General Regulation of Doctoral Studies of Bielefeld University of 01 June 2023

Based on §§ 2 (4), 22 (1), sentence 1, no. 3, and 67 (3) of the Higher Education Act of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia (Higher Education Act – HG of 16 September 2014 (GV. NRW. p. 547), last amended by Article 1 of the Act of 30 June 2022 (GV. NRW. p. 780b), Bielefeld University has enacted the following general regulation of doctoral studies:

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Preamble

Bielefeld University offers doctorates in all subjects and focuses of research pursued at the university. The right to award doctorates rests with the faculties. In this general regulation of doctoral studies, Bielefeld University recognises the diversity of doctoral studies and the different traditions deriving from varying faculty cultures. At the same time, this general regulation of doctoral studies sets out the institutional responsibility of Bielefeld University for all doctorates by:
- guaranteeing a high degree of transparency and quality of the doctoral procedures irrespective of the form of doctorate and thereby making an important contribution to quality assurance;
- ensuring flexibility and compatibility of the procedures to reflect the quality and standards of the research profile of Bielefeld University that distinguishes itself not only by important focuses of research in the classical subjects and disciplines but also through cross-faculty focuses of research;
- supporting doctoral projects that involve more than one university and that are international in scope;
- in particular also facilitating the introduction of structured PhD programmes within the faculties and in the focuses of research across faculties at Bielefeld University.

This general regulation of doctoral studies forms the basis for the doctoral degree regulations of the faculties that assume their own responsibility pertaining to their disciplines, issuing further specifying and complementing regulations.

§ 1

Scope of application

This general regulation of doctoral studies applies to all doctoral procedures conducted at Bielefeld University and in cooperation with other universities. It contains general provisions for the conduct of doctoral procedures. The faculties issue dedicated doctoral degree regulations that stipulate their respective subject-specific contents and requirements for the doctoral procedure. The doctoral degree regulations of the faculties must ensure the implementation of doctoral procedures that encompass cross-faculty research topics. Contradictory provisions of particular doctoral degree regulations of the faculties or in the respective study regulations for doctoral programmes are invalid unless explicitly permitted by this general regulation.
§ 2

Right to award doctorates and doctoral degrees

(1) The following doctoral degrees are conferred at Bielefeld University:

a) Faculty of Biology
   "Doktor*in der Naturwissenschaften" Dr. rer. nat. (doctor rerum naturalium)
   "Doktor*in der Didaktik der Naturwissenschaften" Dr. phil. nat. (doctor philosophiae naturalis)
b) Faculty of Chemistry
   "Doktor*in der Naturwissenschaften" Dr. rer. nat (doctor rerum naturalium)
c) Faculty of Educational Science
   "Doktor*in der Philosophie" Dr. phil. (doctor philosophiae)
d) Faculty of History, Philosophy and Theology
   "Doktor*in der Philosophie" Dr. phil. (doctor philosophiae)
   "Doktor*in der Sozialwissenschaften" Dr. rer. pol. (doctor rerum politicarum)
e) School of Public Health
   "Doctor of Public Health" Dr. PH
f) Faculty of Linguistics and Literary Studies
   "Doktor*in der Philosophie" Dr. phil. (doctor philosophiae)
g) Faculty of Mathematics
   "Doktor*in der Mathematik" Dr. math. (doctor mathematicae)
   "Doktor*in der Philosophie" Dr. phil. (doctor philosophiae)
h) Medical School OWL
   "Doktor*in der Medizin" Dr. med. (doctor medicinae),
   "Doktor*in der Naturwissenschaften" Dr. rer. nat. (doctor rerum naturalium),
   "Doktor*in der Medizinwissenschaften" Dr. rer. medic. (doctor rerum medicinallum)
i) Faculty of Physics
   "Doktor*in der Naturwissenschaften" Dr. rer. nat. (doctor rerum naturalium)
j) Faculty of Psychology and Sports Science
   "Doktor*in der Naturwissenschaften" Dr. rer. nat. (doctor rerum naturalium)
   "Doktor*in der Philosophie" Dr. phil. (doctor philosophiae)
k) Faculty of Law
   "Doktor*in der Rechtswissenschaft" Dr. iur. (doctor iuris)
l) Faculty of Sociology
   "Doktor*in der Philosophie" Dr. phil. (doctor philosophiae)
m) Faculty of Technology
   "Doktor*in der Naturwissenschaften" Dr. rer. nat. (doctor rerum naturalium)
   "Doktor*in der Ingenieurwissenschaften" Dr.-Ing.

