

**Witten/Herdecke University**

**Regulations on Doctoral Procedures**

**Faculty of Health**

**Doctorate in Philosophy**

- **doctor philosophiae (Dr. phil.)**

**Revised version 1 June 2015**

## **Content**

- § 1 General
- § 2 Purpose of doctoral procedures
- § 3 Doctoral procedures
  - 1. Committees and officials
    - 1.1 Mentor
    - 1.2 Doctoral committees
  - 2. Sequence of doctoral procedures
    - 2.1 Acceptance as doctoral candidate
    - 2.2 Doctoral thesis
    - 2.3 Application
    - 2.4 Grading of doctoral thesis
    - 2.5 Oral examination
    - 2.6 Disputation - public defense
- § 4 Resolution on doctoral procedures
- § 5 Publication
- § 6 Doctoral certificate
- § 7 Withdrawal of doctoral degree
- § 8 Inspection of procedural files
- § 9 Publicity
- § 10 Honorary doctorate
- § 11 Entry into force

## **§ 1**

### **General**

The Faculty of Health at Witten/Herdecke University awards the academic degree of a doctor of philosophy – doctor philosophiae (Dr. phil.) on the basis of a scientific treatise (doctoral thesis) and a disputation/public defense of this treatise. It may award an honorary doctorate of philosophy (doctor philosophiae honoris causa – Dr. phil. h. c.) for outstanding academic and social merits.

## **§ 2**

### **Purpose of doctoral procedures**

Doctoral procedures serve as evidence of a candidate's competences in independent scientific research, documented via a written treatise (doctoral thesis) in a scientific discipline represented with a Chair or professorship at the Faculty of Health, Witten/Herdecke University, as well as an oral public defense (disputation) of this thesis.

## **§ 3**

### **Doctoral procedures**

Doctoral procedures commence with the applicant's acceptance as doctoral candidate and end with the resolution on the candidate's performance.

#### **1. Committees and officials**

##### **1.1 Mentor**

The mentor is the candidate's personal contact in doctoral procedures and provides continuous support. The mentor holds either a professorship or postdoctoral lecturing qualification at the UW/H Faculty of Health.

##### **1.2 Doctoral committees**

A doctoral committee is set up for a doctoral procedure at the Faculty of Health to perform all pertinent tasks and those assigned to it by these regulations.

Responsibilities of the doctoral committee include in particular:

- to ascertain requirements for, and decide on admission to, doctoral procedures in accordance with § 3, 2.1,
- to open doctoral procedures and appoint reviewers in accordance with §3, 2.3,
- to determine dates and deadlines,
- to decide on special cases in doctoral procedures, and
- to rule on objections.

The doctoral committee consists of at least eight members of the Faculty of Health, of these at least seven members from the group of university teachers in accordance with § 11, 1.1 Higher Education Act (HG) and one member from the group of academic staff in accordance with § 11, 1.2 HG. The chairperson must belong to the group of university teachers and is elected by the respective doctoral committee. Members of the doctoral committee are suggested by the Dean and elected by the Faculty Council. They may be re-elected. Their term of office is four years. The composition of the committee must be announced.

Passing of committee resolutions is not open to the public. Decisions are taken by simple majority. The vote of the chairperson shall decide in case of a tie. Only members from the group of university teachers and postdoctoral academic staff have a vote in decisions on examination performance.

The doctoral committee may delegate current business to the chairperson. Resolutions on negative decisions and objections require a vote of the committee.

The chairperson shall oblige the members of the doctoral committee to observe confidentiality.

The doctoral committee ensures that regulations on doctoral procedures are adhered to. It reports to the Faculty Council on the progress of doctoral procedures on a regular basis and may suggest revisions in regulations and improvements in procedures.

## **2. Sequence of doctoral procedures**

### **2.1 Acceptance as doctoral candidate**

#### **2.1.1 Admission requirements for doctoral procedures Dr. phil.**

Applicants must document a completed regular degree course in a discipline of obvious relevance to psychology, nursing science or adjacent fields to the disciplines represented at the Faculty of Health:

- a) a degree course at a higher education institution with a regular study period of at least eight semesters, concluded with a degree other than „Bachelor“ and a final grade of “good” or better, or
- b) a degree course at a higher education institution of at least six semesters, concluded with a final grade of “good” or better, and subsequent appropriate studies in the pertinent discipline in preparation of the doctoral project, or
- c) a Master course in the sense of § 61, 2.2 HG, concluded with a final grade of “good” or better.

