

Regulations for Doctoral Degree Studies in the Faculty of Science at the University of Potsdam

As of 18 September 2013

The Faculty Council of the Faculty of Science at the University of Potsdam has promulgated the following regulations governing doctoral degree studies in accordance with § 29 Para 3 Sentence 4 of the Brandenburg Higher Education Act (BbgHG) of 18 December 2008 (Law and Ordinance Gazette (GVBl.) I p. 318), last modified by Article 5 of the Law of 5 December 2013 (GVBl.I/13, [No. 36]), in combination with Article 21 Para 2 No. 1 of the Basic Constitution of the University of Potsdam dated 17 December 2009 (AmBek. UP 4/2010 p. 60) in the version of the First Charter to Change the Basic Constitution of the University of Potsdam (GrundO) dated 27 February 2013 (AmBek. UP No. 4/2013 p. 116):

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§ 1 Doctoral studies

(1) The Faculty of Science at the University of Potsdam awards the academic degree of Doctor of Science [doctor rerum naturalium (Dr. rer. nat.)] or of Doctor of Engineering (Dr.-Ing.) upon completion of a course of doctoral studies to doctoral candidates who, on the basis of a dissertation and an oral examination (Disputation), have demonstrated their scholarly qualifications in a scientific discipline represented by teaching and research in this faculty by university professors.

(2) The University of Potsdam has agreed to follow the German Research Society's "Proposals for Safeguarding Good Scientific Practice."¹ These proposals also apply to the process of completing a doctoral degree.

(3) The German Research Society's rules governing the selection of expert reviewers ("Notes on issues regarding bias") apply for independent supervisors, expert reviewers, and mentors.

(4) The doctoral degree project should be successfully completed within a standard time of three years.

§ 2 Doctoral Committee

(1) The members of the Doctoral Committee, who represent the teaching units of the Faculty (subject matter representatives), are selected by the Faculty Council upon recommendations by the Dean. Members of the Doctoral Committee can only be professors or faculty members who have completed their post-doctoral qualifications.

(2) A member of the Doctoral Committee is appointed from the Faculty Council to chairperson based on the recommendation of the Dean.

(3) The Doctoral Committee makes decisions regarding the opening of the doctoral examination procedure and provides the Dean recommendations on the completion of the doctoral examination procedure.

(4) The Doctoral Committee selects the members of the Examination Committee by means of a simple majority of votes cast, which are comprised of the chairperson, the other examiners, and the expert reviewers.

(5) The Doctoral Committee meets at least four times each semester.

(6) Urgent issues can be decided by written consent in lieu of a meeting.

§ 3 Primary supervisors

(1) A primary supervisor is appointed by the Doctoral Committee.

¹ See also: "Self-Monitoring in the Sciences - Rules for Ensuring Good Scientific Practices at the University of Potsdam" (AmBek. 2/2002).

(2) Professors and lecturers who have completed their post-doctoral qualifications, are members of the faculty, or were included in the acceptance of the dissertation, can be primary supervisors. Retired faculty professors can also serve as supervisors. In this case, the Doctoral Committee must name a second supervisor who is still in active service and is a member of the faculty. The Faculty Council can authorize additional scholars and scientists to serve as primary dissertation supervisors upon case-by-case assessment and the issuance of a resolution to that effect.

(3) The primary supervisor's task is to work together with the doctoral candidate to define a dissertation topic and to provide professional advice and support during the completion of the dissertation. Advising meetings with the primary supervisor should be held once a month as a rule.

(4) The primary supervisor is also responsible for continuous monitoring of the doctoral candidate's progress. The doctoral candidate presents a progress report on their dissertation plans at least once a year.

(5) If a dissertation is not supervised at the University of Potsdam, the doctoral examination procedure can be proposed in the event that a university lecturer from one of the scientific disciplines under Paragraph 2, or a university lecturer from the faculty, recommends the commencement of the procedure. This university lecturer is an expert reviewer. Doctoral candidates earning their degrees outside the University of Potsdam should at the least provide proof of their participation in a one-semester doctoral seminar.