Depending on the doctoral degree regulations, the faculties can alternatively confer the degree of “Doctor of Philosophy” (Ph.D.).

(2) According to § 18, Bielefeld University can also confer the degree of an honorary doctor (“Doktor ehrenhalber”, doctor honoris causa, Dr. h.c.) through the above faculties, each for its own area of expertise, in recognition of exceptional academic achievements and accomplishments. The doctoral degrees to be conferred according to paragraph 1 then carry the additional specification “honoris causa” h.c.

§ 3

Purpose and forms of doctorates

(1) The award of a doctorate is to evidence the ability to work independently on an academic field related to one of the areas of expertise or focuses of research offered by the faculties, exceeding the general study objective as defined by § 58 (1) HG.

(2) The doctoral procedure comprises the production of an academically significant paper (doctoral thesis) and further exam results.

(3) Persons who have been accepted as doctoral students by the faculty in accordance with § 6 must enrol in accordance with § 2 (4) of the Enrolment Rules as amended and remain enrolled until completion of their oral exam; they may remain enrolled as doctoral students at Bielefeld University until completion of their doctoral procedure in accordance with § 13. The provisions on leaves of absence in accordance with § 8 of the Enrolment Rules apply accordingly and remain unaffected.

(4) The doctoral procedure can take place within a doctoral study programme provided for by one or several faculties or as part of another recognised programme of structured PhD studies (e.g., in graduate schools or Research Training Groups), or outside of such a course or degree programme (referred to as doctoral studies
independent of study programmes). Exceptions and further details are provided by the respective doctoral degree regulations of the faculties, by the study regulations for doctoral studies, or the respective programmes for doctoral students.

§ 4 Responsibilities

(1) A doctoral committee shall be in charge of organising the doctoral procedure, in particular of deciding on the access to the doctorate and of accepting a doctoral student, opening of the doctoral procedure, of appointing the reviewers, of choosing the members of the examination committee, of supervising the expeditious course of the doctoral procedure, including the documentation of the number of doctoral students of the faculty as well as all tasks assigned by this general regulation. § 8 (3), sentence 2, must not be affected. The competence of the dean remains unchanged as well.

(2) The doctoral committee is composed of two or three members from the group of university teachers, one member from the group of academic staff who is an authorised examiner, one member from the group of students, and one member from the group of technical and administrative employees, to be elected by the Faculty Conference. The committee elects a chair and a deputy from among its members who are authorised examiners. The term of office of the member from the student group is one year, the term of office of the other members is two years each. Re-election is permitted. Regarding decisions relating to exams, only those members of the doctoral committee who have a doctoral degree are entitled to vote (§ 65 (1) HG).

(3) The committee is quorate if at least three members are present physically or by way of electronic communication, including the chairperson or the deputy chairperson as well as a total of two members who are authorised examiners. It decides by simple majority of the present members with voting rights. The members of the group of university teachers have two votes each; the other members have one vote each. In the case of a tie, the chairperson has the casting vote.

(4) The doctoral degree regulations of the faculties may provide for rules deviating from paragraphs 2 and 3.

(5) The doctoral committee can authorise the chairperson to conduct its business or individual tasks on its behalf by way of resolution. This does not apply in any cases involving unfavourable decisions relating to legal remedies.

(6) If a faculty has not established a doctoral committee as provided for in paragraph 1, the dean is responsible for the tasks outlined in paragraph 1. The Faculty Conference is responsible for any decisions involving legal remedy and for any decisions in accordance with § 10, (9), sentence 6.

(7) The doctoral committee, the Faculty Conference, or the dean are authorities within the meaning of administrative procedural law.

§ 5 Access requirements

(1) Access to the doctoral procedure requires having successfully completed
   a) relevant university studies in a standard period of study of at least eight semesters for which a degree other than “Bachelor” is conferred, or
   b) relevant university studies in a general standard period of study of at least six semesters and appropriate subsequent studies in the doctoral subjects in preparation for the doctorate, or
   c) a relevant Master course within the meaning of § 61, (2), sentence 2 HG.

