

Quality Criteria of the University of Potsdam

The Quality Management of the University of Potsdam regarding doctoral projects is aimed at a minimum standard for quality criteria in all graduate programs and for individuals working on a doctorate in the context of the Potsdam Graduate School. The rights and duties of those working on a doctorate and their advisors shall be regulated transparently and perceived reliably within the institution. The Potsdam Graduate School goes by internationally recognized quality standards in structured doctoral candidate education (cf. UNESCO 2001, EUA 2007) and continuously develops its minimum criteria catalogue in consultation with the faculties and external partners of the university in order to safeguard quality.

The following quality criteria are regarded as minimum standards to be met for dissertation projects. More detailed agreements and necessary subject specific modifications are possible.

- **Written support agreements:** The confirmation of a dissertation project in the context of the Potsdam Graduate School is regulated by a written support agreement which determines the rights and duties of the doctoral student and her/his advisor.
- **Duration of the doctorate:** Advisor and doctoral student oblige themselves to strive for a doctorate degree in the conception and implementation of the doctoral project within 3 years (with a necessary preparation year: 4 years). Framework conditions for this are possible (e.g. choice of a topic which has to be worked on in the above-mentioned time period, good preparation, an optimal advisory situation and networking for the doctoral student, participation possibility at inter-disciplinary offerings of the Potsdam Graduate School).
- **Doctorate concept:** Within the first half year the doctoral student presents a scientific concept for the complete doctorate in an appropriate framework (e.g. in a scientific colloquium or seminar) which makes the degree possible in the time planned. In arrangement with the advisor the concept may be modified.
- **Duty to report:** The doctoral student introduces the progress in the dissertation project within a suitable framework (e.g. scientific colloquium or seminar) at least once a year. After arrangement with the advisor a short written report is alternatively also possible. The verbal or written report serves as a base for possible modifications of the work schedule.
- **Support team:** Support and accompaniment of the doctoral candidate is made by two experienced scientists, if necessary from several fields of knowledge ('interdepartmental support'): Task of the support team is advice and scientific support oriented toward the individual strengths and development needs of the doctoral student on the basis of a continuous check of the doctoral progress. As a rule, support conversations with the main

advisor should take place at least monthly. As a rule, joint consultations with the support team should take place at least twice a year.

- **Development of career plans:** Oriented toward technical criteria personal development plans are created and updated, and possibilities for realization discussed regularly in the context of the advisory team. The plans are based on goals of the doctoral student as well as opinions of the support team on necessary further developments and accomplishment.
- **Publications:** Doctoral students and advisors strive to publish a fixed minimum number of subject-specific, high-quality publications in the context of the thesis project. The concept 'of high quality' is specified dependent on the subject.
- **Mentors:** Doctoral students have the possibility of identifying mentors in addition to the support team. On the one hand this can be an additional advisor, independent of the subject (e.g. gender specific) to advise on possibilities, on the other hand they can take on a role as a mediator in the case of conflicts (e.g. in the context of the support). The Potsdam Graduate School has a current list of university instructors and college lecturers which have declared their readiness for the job as mentor.
- **Good scientific practice:** Advisor and doctoral student commit to compliance with the rules of good scientific practice – Detailed information (in German): http://www.intern.uni-potsdam.de/u/forschung/national/gesetze_und_richtlinien/selbstkontr_wissenschaft.pdf

Additionally structured doctorate programs must satisfy the following criteria:

- **Transparency in the doctoral student's support:** Clearly defined selection criteria, support structures, doctorate concepts and goals, with specifications accessible to all involved.
- **Family kindness** of the education
- **Equality concepts:** These concepts contain concrete and effective positive measures which provide for the equality of women and men in the doctorate phase. Deviations from a distribution of 50:50 % of the sexes within doctorate programs require a written explanation.

Sources:

European University Association (2007). Doctoral program in Europe Universities: Achievements and Challenges. Report prepared for European Universities and secretary of high Education.

URL: [http://www.eua.be/fileadmin/user_upload/files/Publications/Doctoral Programmes in Europe s Universities.pdf](http://www.eua.be/fileadmin/user_upload/files/Publications/Doctoral_Programmes_in_Europe_s_Universities.pdf) [09.03.2009].

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2001). Quality Assurance: Worldly high Education framework of action. Shaping a new vision of high Education. Article 11th qualitative evaluation.

URL: http://www.unesco.org/education/studyingabroad/what_is/quality_assurance_wche.shtml [09.03.2009].