§ 4 Secondary supervisors and mentors

(1) In addition to the primary supervisor, the Doctoral Committee must appoint at least one secondary supervisor and/or mentor. One of these appointees must be independent of the primary supervisor in accordance with § 1 Para 3. Together with the primary supervisor, the appointees take part at least once a year in progress report meetings that discuss the results thus far in the dissertation project. Furthermore, the appointees should be available as discussion partners if problems arise in the relationship between the supervisor and the doctoral candidate.

(2) Secondary supervisors assume a supervisory and consultative function. Professors and university lecturers with post-doctoral qualifications can serve as secondary supervisors. The Doctoral Committee can authorize additional scholars and scientists to serve as secondary dissertation supervisors upon case-by-case assessment and the issuance of a resolution to that effect. They need not belong to the faculty. Secondary supervisors can be nominated retroactively within the first six months after the submission of the supervision agreement if needed.

(3) Mentors assume a consultative function. They must have at least completed their doctoral studies. They do not need to be employed by the University of Potsdam. Mentors can be nominated retroactively within the first six months after the submission of the supervision agreement if needed.

(4) Collective supervision sessions with both supervisors or the primary supervisor and the mentor should also be held upon request by the doctoral candidate.

§ 5 Supervision agreement

(1) A supervision agreement that announces the intended doctoral project is concluded between the supervisors, mentors and doctoral candidate. It must be submitted to the Doctoral Committee at the beginning of doctoral studies, at least one year after beginning work on the proposed dissertation project.

(2) The agreement must at least include:

- The first and last names of the supervisors, mentors, and the doctoral candidate,
- Name of the faculty,
- Name of the department,
- Working title of the dissertation,
- Scientific discipline,
- Anticipated duration of the proposed doctoral project,
- Additional documents as required (see § 8 Paras. 2 and 4),
- Arrangements for progress meetings,
- Tasks of the supervisors and mentors,
- Signatures of the supervisors, mentors, and doctoral candidate, as well as the chairperson of the Doctoral Committee,
- Declaration by the doctoral candidate that he or she will observe the regulations that secure good scientific practices at the University of Potsdam.

(3) Within the first six months after the start of doctoral studies, the doctoral candidate presents a scholarly plan for the entire course of doctoral studies in an appropriate context (e.g., a scholarly colloquium or seminar). It should be possible to successfully complete this plan within the standard time frame of three years. The plan must be modified in cooperation with the supervisors.

§ 6 Expert reviewers

(1) The faculty representative in the Doctoral Committee, working on the recommendation of the supervisors and mentors, appoints three subject-specific professors or university lecturers with post-doctoral qualifications as expert reviewers; one of these reviewers may be a supervisor of the dissertation project, and the other must be an expert reviewer that does not belong to the faculty and is independent of the supervisors, mentor, and the doctoral candidate. In justified individual cases, an expert reviewer who has completed a dissertation in a relevant subject area can be appointed as an expert reviewer.

(2) The expert reviews must evaluate the dissertation, describe the scientific advancement attained by the dissertation, and assess this in international comparison.

(3) If the academic degree of Doctor of Engineering (Dr.-Ing.) is being pursued, then two of the expert reviewers must bear this title as well or be engaged in teaching and research in an engineering-related subject.

§ 7 Examination Committee

(1) The task of the Examination Committee is to conduct an oral examination (Disputation) on the basis of the expert opinions received and to assess the overall quality of the dissertation.

(2) The Examination Committee consists of the expert reviewers and three additional professors or university lecturers with post-secondary qualifications. The majority of the examiners are members of the Faculty of Science at the University of Potsdam. In justified individual cases, evidence of completed doctoral studies in a relevant subject area is sufficient for membership.

(3) For interdisciplinary doctoral studies, the Doctoral Committee must ensure that all involved scientific disciplines are represented in the Examination Committee by electing members as appropriate.

(4) If the academic degree of Doctor of Engineering (Dr.-Ing.) is being pursued, then the number of members in the Examination Committee who have the title of Doctor of Engineering or are engaged in teaching in an engineering-related subject must be a maximum of one less than the number of the other members.

(5) If there is a short-term reason why one or more members cannot attend, or if the minimum requirements under Para. 2-4 and § 14 Para. 2, 3 and 7 cannot be fulfilled, then the chairperson of the Examination Committee can add additional members. The chairperson of the Doctoral Committee must agree to the change in the Examination Committee before the oral examination takes place.