The nature and scope of studies in preparation for the doctorate that serve as evidence of qualification for the doctoral procedure are to be provided for in the doctoral degree regulations of the faculties in the case of sentence 1 b). Studies in preparation for the doctorate can be completed within the scope of a relevant Master course. The requirements in this respect must be included in the notice regarding acceptance as a doctoral student in accordance with § 6 (4), sentence 1, and § 6 (6), sentence 1. The requirements must be met prior to opening of the doctoral procedure; the doctoral degree regulations of the faculties may apply a fixed term for completion of the requirements.

(2) The doctoral degree regulations of the faculties shall require proof of a qualified degree as an access requirement. Furthermore, they may specify:
   a) proof of a subject-specific degree to be defined in the doctoral degree regulations of the faculties, which can be differentiated in accordance with the doctoral subjects represented in the faculty,
   b) proof of completion of further study requirements as well as other academic achievements that indicate suitability for the doctorate.

The doctoral degree regulations of the faculties may stipulate further access requirements. Sentences 4 and 5 of paragraph 1 apply mutatis mutandis to the application of conditions.

(3) If any additional academic achievements or studies in preparation for the doctorate are necessary in accordance with the respective doctoral degree regulations of the faculties on access to the doctorate and for the
doctoral procedure itself, they are to be regarded as having been met if a relevant doctoral programme or any other recognised programme of structured PhD studies has been completed successfully.

(4) Excellent students from a Master course, whose academic achievements were examined after one year in accordance with the regulations of the Master’s examination regulations, shall have completed the studies in preparation for the doctorate through these academic achievements. Further details are to be found in the doctoral degree regulations of the faculties.

(5) University studies completed in foreign countries are to be credited by the competent body in accordance with § 4. The following applies to evaluation of international qualifications apart from the rules of the Higher Education Act:
- the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region of 11 April 1997 (BGBl. 2007 II p. 712, et seq. – Lisbon Convention) and the implementing provisions issued in this regard, each as amended,
- equivalence agreements of the Federal Republic of Germany with any other states, and

The evaluation proposals of the secretary’s office of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the States – Central Office for Foreign Education - shall be used for the evaluation. The doctoral degree regulations of the faculties provide whether and if so, what language skills may be required for access to a doctorate.

§ 6
Acceptance as a doctoral student

(1) Anyone who intends to write a doctoral thesis and meets the access requirements in accordance with § 5 has to apply for the acceptance as a doctoral student at the competent body – as provided for in § 4 - of the faculty where the doctorate is desired.

(2) By accepting a doctoral student, the faculty expresses its general willingness to evaluate a doctoral thesis about the proposed subject as an academic work and to supervise and support the doctoral student in the writing of their paper. The doctoral degree regulations of the faculties stipulate a deadline for acceptance. They also stipulate the conditions for a fixed-term extension.

(3) The following documents are to be enclosed with the application:
- evidence of meeting the access requirements in accordance with § 5,
- indication of the proposed subject of the doctoral thesis, if applicable including description of the doctoral project, and indication of the supervisor,
- the supervisor’s statement that they will supervise the student,
- a CV detailing personal and professional development, and
- a declaration regarding any current or previous doctoral procedures, also indicating the point of time, the subject, and the faculty/university department where the candidate applied to open the doctoral procedure, and how/with what result the procedure ended.

The doctoral degree regulations of the faculties may stipulate further details and require further evidence.

(4) The competent body of the faculty – as defined by § 4 – usually decides on the application within two months, and for doctoral programmes at the respective commencement of the degree programme. Acceptance as a doctoral student will be denied
- if access requirements are not met,
- if the proposed topic is not within the specific direction of the faculty, or if no supervisor can be identified who has the appropriate expertise to supervise the topic, or if supervision cannot be ensured for the duration of the doctoral procedure,
- if none of the responsible supervisors regards the proposed subject as meritable or considers the qualification of the applicant to be appropriate or
- if the provision of resources to conduct the proposed project is not assured.

(5) Being accepted as a doctoral student does not imply a legal claim to commence the doctoral procedure.

(6) The applicant is to be informed in writing or electronically of the decision on acceptance or rejection as a doctoral student. Reasons will be given for a rejection and the decision must be accompanied by an instruction on the legal right to appeal.

