bar. Below the header, there are four main navigation categories: STUDYING, RESEARCH, UNIVERSITY, and ONLINE SERVICES. The 'RESEARCH' category is expanded, showing a list of sub-items: Overview, Research Focuses, Research initiatives, Graduate Programs, Geräteliste, Doctorate and Post-doctoral dissertation (Habilitation) (highlighted with a mouse cursor), Good Scientific Practice Panel, and CoARA. The 'Doctorate and Post-doctoral dissertation (Habilitation)' page is displayed, featuring a sidebar with navigation links (Overview, Research Focuses, Research initiatives, Graduate Programs, Geräteliste, Doctorate and Post-doctoral) and a main content area with a large image of a graduate and the heading 'Doctorate and Post-doctoral dissertation (Habilitation)'. Below the image, there are sections for 'Doctoral Studies' (Informations and Dates) and 'Post-doctoral dissertation (Habilitation)'.

<https://www.uni-potsdam.de/en/mnfakul/research/doctorate-and-post-doctoral-dissertation-habilitation>

www.uni-potsdam.de/en/mnfakul/research/doctorate-and-post-doctoral-dissertation-hab

Doctorate

The Faculty of Sciences at the University of Potsdam awards the academic degrees of Doctor of Natural Sciences (Dr. rer. nat.) or Doctor of Engineering (Dr.-Ing.). The prerequisite is the completion of a written dissertation, which is defended orally as part of the disputation.

The legal basis for a doctorate at the Faculty of Sciences is the doctoral degree regulations dated [18.09.2013](#).

[\(English version\)](#) of the doctoral degree regulations not legally binding)

- Overview
- Research Focuses
- Research initiatives
- Graduate Programs
- Geräteliste
- Doctorate and Post-doctoral dissertation (Habilitation)**
- Promotion
- Procedure of the doctorate & general questions
- Registration of doctoral project
- Submission of your dissertation
- Completion of the procedure
- Dates
- Doctoral Committee
- Post-doctoral dissertation (Habilitation)
- Good Scientific Practice Panel
- CoARA

Procedure and frequently asked questions

Would you like to find out more about the doctoral process or do you have any questions? You can find all the information about the process here.



Registration of doctoral project

Would you like to start a doctorate? You can find all the information you need to start a doctorate here.

Photo: MNF



Opening of the doctoral procedure

Would you like to submit your dissertation? Here you will find all the information about the process and the necessary documents.



Completion of the doctoral procedure

You have completed your disputation! Here you can find out what happens after the defense and how to get your certificate here.

Photo: Karla Fritze



Doctoral Committee

List of meeting dates with respective editorial deadline and subject representatives of the individual institutes/teaching units



Starting your doctoral studies

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL www.uni-potsdam.de/en/mnfakul/research/doctorate-and-post-doctoral-dissertation-hab. The page header includes the University of Potsdam logo and navigation menus for 'STUDYING', 'RESEARCH', 'UNIVERSITY', and 'ONLINE SERVICES'. A secondary menu highlights 'Research', 'Internationalisation', and 'News'. The breadcrumb trail reads: Faculty of Science / Research / Doctorate and Post-doctoral dissertation (Habilitation) / Promotion / Registration of doctoral project.

Overview

- Research Focuses
- Research initiatives
- Graduate Programs
- Geräteleiste
- Doctorate and Post-doctoral dissertation (Habilitation)**
- Promotion
- Procedure of the doctorate & general questions
- Registration of doctoral project**
- Submission of your dissertation
- Completion of the procedure
- Dates
- Doctoral Committee

Please note!
Starting September 1, 2025, written proof of equivalence must be provided for qualifications obtained outside the EU. (see Pre-requisite for the doctorate)

Registration of doctoral project and acceptance into the program

You have decided to do your doctorate at the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences at the University of Potsdam.

Please note the following procedure for notification and admission.

If you have any questions or would like to make an appointment to submit your documents, please send an e-mail to prommnf@uni-potsdam.de or prommnf-aufe@uni-potsdam.de

Please also note our [FAQs!](#)

Pre-requisite for the doctorate

! *New rules for incoming doctoral students with degrees from outside EU*

Finishing your doctoral studies

The screenshot shows the website for the Faculty of Science at the University of Potsdam. The main navigation menu includes 'The Faculty', 'Studies and Teaching', 'Research' (highlighted), 'Internationalisation', and 'News'. The breadcrumb trail reads: Faculty of Science / Research / Doctorate and Post-doctoral dissertation (Habilitation) / Promotion / Submission of your dissertation.