§ 8 Admission requirements for doctoral study

(1) Doctoral candidates must submit, upon agreeing on a dissertation topic with supervisors, a German university degree in the form of a diploma or a master's degree in the primary subject and the final paper in the selected scientific discipline, or a certificate for the first State Examination for the secondary-school teacher-training program (Secondary I and II), for a subject in the Faculty of Science that can be classified as the scientific discipline in which the doctoral degree will be earned.

(2) The German university degree must as a rule have been completed with at least a "satisfactory" ("gut") rating. Degrees earned at scholarly institutions outside of the jurisdiction of the Federal Republic of Germany's Basic Law shall be recognized insofar as their equivalence is determined. If there are doubts concerning equivalence, then the Examination Committee must request further information from the relevant offices.

(3) After passing a Bachelor's examination in a course of study that is essential for doctoral studies, admission to a course of doctoral studies can be granted on an exceptional basis if the capacity for scholarly work is confirmed in a procedure meant to ascertain aptitude. Admission to fast-track courses of doctoral study are governed by the applicable discipline-specific regulations.

(4) When the primary supervisors of the project sign the supervision agreement that announces the intended doctoral project, they confirm that evidence of equivalency under the professional requirements enumerated in Paragraph 1 was given, or that the doctoral candidate can acquire the necessary knowledge or skills with the support of the supervisors and/or by completing

appropriate course modules in the course of their doctoral studies. The subject representative in the Doctoral Committee must be included in this process. The activities required to acquire the necessary knowledge or skills shall be incorporated in the supervision agreement, with specific deadlines if possible.

(5) The supervision of a dissertation by a professor from a university of applied sciences shall be governed on a case-by-case basis by the University of Potsdam and the university of applied sciences.

(6) Those who wish to complete doctoral studies at the Faculty of Science at the University of Potsdam and do not fall under § 3 Para. 5 should enroll at the University of Potsdam for the duration of the dissertation project as a doctoral student. Such students must then participate in at least one semester of doctoral seminars or equivalent courses, with grades, in the relevant department.

(7) One requirement for the awarding the academic degree of Doctor of Engineering (Dr.-Ing.) is that the dissertation must be focused on a scholarly topic in the field of engineering.

§ 9 Dissertation

(1) The dissertation must

- advance scientific knowledge by means of independent research,
- describe the methods applied to complete the task in a demonstrable manner,
- clearly represent the results, interpret them in the context of relevant current knowledge, and discuss the results,
- contain complete documentation of the scholarly literature and aids applied in the project.

(2) The dissertation should not exceed a length of approx. 100 DIN A4 pages (discipline-specific guidelines can deviate from this rule), and must be composed in German or English.

§ 10 Bi-national doctoral studies

(1) The requirements enumerated in these regulations for the procedural aspects and content of doctoral studies are also applied to bi-national doctoral studies. The cooperation agreement that must be concluded for every doctoral candidate that seeks a joint program of doctoral study between the

University of Potsdam and an international university can include exemption clauses in individual cases insofar as the particular procedure for bi-national doctoral studies requires it. All exemption clauses require the approval of the Faculty Council. The Doctoral Committee provides a recommendation for this upon the request of the primary supervisor.

(2) The prerequisite for bi-national doctoral studies is that major parts of the dissertation work take place at both institutions.

§ 11 Publication-based dissertation

(1) The Doctoral Committee issues specific guidelines for publication-based dissertations for the relevant individual teaching units. The university instructors who represent these teaching units in class and in research on the Faculty must be involved in their development. The dissertation must be recognizable as an independent achievement. An additional document that lists individual publications cannot be accepted. The title page must clearly state that this is a publication-based dissertation.

(2) For works by several authors, the doctoral candidate's share of work must be identified. This must be explained separately and approved by the primary supervisor.

(3) The data used must be appended to the dissertation in an appropriate manner.

