

# Questions and answers about the doctorate

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This document contains answers to frequently asked questions about doctorates. It is not an official document! In principle, the requirements formulated in the official regulations and implementation regulations always apply.

**Please note that failure to comply with orders, rules and regulations may result in a delay in your process or even in failing your doctorate, depending on the severity of the violation.**

*The use of the male form in this text for editorial reasons applies equally to female persons.*

## 1. Topic: Starting a PhD

If you have obtained your degree from a foreign university or from a German university of applied sciences, please refer to the information in the files "Information for alumni of foreign universities" and "Information for graduates" in the download area.

### 1.1 Who can supervise my thesis?

It is the job of the candidate to find a mentor for himself. All "active" professors (i.e. professors within the meaning of § 61 Abs.1 HHG) and junior professors of FB15 can choose their own candidates as well as external candidates, i.e. those who are based in other working groups inside and outside the university.

Adjunct professors and private lecturers (PDs) (professors and PDs who belong to FB15 as members as well as external professors habilitated in FB15) as well as professors who are second members of FB15, and professors co-opted at FB15 can only look after candidates for FB15 working for their own working group.

One of the two supervisors, who later serve as reviewers, can be located externally - outside the FB15 - but must at least be habilitated.

### 1.2 What do I have to consider when completing the form "Application for acceptance as a doctoral student"? Do I have to enroll in the department as a doctoral student and enroll as a doctoral student at the Goethe University?

The application for acceptance as a doctoral student should be submitted to the Dean's Office within three months of admission of your doctoral student activity (signed twice, by you and the supervisor (s), if possible also from the second supervisor). For degrees obtained outside the FB15, please submit an officially certified copy of your diploma / master certificate and the certificate (only one copy). In order to save costs, you can alternatively also present the originals at the Dean's Office. For graduates of the FB15 a simple, uncertified copy is enough. Upon acceptance by the doctoral committee, you will receive a sealed copy of your application for acceptance as a doctoral student signed by the Dean, which serves as proof of your acceptance.

As of 01.04.2017, the new bilingual application form must be used for acceptance as a doctoral student, which you will find on our homepage as usual. Part of this form is the consent from the supervisor and the agreement about doctoral supervision, which were developed in the interests and for the protection of the doctoral students. Here, the designation of a second supervisor is provided. Secondary supervisors are not the second appraisers, but may be persons - usually from your working group - who have at least a doctorate and who are your direct contact persons for scientific questions during the doctoral studies. The second supervisor can be submitted later in the first year, this is the form "Nachmeldung ZweitbetreuerIn" (Late registration second supervisor). We do not send confirmation via registered second supervisors.

## **Doctoral students, who have been accepted for doctoral studies before 01.04.2017, do NOT have to name a secondary supervisor!**

In addition, from 01.04.2017 the application for acceptance as doctoral student has to be accompanied by a report, the details of which you should discuss with your supervisor. It should contain at least one page and the content should include an introduction to the topic, the planned methods and the expected results. Regardless of their employment status at the Goethe University, doctoral students can according to paragraph 3 (3) (11) of the ImmaVO (Immatrikulationsverordnung/ Enrollment Regulations) shall be enrolled in the Student Secretariat on the Westend campus of Goethe University if they submit the signed and sealed application for acceptance as a doctoral student; currently they do not have to, but this may change soon. If this happens, we will inform you immediately via the mailing list (if you have not yet registered, here is the link:

[http://dlist.server.uni-frankfurt.de/mailman/listinfo/promovierende\\_bio](http://dlist.server.uni-frankfurt.de/mailman/listinfo/promovierende_bio)).

For doctoral candidates, there are currently no deadlines for enrollment in the student office. However, the contribution for the current semester must be paid in full regardless of the time of enrollment. Please inform yourself from the homepage of the student secretariat about the procedure.

### **1.3 What do I have to do as a graduate of a foreign university?**

Graduates of foreign universities must submit their application for acceptance as a doctoral student as early as possible; Please refer to the file "Graduates of Foreign Universities" in the download area to find out which documents have to be submitted. Candidates whose degrees do not correspond to those of German universities in terms of scope and quality are generally accepted provisionally and with conditions as doctoral students and must as a rule fulfill requirements within 12 months from the Doctoral Committee.

### **1.4 What do I have to do as a graduate of a University of Applied Sciences?**

University of Applied Sciences graduates wishing to earn a doctorate from the Life Sciences Department must fulfill requirements stipulated by the Doctoral Committee following receipt of the application for acceptance as a PhD student. In any event, the applicant must submit two reports giving reasons for the particular qualification of the candidate. One of the reports must be written by a member of the Department of Life Sciences of Goethe University, who is not the supervisor of the dissertation. Further information can be found in the download area in the file "Information for FH graduates".

### **1.5 What should I do if the topic of my work has changed?**

If it is only an editorial amendment or modification of the provisional working document indicated in the application for acceptance as a doctoral candidate, you do not need to take action. However, if it is a substantive / thematic change, it must be communicated to the doctoral committee. Please use the form "Application for change of working title", which can be found in the download area.