(7) Acceptance as a doctoral student may be revoked in particular
- if any reasons for a rejection of the acceptance as a doctoral student appear subsequently, or
- if there is no prospect that the doctoral thesis can be successfully completed within an appropriate period of time, or
- if the supervision or doctorate agreement (§ 7, (2)) is legally invalid or has been revoked.
§ 7

Supervision

(1) The following persons are generally eligible as supervisors: Members of the group of university teachers, Privatdozent*innen [senior lecturers], other persons qualified as university professors or other members of the faculty with at least a doctorate or at least appropriately qualified persons working outside of the faculty or university. In the case of interdisciplinary or cross-faculty work, a member of another faculty or university should also be appointed as supervisor. Further details on this can be found in the doctoral degree regulations of the faculties.

(2) The doctoral degree regulations of the faculties provide for the appointment of a supervisor with main responsibility; they may also provide for a second supervisor and, in accordance with § 67 a HG, also permit cooperative forms of supervision. They stipulate the manner and scope of supervision. They provide for the conclusion of a supervision agreement or doctorate agreement between the academic supervisors and the doctoral student. In accordance with the DFG’s recommendations for the drafting of supervision agreements, the supervision or doctorate agreement contains at least the following information:

- the persons involved (the doctoral student, the supervisor(s), other persons involved, if applicable),
- the topic of the doctoral thesis (working title, if applicable),
- in the case of a cumulative or publication-based paper, consideration of the requirements of § 10 (2),
- a provisional schedule and work plan indicating the expected duration of the doctorate, to be reviewed and, if necessary, adjusted in the course of the doctoral procedure within the scope of the supervisory relationship,
- the tasks and obligations of the doctoral student (regular reporting obligations and submission of partial results, participation in events, if applicable),
- the tasks and obligations of the supervisor(s) (regular professional counselling, career development/perspective discussions, quality assurance),
- mutual commitment to compliance with the principles of good academic practice,
- if applicable, provisions in cases of conflict and in case of a change of supervisor(s),
- if applicable, special measures to reconcile family and academic work,
- if applicable, integration into a working group or a research network and, if applicable, equipment for the doctoral student.

(3) The faculties shall ensure supervision for the duration of the doctorate. The university’s guidelines on good supervision must be observed.

(4) If a supervisor leaves the university or becomes emeritus or retires, § 9 (6) is to be applied.

§ 8

Opening of the doctoral procedure

(1) The application for opening of the doctoral procedure is to be made in writing or electronically to the body competent in accordance with § 4, of the respective faculty. The following documents have to be enclosed with the application:

a) notice of acceptance as a doctoral student in accordance with § 6,
b) if applicable, evidence of studies in preparation for the doctorate and/or compliance with any further requirements,
c) a CV detailing personal and professional development,
d) if applicable, a list of academic publications and academic presentations,
e) the number of copies of the doctoral thesis provided for by the doctoral degree regulations of the faculties in the case of written submission; in the case of a cumulative or publication-based doctoral thesis, also the detailed presentation required by the doctoral degree regulations according to § 10 (2), sentence 3, as well as an electronic version of the doctoral thesis as a pdf file,
f) in the case of team work as provided for in the doctoral degree regulations of the faculties: a report jointly written by the persons involved regarding the collaboration on the doctoral thesis, indication of the individual authorship of the respective parts of the doctoral thesis, furthermore indication of names, academic titles, addresses of the persons involved in the group work as well as information on the question as to whether any persons and – if applicable - which persons have already applied for a doctoral procedure, or completed such a procedure, using parts of the submitted paper.
g) a declaration stating

1. that the doctoral student is familiar with the applicable doctoral degree regulations of the faculty,
2. that the doctoral student has written the doctoral thesis on their own (declaration of authorship), no texts or parts of texts have been copied from a third party or the candidate’s own academic work without due attribution and tools, and any sources used by the doctoral student have been duly referenced and attributed in their paper,
3. that no third party has received any money or monetary benefits from the doctoral student, directly or indirectly, for services of an intermediary nature, or for any work associated with the content of the submitted doctoral thesis.
4. that the doctoral student has not yet submitted the doctoral thesis for examination for a public or other academic examination, and
5. whether the doctoral student has submitted the same paper, a paper similar in essential parts or another paper as a doctoral thesis to another university and, if applicable, with which results.

The doctoral degree regulations of the faculties may stipulate further specifications and provisions.

(2) The application may be withdrawn. Withdrawal is excluded if an opinion has already been submitted to the competent body.