§ 12 Commencing the doctoral examination procedure

(1) Applications to commence the doctoral examination procedure must be submitted to the chairperson of the Doctoral Committee at the office of the Doctoral Committee. The application must include:

1. Four printed copies of the dissertation and a digital copy,
2. Ten copies of a scholarly abstract,
3. Original or certified copies of the supervision agreement under § 5,
4. A personal data sheet that focuses specifically on scholarly development,
5. A list of published or forthcoming manuscripts or other scholarly achievements, including any assessments, statements, reviews,

6. A certified copy of the final grade certificate in accordance with § 8,
7. A declaration that this work has not been submitted to any other institution of higher education, and that it was prepared independently and exclusively with the specified funds,
8. Evidence of teaching experience,
9. Evidence for at least a one-semester doctoral seminar,
10. Evidence of enrollment as a doctoral candidate,
11. A police clearance certificate if the applicant was ex-matriculated more than three months previously and was not in public or ecclesiastical service,
12. A copy of a generally comprehensible summary in German,
13. For bi-national doctoral studies, evidence of the cooperative agreement approved by the Faculty Council for collaborative doctoral studies between the University of Potsdam and the international partner university.

(2) The Doctoral Committee should make a decision regarding the completion of doctoral studies at their next meeting if the complete application was submitted at least fourteen days in advance.

(3) The chairperson of the Doctoral Committee will notify the doctoral candidate in writing of their decision. A rejection must be accompanied by an explanation. An application may be rejected in particular if

1. The evidence named in Paragraph 1 is not given,
2. The submitted version of the dissertation, or a version that is not essentially different, has been submitted for evaluation to another faculty, or has not been accepted,
3. The Faculty of Science cannot guarantee an assessment due to discipline-specific reasons,
4. Justified doubt as to the veracity of declarations under Para. 1 no. 7, or
5. There are compelling reasons that would lead to the withdrawal of the doctoral degree in accordance with § 17.

The Faculty Council makes decisions regarding objections to a rejection of the completion of doctoral studies.

(4) Each of the three expert reviewers are given a copy of the dissertation and of the scientific summary; each of the other members of the Examination Committee and the Doctoral Committee are sent a copy of the scientific summary. Information about the initiation of the procedure

and the topic is made accessible to all faculty departments. One copy each of the dissertation and of the scientific summary are made available to the public, two weeks before and up to the day before the oral examination date, in the office of the Doctoral Committee. The display of the work is reported to all faculty departments with the invitation to the oral examination.

(5) All faculty professors and university lecturers with post-doctoral qualifications have the right to present their objections to the work, in writing, to the Doctoral Committee, before the display period is over.

§ 13 Review and evaluation of the dissertation

(1) Within eight weeks after receiving the dissertation, the expert reviewers report independently of one another whether the dissertation requirements articulated in § 9 Para. 1 have been satisfied. The expert reviews can be delivered to the office by post, electronically, or by fax. These reviews provide a detailed recommendation as to the acceptance, revision or rejection of the dissertation. If the recommendation is for acceptance, then an evaluative grade for the dissertation is given on a separate page. The following grades can be given:

- rite
- cum laude
- magna cum laude
- summa cum laude.

(2) The rating of summa cum laude can only be awarded when all three expert reviewers unanimously recommend this grade.

(3) If an expert review does not arrive within the deadlines, then the Doctoral Committee decides whether to agree to a deadline extension or to appoint another expert reviewer.

(4) If at least two expert reviewers recommend that the dissertation be rejected, then the doctoral examination procedure ends without success. If one expert reviewer recommends rejection, then the subject-specific expert in the Doctoral Committee requests another expert reviewer through the Doctoral Committee. If an expert reviewer requires revisions as a condition of acceptance, then the doctoral candidate is granted two months within which to complete the revisions. These changes require the approval of all expert reviewers. The Examination Committee presides over any

objections under § 12 Para. 5. These Examination Committee decisions require the approval of the Doctoral Committee. One copy of the rejected work shall remain with the expert reviews at the University. Doctoral candidates whose work is rejected can apply again for admission with another or with a significantly modified version of the work after one year at the earliest.

(5) If all of the expert reviewers recommend the acceptance of the dissertation and there are no objections under § 12 Para. 5, then the dissertation is accepted.