2.1.2 The doctoral candidate determines the subject of the doctoral thesis in the form of a standardized statement of supervision under the guidance of the mentor. The statement of supervision contains an exposé which describes the planned research project (objective,

methods, prospective results, financing plan and time schedule), and forms the basis for the doctoral thesis. Mentor and candidate must both sign the statement of supervision.

2.1.3 The candidate registers the doctoral project with the chairperson of the doctoral committee by submitting the statement of supervision. Within two weeks of receipt the chairperson of the doctoral committee checks whether the application meets requirements according to 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 and checks submitted documents for completeness. The chairperson may contact an expert in biometrics or other expert to evaluate the exposé. The candidate must be given a deadline of two weeks to revise the statement of supervision. The applicant achieves the status of doctoral candidate as soon as the statement of supervision is approved and may then be registered at the Registrar's Office.

## **2.2 Doctoral thesis**

2.2.1 The doctoral thesis must be a candidate's independent academic performance. The written thesis must constitute a contribution to scientific progress in one of the disciplines represented at the Faculty of Health and provide evidence of the candidate's competence to elaborate on a scientific topic under supervision and using sound methods, and to present the findings comprehensibly and with due reference to the literature. Candidates must adhere to the methodological principles of their discipline.

2.2.2 Medical research involving human subjects must correspond to the currently applicable version of the World Medical Association's Declaration of Helsinki and requires approval by an independent ethics committee.

2.2.3 Doctoral theses must be written in German or English. They may have been published elsewhere in parts, whereby the listing of authors must clearly connect the publication with Witten/Herdecke University.

2.2.4 A cumulative thesis is possible. This is the compilation of at least three manuscripts with the candidate as the first author. In justified exceptional cases requirements are met by two articles with the candidate as first author and a third with co-authorship. At least two articles must have been accepted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. The third must at least have been submitted to a peer-reviewed journal. If a doctoral candidate plans to submit a cumulative thesis, the mentor submits a corresponding application to the chairperson of the doctoral committee who makes the final decision on acceptance.

## **2.3 Application**

2.3.1 Upon completion of the thesis, the doctoral candidate submits a written application to the chairperson of the doctoral committee, in coordination with the mentor. This application includes:

- title of the thesis,
- the mentor's written confirmation that he/she approves of the submitted title and is willing to act as the primary reviewer,

- two alternative (mentor's) suggestions for the second reviewer, whereby the suggested persons must either hold a professorship or postdoctoral lecturing qualification at UW/H or a professorship at a higher education institution in the German-language area,
- evidence of payment of administrative fees for doctoral procedures,
- the candidate's updated CV in German or English,
- documentation of completed course work and exam performance,
- doctoral thesis in 4 copies (for a cumulative thesis: the equivalent in the meaning of 2.2.4), as well as a pdf file in electronic form,
- an affidavit that the candidate has compiled the thesis personally and has explicitly marked and defined all assistance from third parties, and has quoted literature references completely and correctly,
- a statement that the thesis in this or similar form was not submitted to any other university for a doctorate.

2.3.2 If the chairperson of the doctoral committee questions the suitability of a suggested reviewer, he or she may ask the mentor to make further suggestions.

2.3.3 Candidates who withdraw their application must notify the chairperson of the doctoral committee in writing. Withdrawal is admissible only if the doctoral thesis has not been rejected for insufficient proof of independent academic work as requested in § 2.

## **2.4 Grading of doctoral thesis**

2.4.1 The chairperson of the doctoral committee ascertains within a period of two weeks whether the application is correct and complete. The doctoral candidate has two weeks to hand in missing documents. As soon as the application is complete, the chairperson of the doctoral committee commissions the mentor and one of the two suggested co-mentors to write their reviews within a period of eight weeks. If by this deadline one review has not been submitted, the chairperson after one written reminder and another two-week deadline contacts the second suggested co-mentor and asks for a review.