(3) The decision on the opening of the doctoral procedure is taken by the competent body in accordance with § 4. Differing from § 4, (1), the doctoral degree regulations of the faculties may transfer the decision on the opening of the doctoral procedure to the Faculty Conference. The doctoral student receives a notice concerning the opening. The opening of the doctoral procedure is to be refused if one of the prerequisites in accordance with paragraph 1 is not met or if any documents are missing; in the latter case, an appropriate deadline for submission of the missing documents shall be set beforehand.

(4) Evaluation of exam results shall be completed no later than six months after receipt of the request to open the proceedings.

§ 9
Examination committee

(1) The doctoral exam is assessed by an examination committee to be determined by the competent body in accordance with § 4 when deciding on the opening of the doctoral procedure. The members of the faculty conferring the doctorate must hold the majority in the examination committee.

(2) The examination committee will usually comprise the reviewers and at least one further examiner for the oral exam. The doctoral degree regulations of the faculties specify the number of reviewers to be appointed and the composition of the committee and determine whether the doctoral student has the right to nominate a member or members of the examination committee. The doctoral degree regulations of the faculties shall also define who will qualify as a reviewer in general and the conditions under which, if applicable, further opinions are needed or external reviewers are to be involved. These reviewers also become voting members of the examination committee.

(3) A supervisor may be appointed as a reviewer; regarding any other supervisors and reviewers, if any, the faculties make regulations in their doctoral degree regulations to ensure their independence. Supervisors and reviewers should not be the chairperson of the examination committee. Alternatively, the doctoral degree regulations of the faculties may stipulate that the supervisors must not be reviewers.

(4) The chair of the examination committee is to be taken by a voting member of the group of university teachers of the faculty conferring the doctorate; they are appointed by the competent body in accordance with § 4. For interdisciplinary or cross-faculty doctoral projects, it is to be ensured that the composition of the examination committee is interdisciplinary or cross-faculty and that the reviewers are appointed accordingly.

(5) The examination committee is meeting in non-public sessions. Its decisions are to be documented in a record.

(6) The professors’ rights to participate in a doctoral procedure are not affected by receiving emeritus status nor by retirement. If a supervisor or a reviewer moves to another university or to a position outside of the university, they – with the doctoral student’s and the faculty’s agreement – have the right to continue with the supervision of doctoral studies already underway. The doctoral degree regulations of the faculties provide for more details concerning this matter and stipulate further participatory rights.

§ 10
Doctoral thesis

(1) This doctoral exam comprises an independent and methodologically flawless academic paper written in an appropriate presentation, through which the doctoral student makes their own contribution to research, which expands the boundaries of knowledge and stands up to peer review (doctoral thesis). Parts of the academic work performed within the scope of the doctoral thesis may, in agreement with the supervisor, already have been published before the application for the opening of the doctoral procedure in accordance with § 8. In accordance with the doctoral degree regulations of the faculties, the doctoral thesis can be written as a team doctoral thesis.

(2) The faculties may permit cumulative or publication-based doctoral theses (if necessary only for specific areas of expertise), through which the doctoral student provides the evidence according to paragraph 1. The papers must have been written under a common academic question; overall, they must meet the requirements of sentence 1 of paragraph 1. A detailed presentation is to precede the research topics and the most important findings from the publications in the context of the academic literature on the topic, as well as an assessment of the individual contribution and the contribution of the other authors to the respective publications. In the case of co-authorships, the doctoral student’s share must be clearly identified, and a sworn statement must be made
regarding their personal contribution. The doctoral student must also inform all authors about the use of the work as a cumulative or publication-based doctoral thesis as well as about their statement on their personal contribution and ensure that no copyrights are infringed by use of the work, also with regard to the publication of the doctoral thesis. Further details are to be found in the doctoral degree regulations of the faculties. They also state whether and to what extent a person who is a co-author of included papers is eligible as a reviewer in the doctoral procedure, the minimum number of papers to be submitted in total with significant authorship, and how many of these must already have been published, accepted or submitted for publication. They also describe the requirements for the detailed presentation according to sentence 3.

(3) The doctoral thesis usually must be written in German or English. The doctoral degree regulations of the faculties may admit other languages.

(4) The doctoral thesis must contain a title page, a table of contents, an abstract, and a bibliography, as well as a detailed presentation in accordance with sentence 3 of paragraph 2 in the case of a cumulative or publication-based doctoral thesis. The doctoral degree regulations of the faculties may stipulate further requirements.