§ 14 Oral examination (Disputation) and subsequent evaluation

(1) The Examination Committee sets a time and place for the oral examination and provides public, university-wide notice for at least 14 days, including the announcement of the dissertation topic. In justified exceptional cases, the Doctoral Committee can allow deviation from this regulation. The chairperson of the Examination Committee invites the doctoral candidate and the members of the Examination Committee to the oral examination and appoints a person to keep the minutes. All of the members of the Examination Committee and the Doctoral Committee have the right to view the expert reviews. The doctoral candidate has this right, with the exception of viewing the page with the recommended rating.

(2) The quorum for the oral examination is at least four members of the Examination Committee under § 7, including one of the expert reviewers. The primary supervisor can submit a request to the Doctoral Committee to conduct a video conference for the oral examination for individual members of the Examination Committee.

(3) If the expert reviews recommend awarding the rating of "summa cum laude," then five members of the Examination Committee under § 7, including at least one expert reviewer, must be present. The attending members must be able to assess the breadth of the scientific discipline.

(4) The oral examination is a public event. It is comprised of a 30-minute presentation, followed by questioning of the doctoral candidate that should not exceed 60 minutes. The presentation shall explain the scholarly problem in the dissertation, the methodological approach used to find a solution, the most important results of the project, and its place in the current body of knowledge. The subsequent questioning session on the dissertation

and its scholarly context must demonstrate that the doctoral candidate has developed his or her topic on the basis of detailed knowledge of his or her specialized area, the relevant literature, and methodological considerations. The Examination Committee can upon request conduct the proceedings in a language other than German or English, if this language is typical in the international literature of the scientific discipline and a rating of the oral examination remains possible.

(5) The chairperson of the Examination Committee commences the oral examination by introducing the Examination Committee and the doctoral candidate's scholarly background. The questioning is performed initially exclusively by the members of the Examination Committee and is oriented towards the requirements for an oral examination presentation articulated in Paragraph 4. The chairperson can then permit questions from the audience.

(6) The Examination Committee then meets immediately after the oral examination, excluding the public, to evaluate the doctoral dissertation. The oral examination is evaluated upon the basis of

- The quality of the presentation,
- The capacity to engage with questions and critical comments, and
- The demonstrated state of knowledge.

Then the examiners give an oral explanation of the rating given. The oral examination is not considered successful if at least two examiners rate the presentation or the questioning as "failed." A failed oral examination can only be repeated once. The second oral examination should be scheduled no later than six months later. If this repeat examination is also failed, then the doctoral examination procedure ends without success.

When the Committee sets the rating for the doctoral dissertation, it can only deviate one rating from the expert review vote. A simple majority of the present members of the Examination Committee must approve deviations.

(7) The "summa cum laude" rating can only assigned if

- All of the expert reviewers have granted the dissertation a rating of "summa cum laude,"
- Five members of the Examination Committee, including one expert reviewer and an audience member at the oral examination who is from a department other than the department responsible for the oral examination, and
- The Examination Committee and the present expert reviewers, in closed session,

vote to approve the application, with a maximum of one vote against.

If the Examination Committee decides together with the expert reviewers present to award the rating "summa cum laude," then the chairperson is required to conclude the process by drafting a statement or Laudatio that contains an appraisal of the publication as well as the oral examination.

(8) At the conclusion of the private session, the chairperson of the Examination Committee notifies the doctoral candidate, if they have passed the examination, of the rating given to their dissertation. The chairperson of the Examination Committee points out that this rating requires approval by the Doctoral Committee.

(9) The academic degree can only be awarded upon the issuance of a doctoral certificate. This is predicated upon the publication of the dissertation.

§ 15 Publication of the dissertation

(1) The delivery of an additional ten bound copies of the dissertation to the University library qualifies as publication of the dissertation. This must be done within twelve weeks after the oral examination and is a prerequisite for issuance of preliminary written permission to carry the title of Dr. rer. nat. or Dr.-Ing.

(2) Publication is also considered to be the submission of four complete copies printed on non-aging, wood-free and acid-free paper in a permanent durable binding, as well as an electronic version in a file format and on media as determined by the University library. The publication must contain an abstract in German and English. The doctoral candidate must transfer the rights for the electronic publication of the dissertation to the University of Potsdam, the German Library in Frankfurt am Main/Leipzig (DDB), and if necessary the Special Collections Library of the German Research Society (DFG); the doctoral candidate must also ensure that the electronic version corresponds to the accepted dissertation. The University library assesses the submitted version for readability and conformance with requirements. The submission of files that do not meet the requirements of file format or media, and for which the requisite rights of use have not been granted, does not qualify as publication.