2.4.2 The thesis is available for inspection at the Dean's office/Faculty of Health for two weeks after receipt of reviews. All professors and holders of postdoctoral lecturing qualifications at the UW/H Faculty of Health are authorized to inspect all documents referring to the doctoral procedure and may submit an academic assessment to the chairperson within this period. The mentor is to be informed of such assessments in writing. The doctoral committee must duly consider them in assessing the thesis.

2.4.3 Reviews must state acceptance or rejection and contain a recommendation for the grade to be awarded. The following grades may be awarded:

- summa cum laude (0)

- magna cum laude (1)
- cum laude (2)
- rite (3).

If both reviewers suggest acceptance but differ in the recommended grade by at least two grades, the chairperson commissions an independent third review from a professor at UW/H or another higher education institution in the German-language area within a period of two weeks maximum. The grade awarded will be based on the two reviews which come closest to each other.

If one reviewer suggests rejection and the other acceptance, the chairperson commissions an independent third review from a professor at UW/H or another higher education institution in the German-language area within a period of two weeks maximum. If two of the then available reviews suggest rejection then the thesis is deemed to be rejected. If two of three reviews suggest acceptance then the thesis is deemed to be accepted; the grade awarded will be based only on the two reviews suggesting acceptance.

The chairperson of the doctoral committee has the right to propose external reviewers, in consultation with the mentor and the Dean of the Faculty of Health.

The grade „summa cum laude“ may only be awarded for an excellent doctoral thesis which the candidate has already published wholly or partly as a first author in an internationally renowned journal with impact factor. This applies to monographic theses as well. This grade can only be considered as the final grade if both reviewers suggest it without reservation. In this case the chairperson commissions an external reviewer with an outside opinion on the thesis with a deadline of two weeks. The chairperson has the right to propose an external reviewer in consultation with the mentor. Sections 2.4.2 and 2.4.3 apply accordingly for the external review; in this case the thesis will be available for inspection according to 2.4.2 only after receipt of the external review.

2.4.4 After the display period ends the chairperson decides on acceptance of the thesis.

2.4.5 The chairperson may decide to return the thesis to the candidate and request amendments on a one-time basis. The deadline for resubmission is twelve months; the doctoral committee may extend it by another twelve months for serious reasons upon the candidate's request. A doctoral thesis is deemed as rejected if the candidate does not meet the deadline.

## **2.5 Oral examination**

2.5.1 As soon as the thesis has been accepted the chairperson sets a date for the oral examination, at the earliest three weeks after acceptance, and invites the reviewers for that date without delay.

2.5.2 The oral examination is open to the university public and is held in the presence of the doctoral committee and at least one of the reviewers.

2.5.4 The oral examination may be held either in German or in English.

## **2.6 Disputation – public defense**

2.6.1 The disputation takes a total of 90 minutes and starts with the doctoral candidate presenting the essentials and key findings of the thesis within 45 minutes maximum. The candidate is expected to place the thesis into the context of the research field. The subsequent 45-minute discussion addresses issues from the thesis and related areas. The aim is to determine the candidate's knowledge and competences in analyzing scientific issues. The chairperson of the doctoral committee or the deputy presides over the meeting.

2.6.2 The doctoral committee deliberates on acceptance and decides on the grade to be awarded. Mentors and reviewers of the thesis are not entitled to vote. Possible grades are listed in § 3 (2.4.3).

2.6.3 If the grade awarded for the candidate's oral performance is not at least rite, the candidate is deemed to have failed. If the disputation is rejected, the candidate and the chairperson of the doctoral committee agree on a date for a repetition of the oral examination on a one-time basis. If the disputation is still rejected after the repetition, the doctoral procedures are deemed as definitely failed.

2.6.4 If a candidate is absent from the oral examination or does not complete it without a compelling reason, the examination is deemed to have failed. The doctoral committee has the final say.

## **§ 4**

### **Resolution on doctoral procedures**

Upon acceptance of a candidate's written and oral performance, the doctoral committee decides on the grade to be awarded, based on submitted reviews and the grade awarded for the oral examination. Possible grades are listed in § 3 (2.4.3).