### **1.6 Can I change supervisor?**

According to § 4 (10) of the PhD regulations of the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences of the Johann Wolfgang Goethe-University Frankfurt am Main, you can apply for a change of supervision relationship. Please use the form "request for change of supervisor" (Antrag auf Betreuerwechsel), which can be found in the download area.

## **1.7 Which institutional connection do I have to specify in the publications and manuscripts submitted during my doctoral studies?**

Regarding the specifications of the Goethe University as an institution to award a doctorate, the following applies:

(1) In principle, the Department of Life Sciences of the Goethe University Frankfurt am Main should be indicated as an institutional affiliation (or as one of several affiliations).

(2) If this is not possible, a reasoned, informal application must be submitted to the Dean as chair of the Doctoral Committee.

## **2. Topic: Dissertation**

### **2.1 In which language can I write my dissertation?**

In principle, dissertations can be submitted in German or English.

Regardless of the language of the dissertation, a German summary of at most two pages must be submitted separately with the dissertation and the other documents in the doctoral office.

In the case of an English-language dissertation, a 5-page German abstract must also be included in the dissertation. Support provided by others in translation can be explained in a footnote.

This also applies to manuscript / publication-based dissertations.

### **2.2 What are the specifications for formatting the dissertation?**

At the end of the doctoral degree regulations, there is a sample of the title page. In addition, you are free in your design in terms of writing, etc., but should of course follow the advice of your supervisor and successful role models. If you include publications that have already been published, this must be in the format of the journal.

### **2.3 Is it possible to include in my dissertation text quotes, tables or figures that others have published or worked on?**

Basically yes, although your own elements are of course better. If you use elements from other authors, it is very important that you specify the sources, either as a quote or, if the element is not published, with a corresponding explanation. Otherwise, you are committing plagiarism!

### **2.4 What do I do if my dissertation will contain texts, tables or illustrations that I have previously published myself?**

If parts of the dissertation have already been published or just submitted, and text passages, illustrations, data or tables from these publications are included in the dissertation, they must be identified as a self-citation in order to avoid self-plagiarism. Make sure that it is clear which contributions come from you and those from co-authors!

### **2.5 How can I integrate texts that have already been published into my work? Concerning paraphrasing: Is there a precise number how words in a sentence that can be quoted and how many words have to be paraphrased?**

There are two ways to quote something already published: Either, you put the entire sentence / part you quoted in quotation marks, followed by the reference (for example, Mayer and Müller 2002). This is an original quote and common for social science texts. In the natural sciences we mostly use paraphrases, i.e., you reformulate the published information and provide the

corresponding reference. In the latter case, you should actually rephrase and not just replace single words.

These references affect self-published texts and texts of other authors alike.

## **2.6 Do I need to ask the publishers / magazines for permission to reprint already published illustrations from my own publications or other publications and do I have to indicate this under each picture?**

You must specify the source in the caption below each figure. It is recommended that you obtain the permission of the magazine / publisher!

## **2.7 I would like to use my own publications or submitted manuscripts for the dissertation. How does it work?**

For this, the regulations of the faculty apply, which are available for registered doctoral students in the Dean's Office (dekanat15@bio.uni-frankfurt.de). Please note that publication- / manuscript-based doctorates are only possible on request according to the regulations of the department. The corresponding form "Application for approval of a publication-based doctorate" can be found in the download area.

## **2.8 I would like to contribute more than three publications or submitted manuscripts to the dissertation, is that possible?**

Yes, a fourth and further publications (manuscripts) or additional data can be included in suitable positions, if you complement the first three works thematically. It is important that the whole content of the dissertation is a "rounded thing".

## **2.9 I would like to include a publication with shared first authorship in a publication-based dissertation. Is that the first authorship?**

A shared first authorship counts as a first authorship if it is a particularly good (large, important) publication in a reputable journal and if the supervisor advocates it. The evaluation of shared first authorship as the first authorship requires the approval of the Doctoral Committee. For this reason, in the case of shared first authorship, the forms "Declaration of the Author's Contributions to the Publication" with the application for approval of a publication / manuscript-based dissertation must be submitted.

A book chapter can not be ascribed with double first authorship.

Dissertations should use at most one shared first authorship. If more than one publication / manuscript with a shared first authorship is used, such publications going beyond such a limit will be counted as follows: for two authors sharing the first authorship, the publication / manuscript will count as 0.5, for three authors as 0, 33, etc. Thus, a correspondingly larger number of publications is required to fulfill the minimum requirement of 2 (publication-based) or 3 (manuscript-based) papers.

## **2.10 Can I use Short Communication papers for a publication- / manuscript-based doctorate?**

Short Communication papers can be used for a publication- / manuscript-based dissertation.