(5) Each reviewer has to submit an opinion, including reasons, to the competent body in accordance with § 4, usually within two months of their appointment as reviewer. The opinions may be issued in writing or in electronic form. The doctoral degree regulations of the faculties may provide for more detailed provisions.

(6) The reviewers examine in detail and independently from each other whether the submitted doctoral thesis can be accepted toward the doctoral exam results, whether it has to be rejected or returned for revision. They assess the academic achievement of the thesis in their opinions. If accepted, they award the following assessments:
   a) very good thesis (magna cum laude)
   b) good thesis (cum laude)
   c) sufficient thesis (rite).

   A paper to be rejected will be evaluated as “failed (non rite)”. In the case of extraordinary academic achievement, the distinction “outstanding work (summa cum laude)” may be awarded. The doctoral degree regulations of the faculties provide for the adoption of assessment criteria by the competent body in accordance with § 4 and for further provisions for the award of the distinction “summa cum laude”; they may provide for intermediate grades.

(7) Alternatively, the faculties may waive an evaluation of the doctoral thesis in accordance with paragraph 6 sentence 3 a) to c) in their doctoral degree regulations; in this case, they only provide for the results “passed” or “failed” and only for the grade “excellent” in the case of extraordinary academic achievements. Paragraph 6 sentence 6 applies accordingly.

(8) After receipt of the opinions, the doctoral thesis, together with the reviews, is being displayed in the dean’s office for the faculty’s public; the display may be made electronically. The office responsible in accordance with § 4 notifies the doctoral student, the members of the group of university teachers and the doctoral members of the faculty of the display. During a period of at least two weeks and a maximum of three weeks, in accordance with the doctoral degree regulations of the faculties, the members of the faculties of Bielefeld University who are authorised examiners and who provide the reviewers as well as the members of the examination committee are entitled to inspect and object to the proposal of acceptance, rejection, or evaluation of the doctoral thesis in writing. Objections must include a statement of reasons. The doctoral degree regulations of the faculties may provide for the doctoral student to be informed of the opinions by the competent body in accordance with § 4 before they are made available, with the possibility of making a statement. The statement is then also to be provided for inspection.

(9) If the reviewers have unanimously proposed acceptance of the doctoral thesis, it is thereby accepted, provided that no objection has been lodged. If the reviewers have unanimously proposed rejection of the doctoral thesis, it is thereby rejected, provided that no objection has been lodged; an oral exam will then no longer take place. If the reviewers have unanimously proposed revision, the doctoral thesis will be returned for revision; at the same time, the competent body in accordance with § 4 sets a deadline for resubmission, which shall not exceed six months. If the opinions differ with regard to their recommendation for acceptance or rejection or revision of the doctoral thesis, if they differ by more than two grade levels in the case of acceptance, or if an objection against the acceptance or rejection is lodged within the display period in accordance with paragraph 8, the competent body in accordance with § 4 appoints another reviewer without undue delay after hearing the doctoral student; in accordance with § 9 (2), sentence 3, the provision in the doctoral degree regulations of the faculty has to be observed for this reviewer. The reviewer opinion of the further reviewer should be available within two months after their appointment. Under consideration of the recommendation of the further reviewer opinion, the competent body according to § 4 decides whether the doctoral thesis is to be accepted or rejected. The doctoral degree regulations of the faculties may provide for deviating provisions.
§ 11

Oral exam

(1) The oral exam will take place after the doctoral thesis has been formally accepted. The doctoral degree regulations of the faculties stipulate provisions on the form and content, duration, failure, and repetition of the exam results from the oral exam. The oral exam can take the form of either a doctoral thesis defence or a colloquium.

(2) In exceptional cases and if provided for in the respective doctoral degree regulations, the oral exam may be conducted with the aid of audio-visual transmission technology approved by the rectorate. The corresponding requirements in the Examination Regulations of Bielefeld University of 18 December 2020 (Bielefeld University Gazette - Official Announcements - year 49 No. 16 p. 256) as amended must be observed. It must be ensured that there are no disturbances in the mutual perception of the participants throughout the examination; otherwise, the examination must be interrupted and continued after the interference has been remedied or, if the interference cannot be remedied in the short term, a new appointment must be scheduled. Further details are to be found in the doctoral degree regulations of the faculties.