The final grade "summa cum laude" may be awarded only if recommended unreservedly in all available single assessments (reviews and grade for oral examination). If one of the single assessments differs then the final grade cannot be better than "magna cum laude".

In all other cases the final grade is calculated by 2/3 from the arithmetic mean of the two reviews considered for the grade (see § 3, 2.4.3), and by 1/3 from the grade for the oral examination.

The final grade corresponds to the following levels:

0 = summa cum laude

>0 to 1.5 = magna cum laude

>1.5 to 2.5 = cum laude

>2.5 to 3.0 = rite



## **§ 5**

### **Publication**

1. Candidates must have their doctoral theses printed or duplicated at their own expense within one year after resolution on doctoral procedures. The manuscript ready for print has to be submitted to the mentor for permission to print. Permission is deemed to be given if this version corresponds exactly to the version submitted for review. In this case the candidate confirms exact correspondence via affidavit to the chairperson of the doctoral committee.
2. Publication requirements are met by
  - delivery of one specimen copy printed on paper and 11 electronic copies to the university library; data format and type of data medium to be arranged with the university library,
  - or proof of distribution via professional editors with a minimum edition of 150 copies. Date and place of publication must be indicated on the back of the title page. Two copies must be submitted to the university library.
3. The title page of the deposit copies must adhere to the template for title pages in appendix X. A short CV and the affidavit must be attached to the doctoral thesis on the last pages.
4. In substantiated cases and if requested by a candidate in good time, the chairperson of the doctoral committee may extend the publication deadline for the doctoral thesis by 6 months maximum on a one-time basis.
5. The university's obligation to issue the doctoral certificate shall expire if a candidate does not meet the publication deadline.

## **§ 6**

### **Doctoral certificate**

1. Doctoral certificates are handed over to candidates who have met all obligations. The certificate contains the title of the doctoral thesis and the final overall grade. It is signed by the Dean of the Faculty of Health as well as the University President and carries the university seal. It bears the date of the last completed examination.
2. The doctoral certificate may be handed over upon proof of publication in print and payment of administrative fees.
3. Candidates may claim the doctoral title only after they have received the doctoral certificate.

## **§ 7**

### **Withdrawal of doctoral degree**

If a doctoral candidate turns out to be guilty of a deception in connection with his performance in doctoral procedures or proof of such performance, in particular: if the doctoral thesis is not completely to be recognized as the candidate's autonomous performance or if essential requirements turn out to have been erroneously assumed to be met, the Faculty of Health is authorized to declare the degree as null and void any time and withdraw the degree immediately and irrevocably. Details are set out in UW/H rules of good scientific practice and procedures in case of scientific misconduct.

## **§ 8**

### **Inspection of procedural files**

1. Doctoral candidates have the right to inspect the procedural files, including reviews and any comments, during the display period.
2. Inspection includes the right to make transcripts or copies at their own expense.

## **§ 9**

### **Publicity**

All deliberations and resolutions on doctoral procedures take place in closed session unless stated otherwise in these regulations.

## **§ 10**

### **Honorary doctorate**

1. The university may award an honorary doctorate (Dr. phil. h. c.) for outstanding academic and social merits. The decision requires approval by at least 2/3 of attendant members of the Faculty Council with voting rights, and a university teacher must submit a substantiated request for such a decision to the Dean in writing.
2. An honorary doctorate requires approval by the Senate in each case, in addition to a positive vote in the Faculty Council.
3. An honorary doctorate must be substantiated in the certificate, which will bear the date of the Senate's resolution and the signatures of the University President and the Dean of the Faculty. The responsible Ministry of Research will be notified.

## **§ 11**

### **Entry into force**

These amended regulations on doctoral procedures enter into force on 1 June 2015.

These regulations on doctoral procedures were issued on the basis of the Senate's resolution dated 7 April 2015 and the determination of equivalence of these regulations with regulations at state universities issued by the NRW Ministry of Innovation, Science and Research dated 20 May 2015 – number: 221-7.04.02.01.01./146 (9682, 9684, 70867).

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President, Witten /Herdecke University

*(Translation: November 2015 – the original German version is legally binding.)*