(3) The expert reviewers can state requirements for the publication of the dissertation

in terms of content corrections. The Examination Committee adjudicates any differences.

(4) Upon request, expert reviewers that have rejected a dissertation can elect to not have their name appear in the dissertation.

(5) The final draft of a dissertation is authorized with the signing of a review certificate (Imprimatur). This authorization is performed by the primary supervisor.

(6) In the event of publication under Paragraph 1, if the doctoral candidate and his/her primary supervisor submit a joint application with sufficient justification, then the publication can proceed in such a way that for a specific amount of time, only the abstract will be rendered accessible, not the complete text of the dissertation. Sufficient justification exists if

- a) Parts of the dissertation have been accepted for publication at a scholarly journal, and the publication contract does not allow these parts to be published previously,
- b) A patent was filed.

§ 16 Doctoral certificate

The successful completion of doctoral studies is documented by a certificate in the German language. The certificate must clearly communicate:

- The name of the university and faculty,
- The last name, first name, date and place of birth of the doctoral candidate,
- The doctoral degree awarded,
- The scientific discipline,
- The dissertation topic,
- The grade,
- The place of issue, the date of the oral examination as the date on which studies were completed,
- The signature of the Dean and the President of the University of Potsdam.

§ 17 Annulment and withdrawal

(1) If it becomes clear before the issuance of the doctoral certificate that the applicant has engaged in deception in their dissertation or with regard to the prerequisites for admission into the doctoral examination procedure, then the Faculty of Science must declare the doctoral work invalid.

(2) The Faculty can withdraw the academic degree if one of the reasons named in Paragraph 1 are subsequently established, or if the rules of good scientific practice were not observed.

(3) Proposals for the annulment or withdrawal of a doctoral degree must be directed to the Doctoral Committee. The Doctoral Committee conducts an assessment and then submits its recommendation to the Faculty Council. The Faculty Council can only decide for the withdrawal or annulment with a two-thirds majority.

(4) The person affected must be given an opportunity to state their position before the decision is made.

§ 18 Honorary doctorates

(1) The Faculty of Science can award the degree and dignity of the honorary degree of Doctor of Natural Sciences (Dr. rer. nat. h.c.) in recognition of special achievements in the sciences represented in this Faculty.

(2) Upon a request by a professor whose primary occupation is the Faculty of Science at the University of Potsdam, the Faculty Council shall form a commission to evaluate the scientific achievements of the potential honoree. The commission consists of the Dean, five additional University teachers, a member of academic staff, and a student. All members of the Doctoral Committee must be notified of the formation of the commission. Upon their own application, every member of the Doctoral Committee can become a voting member of this commission.

(3) A proposal to award an honorary doctorate requires a two-thirds majority vote of the commission members. After the submission of the commission's proposal, the Faculty Council makes a decision in a session called by the Dean. The decision to award an honorary doctorate requires a two-thirds majority of the members present at the Faculty Council session.

(4) The awarding of an honorary doctorate is completed with the handover of a certificate in which the achievements of the honoree are emphasized. The certificate bears the University seal and the signature of the Dean, the President, and the Rector of the University of Potsdam.

§ 19 Application, expiration and transitional provisions

(1) The regulations for a doctoral degree must be published in the Official Public Notices of the University of Potsdam and go into effect on 1 January 2014. The regulations for a doctoral degree of 27 November 2003 (AmBek. UP No. 1/2004 p.2) simultaneously expire.

The regulations for a doctoral degree named in Sentence 2 remains in force for doctoral candidates whose doctoral examination process was started by the Doctoral Committee before the application of these regulations for a doctoral degree.

(2) Until 31 December 2016, §§ 4 and 5 as well as § 12 Para. 1 Pt. 3 of these regulations do not apply to doctoral candidates who were admitted to doctoral studies up to 31 December 2013.

(3) Doctoral candidates who are admitted before these regulations come into force can request before 31 December 2016 that these regulations apply to their doctoral examination procedure.