Overview

- Research Focuses
- Research initiatives
- Graduate Programs
- Geräteleiste
- Doctorate and Post-doctoral dissertation (Habilitation)**
- Promotion
- Procedure of the doctorate & general questions
- Registration of doctoral project
- Submission of your dissertation**
- Completion of the procedure
- Dates
- Doctoral Committee

Opening of doctoral procedures

The opening of the doctoral **examination process** is the date of submission of your dissertation to the office and the subsequent appointment of the examination committee and the reviewers by the doctoral committee.

Please take note of the [regulations for Doctoral Degree Studies](#) of the Faculty of Science. Many questions will be clarified by reading them.

The documents for opening the doctoral procedure can be submitted either **digitally** by email with a download link **OR** in **paper form** in person during office hours or by appointment. Please choose one option and submit **only complete documents** to the office.

If you have any questions or would like to make an appointment to submit the documents, please feel free to write an email to prommf@uni-potsdam.de.

Please also take note of our [FAQs](#)!



- Documents for digital submission** ← *Details regarding what's needed for submission*
- Documents for paper submission** ← *Details regarding what's needed for submission*
- What happens after the opening of the examination process?**

[Link](#)

Procedure of submission and examination

- **~2 to 3 months before submission:** Familiarize yourself with [what's needed](#) for submission, identify and contact potential reviewers and further potential members of the examination committee (in agreement with your supervisors)
- Complete form “request for opening” and collect all required signatures (note, original signature of institute’s representative required)
- Submission of thesis and all further documents to faculty’s doctoral committee (note, meeting [dates and deadlines](#) for submission)
- After official approval by the doctoral committee, faculty asks reviewers for providing their reports within eight weeks
- After receipt of all reviews, chairperson of the examination committee starts planning oral defense (in agreement with you and your supervisors)
- After successful defense, approval of faculty’s doctoral committee and publication of thesis via university library required ([further details](#))

Some typical questions and problems (1)

Are there rules for a publication-based thesis (cumulative dissertation)?

- Yes, detailed guidelines specific to geosciences available ([link to pdf](#))
- What is needed (minimum requirements in geosciences)
 - At least **three articles** accepted for peer review in well established journals
 - At least **one published** article (or accepted for publication)
 - At least **two first-author** articles
 - For all multi-author papers, statement regarding contribution of doctoral candidate needed
- Note, publication-based is just an option not a must (sometimes writing a monograph could be advantageous)

Some typical questions and problems (2)

Are there regulations for selecting reviewers?

- Yes, three expert reviewers needed including at least
 - one supervisor
 - one external and independent reviewer (following [DFG guidelines](#))
- All reviewers must be professors, senior researchers, or university lecturers with post-doctoral qualifications (“Habilitation” in the German academic system)
- For experts from another academic system or in case of doubt, the 1st supervisor must prepare a detailed justification regarding habilitation equivalence

Some typical questions and problems (3)

Regulations for selecting further members of the examination committee

- Three further committee members needed (in addition to reviewers) including one chairperson (head of the committee)
- Again, these persons must be professors, senior researchers, or university lecturers with post-doctoral qualifications (“Habilitation” in the German academic system)
- In case of doubt or for experts from another academic system, the 1st supervisor must prepare a detailed justification regarding habilitation equivalence
- Finally, at least three of the six committee members (three reviewers plus three additional members) must be officially affiliated with our faculty
- Please make sure that all nominated persons agree to participate before submitting your documents!

Final remarks

- For additional FAQs and further information, see [webpages of the faculty](#)
- To avoid problems and delays, carefully read these pages as early as possible
- This also includes the official regulations (“Promotionsordnung”, [link to pdf](#))
- Note, there is also an [English translation](#) of the “Promotionsordnung” (not legally binding)
- If you have any further questions, don’t hesitate to ask your supervisors (they should know the rules)
- Of course, you can also contact the [official representatives](#) of the Institute of Geosciences (Jens Tronicke and Ed Sobel) or the [administrative staff](#) of the faculty (Jeanette Ziegler and Sylke Pfeiffer)