(3) The oral exam shall take place no later than eight weeks after acceptance of the doctoral thesis; the date shall be announced in time. A longer deadline can only be permitted with the agreement of the doctoral student.

(4) The doctoral thesis defence primarily serves to present the most important results of the doctoral thesis in a presentation given by the doctoral student and in a subsequent academic discussion with the members of the examination committee, during which the doctoral student has the opportunity to defend the results of their doctoral thesis. Further details are to be found in the doctoral degree regulations of the faculties.

(5) An oral exam can also take the form of a colloquium in the area of expertise of the doctorate, which allows the doctoral student to evidence, face to face with the members of the examination committee, their thorough independent engagement with major subjects of the area of expertise and their knowledge of the latest research. Further details are to be found in the doctoral degree regulations of the faculties.

(6) A record of the essential aspects and results of the oral exam is to be kept. This includes a corresponding notice if the examination was performed in accordance with paragraph 2.

(7) The oral exam is open to the entire university unless the doctoral student has objected to this. The public is to be excluded from the assessment discussions and announcement of the exam result.

(8) The examination committee decides in a non-public session following the oral exam whether the oral exam has been passed; it evaluates the oral exam in accordance with § 10 (6) or accordingly with § 10 (7). If assessments differ, a decision is taken by voting. In the case of a tie, the chairperson has the casting vote. The doctoral degree regulations of the faculties may contain supplementary or differing provisions.

(9) Upon application, a failed oral exam can be repeated once within 12 months, but no earlier than after two months. In case of a repeated failure, the attempt to obtain the doctoral degree is finally considered to have failed. The doctoral student receives a corresponding notice, including reasons, from the competent body of the faculty upon a hearing, as provided for in § 4.

§ 12

Overall grade of the doctorate

(1) Following a successful oral exam, the examination committee determines the overall grade. The overall grade results from the grades of the doctoral thesis and the oral exam result. The doctoral thesis shall be given greater weight than the oral exam result; the doctoral degree regulations of the faculties may provide for an explicit weighting.

(2) In the case of § 10 (6), sentence 3, the following grading scheme applies to the overall grade, subject to paragraph 4:
   a) very good (magna cum laude)
   b) good (cum laude)
   c) sufficient (rite).

(3) In the case of § 10 (7), subject to paragraph 4, the overall grade shall be "passed".

(4) The overall grade "outstanding (summa cum laude)" or "excellent" will be awarded only in the case of extraordinary academic achievements.

(5) The doctoral degree regulations of the faculties may dispense with an overall grade; they may provide further regulations for assigning the overall grade "summa cum laude" and intermediate grades, if applicable.
§ 13
Conferral of doctorate and certificate

(1) Following the decision of the examination committee, the dean issues a preliminary certificate concerning the passing of the examination to the doctoral student. This certificate includes the title and evaluation of the doctoral thesis, the assessment of the oral exam result, as well as the overall grade. The doctoral student is being informed in an accompanying letter that they are not permitted to use the academic degree of a doctor or a similar designation until the doctoral degree certificate has been issued.

(2) In issuing the doctoral degree certificate, the dean confers the doctorate. This doctoral degree certificate contains the doctoral degree received. The enclosed doctoral examination certificate includes the title of the doctoral thesis, its evaluation, and the evaluation of the oral exam as well as the overall grade of the doctorate. The date of the oral exam will be given as the date of the doctorate. The doctoral degree certificate and doctoral examination certificate are to be signed by the dean of the faculty conferring the degree and applied with that faculty’s seal. Both graduation documents are to be issued in English upon request.

(3) The doctoral degree certificate and transcript are not to be handed over until publication of the doctoral thesis has been ensured in accordance with § 14 or a publication contract has been concluded with a publisher.

§ 14
Publication of the doctoral thesis

The doctoral student is obligated to make the doctoral thesis accessible to the academic public in an appropriate manner. If a reviewer imposes any requirements to the version for publication, this must be approved by the Chair of the Examination Committee before publication after endorsement by the reviewer. The obligation to publish is part of the doctoral procedure. Further details are to be found in the doctoral degree regulations of the faculties.

§ 15
Fraud, invalidity of the doctoral exam results, and withdrawal of the doctoral degree

(1) After having heard the doctoral student, the competent body in accordance with § 4 can declare the doctoral exam results void if it is established before the conferral of the doctorate that the doctoral student has committed academic fraud in their doctoral exam results or that any essential requirements of the doctoral procedure have been misrepresented.