## **2.11 One of the manuscripts I submitted before handing in my dissertation was rejected by a journal before the defence appointment. What should I do?**

For you (and the evaluation of your work), only the status of the manuscript at the time of submission counts. However, in the case of manuscript-based dissertations, you must submit copies of the current feedback from the journals (statements by the editors) to the Dean's Office for all works submitted as a manuscript at the same time as the defence form is submitted to the Doctoral Office (see Implementing Regulations). The Dean's Office forwards these documents to the Chairman of the commission.

## **2.12 I would like to include a book chapter in a publication-based dissertation, but no peer review is planned. What can I do?**

If a peer review is not planned, the chapter should be reviewed by an external expert after consultation with the supervisor. This process is described briefly on the page with the explanations about the authors' shares.

## **2.13 What must be considered when selecting the two reviewers?**

One of the two reviewers should be a professor in the Department of Life Sciences in the sense of § 61 Abs.1 HHG, i.e. an "active" professor.

The reviewers must come from different working groups.

Co-authors of the publications / manuscripts that are part of the publications / manuscript-based dissertations can not serve as second reviewers.

## **2.14 What must be considered when submitting?**

Since 01.04.2016, doctoral candidates of the FB15 have had to submit the form "Information on the form of the dissertation" which can be found on the homepage of the faculty as well as on the website of the Doctoral Office.

The Doctoral Office only accepts complete documents; Incomplete documents received by mail will be returned. Information on the required documents can be found on the homepage of the Doctoral Office: <http://www.uni-frankfurt.de/42800906/startseite?>

## **2.15 Tip**

If your work contains no color illustrations, the printing costs of the university printing company are very favorable. Example: Per copy (160 pages on 100g paper, printed on one side in black and white, including imitation leather cover + binding) 8,90 € / as of February 2016.

# **3. Topic: Defence**

## **3.1 Who comes into consideration as a member of the Defence Committee?**

According to the doctoral regulations § 9 applies: "The members of the examination board, which belong to the doctoral subject area, should have the majority in the committee."

The department also notes that at least three of the four committee members should be members of FB15 (and not relatives). This means that a maximum of one emeritus professor, one external private lecturer or Adjunct Professor, co-opted or external professor may belong to the committee.

Adjunct Professors and private lecturers who have not written a report, may only be designated as examiners if they belong to the FB15.

Furthermore, committee proposals will only be approved if an FB15 member comes from a different institute than the one in which the dissertation was written. External evaluators can not be used in this context.

In the examining board as a rule only a maximum of two examiners can sit who have not written reports.

### **3.2 What do I have to do to organize my defence?**

If your circulation procedure has not been completed after five weeks, but you need to complete your defence appointments promptly for compelling reasons, please contact the Dean's Office. The candidate will be notified at the end of the round by the Doctoral Office and will receive a form in which the names of the reviewers and the nominations for two additional members of the committee and the location (see question 3.3) and date are to be entered. This form must be completed and signed by the supervisor at the latest two weeks before the desired date of the defence in the Doctoral Office. On the basis of this committee proposal, the doctoral committee shall determine the composition of the committee, the chair of the defence committee and the taking of minutes before the defence date is announced. Every non-examiner on the examination board should be provided with the dissertation at least one week before the defence. The responsibility for this lies with the candidate.

### **3.3 Where does the defence take place?**

Defences must take place in the faculty rooms in the Biologicum or Biozentrum on the Riedberg campus. For the reservation of the room, please contact one of the secretaries at the institute for the Biologicum (Mr. Michael Born, Tel. 069 798 42270 or Ms. Melanie Groth, Tel. 069 798 42000) and for the Biozentrum to Ms. Schulze in Technical Building Management (Schulze em.uni-frankfurt.de, Tel. 069 798 29219).

### **3.4 How long should my lecture be?**

The defence lecture should last 15 to a maximum of 20 minutes, and this time should not be exceeded! The lecture can be held in German or English.

## **4. Topic: Submission of deposited copies in the library**

### **4.1 Do I have to / can I subsequently correct errors discovered in the deposited copies?**

Only if the Defence Committee grants you appropriate conditions can you may make changes; otherwise, the assessed version should agree with the submitted version.

### **4.2 Can problems arise with a journal if my dissertation with data for a as yet unpublished paper is already online on the library homepage?**

You can ask the library to publish the dissertation after a waiting period.

In principle, it is important that you indicate to the journals in which you publish that the results have been used for a dissertation.



## **5. Topic: Handover of the certificate**

### **5.1 What do I have to do to get my certificate?**

After the defence, your file will be sent to the Doctoral Office, where the certificate will be issued and sent to the Dean to be signed; afterwards the certificate goes back to the Doctoral Office. About ten days after the defence, you can inquire at the Doctoral Office if your certificate is already available. You will receive your certificate in the Doctoral Office (not in the Dean's Office as prescribed in the doctoral degree regulations) and only after presentation of the certificate from the university library confirming the submission of your deposited copies.

*In case of disagreements, the German version shall prevail.*