(2) The doctorate can be withdrawn if
   a) it is found out subsequently that it was obtained through academic fraud in the doctoral exam results or through fraudulent misrepresentation of essential requirements for the doctoral procedure;
   b) the person holding the doctoral degree has been convicted of a deliberate criminal act misusing their doctoral degree when preparing or committing this criminal act.

(3) If any requirements for access to the doctorate were not met without the doctoral student’s intention to deceive and if this fact emerges only after issuing the certificate, this impediment shall be remedied by virtue of having passed the doctoral exam.

(4) The Faculty Conference decides on the withdrawal after the dean has heard the person concerned.

§ 16
Review

The doctoral student is entitled to review the documents relating to the doctoral exam after completion of the doctoral procedure. The doctoral degree regulations stipulate deadlines for review.

§ 17
Legal remedy against decisions made in the doctoral procedure

(1) The candidate may file legal remedy against any unfavourable notices issued based on these rules in writing with the competent body in accordance with § 4 within one month. The competent body in accordance with § 4 (5), (6) decides on the legal remedy, if necessary, after hearing the examination committee.

(2) An objection and objection procedure shall be subject to the provisions stipulated in the Rules of the Administrative Courts (Verwaltungsgerichtsordnung).
§ 18  
Honorary doctorate

(1) Bielefeld University may – through the faculties listed in § 1 (1) – award the degree of an honorary doctor in accordance with § 2 (2), in recognition of exceptional academic achievements or other exceptional merits in their areas of expertise.

(2) The doctoral degree regulations of the faculties can provide provisions for the formal application for an honorary doctorate and for appraisal of the academic achievements of the person to be honoured.

(3) Under consideration of the submitted statements, the Faculty Conference decides on the application for conferral of the honorary doctorate submitted by at least two faculty members with a doctoral degree; the decision requires a majority of three quarters of votes of those members who have a doctoral degree and voting rights.

(4) The dean confers the honorary doctorate by issuing a certificate signed by the dean, recognising the academic achievements of the honoured person.

(5) The doctoral degree regulations of the faculties may contain differing provisions.

§ 19  
Joint doctorate with other universities

(1) The conduct of joint doctoral procedures with another university entitled to confer doctorates is based on a bilateral agreement between Bielefeld University and the university concerned.

(2) Agreements on joint doctoral procedures between Bielefeld University and other universities entitled to confer doctorates may differ from §§ 1 – 17.

(3) Further details are to be found in the doctoral degree regulations of the faculties.

§ 20  
Withdrawal from the oral exam; disadvantage compensation

The regulations on withdrawal and the regulations on disadvantage compensation in the Examination Regulations Framework of Bielefeld University of 18 December 2020 (Bielefeld University Gazette - Official Announcements - Year 49 No. 16 p. 256) as amended apply accordingly to the withdrawal from the oral exam and the application of any disadvantage compensation.

§ 21  
Entering into effect and transitional arrangements

(1) These rules enter into effect on the day after they are published in the Bielefeld University Gazette – Official Announcements. At the same time, the general regulation of doctoral studies of 15 June 2010 (Bielefeld University Gazette - Official Announcements - year 39 no. 12 p. 98), last amended by the second amending order of 1 July 2021 (Bielefeld University Gazette - Official Announcements – year. 50 no. 9 p. 161), loses its effect.

(2) The faculties are obligated to adapt their doctoral degree regulations to the requirements of this general regulation of doctoral studies. They issue transitional regulations for their doctoral students.

No complaints

Claims from violation of any procedural or formal rules of the HG NRW or the university’s regulatory or other autonomous law by these rules can only be asserted within one year of their publication, except if

a) the rules have not been duly published,

b) the rectorate has previously objected to the decision of the body adopting the rules,

c) the university has been notified of the formal or procedural defect in advance and the violated legal provision and the fact giving rise to the defect have been designated in the course of this, or

d) the legal consequence of the exclusion of complaint was not referred to in the public announcement of the rules.

The supervisory authorisations under § 76 HG will not be affected by this.

Issued based on the resolution of the Senate of Bielefeld University of 10 May 2023.

Bielefeld, 01 June 2023

The rector  
of Bielefeld University  
University Professor Dr.-Ing. Gerhard Sagerer