

Doctoral Regulations with Implementation Provisions
of the Faculty of Biology
of the University of Münster
of 30 October 2019

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Amendment regulation as of 4 August 2020 (blue)

and the currently active implementation regulations, July 2025 (red)

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§ 1

Doctoral Degree

- (1) By completing the doctoral degree, the candidate should demonstrate their ability to carry out independent scientific work beyond the general academic objective of the programme.
- (2) The Faculty of Biology of the University of Münster awards the academic degree “Doctor of Natural Sciences” (*doctor rerum naturalium*, Dr rer nat) in recognition of an academically significant doctoral examination; the doctoral candidate may alternatively receive the title “Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Biology” upon request. The doctoral examination consists of two degree-relevant examinations (*Prüfungsleistungen*): a written thesis (doctoral thesis (*Dissertation*)) and its oral defence (doctoral thesis defence (*Disputation*)). The doctoral examination enables the candidate to demonstrate that they
 - have acquired a systematic understanding of the subject area and the knowledge and skills relevant to it;
 - meet high international standards in their research and have extended the frontiers of knowledge;
 - are able to design and carry out an extensive research process, usually lasting several years, with academic integrity;
 - are capable of critically analysing academic and technical problems and finding innovative solutions;
 - are able to communicate with the scientific community and society at large about their field of expertise.
- (3) The faculty (*Fachbereich*) may award honorary doctoral degrees “Honorary Doctor of Natural Sciences” (*doctor rerum naturalium honoris causa*, Dr rer nat hc) in recognition of outstanding academic achievement or exceptional contributions to the field of biology.

§ 2

Admission to the Doctoral Programme

- (1) The requirements for admission to the doctoral programme are:
 1. supervision of the doctoral thesis by a doctoral committee (*Promotionskomitee*) in accordance with § 5;
 2. proof of the necessary academic skills and interdisciplinary key qualifications which enable one to conduct academic research, solve problems and engage in discussion, as well as critically classify academic findings in the selected specialised discipline of biological sciences; § 67 (4) of the Higher Education Act [*Hochschulgesetz – HG*] remains unaffected.
- (2) The candidate provides proof of the skills specified in § 2 (1) (2) by having earned a university-level academic qualification higher than a bachelor’s degree upon completion of a research-oriented university degree programme with a standard duration of no fewer than eight semesters in a mathematical/natural scientific subject* (as a rule, a master’s degree is awarded after five years of study or 300 ECTS credits in total).

* e.g. biology, biotechnology, bioinformatics, biochemistry, biophysics, biomedicine, chemistry, physics, geosciences, mathematics and computer science

Does not include (at least not automatically) biological or chemical engineering, pharmacy, agriculture, medicine, food chemistry, veterinary medicine and ecotrophology (nutritional science)

- (3) Graduates who have received an academic qualification higher than a bachelor's degree after completing a university degree programme with a standard duration of no fewer than eight semesters in a different subject, including state qualifications, can meet the requirement under § 2 (1) (2) by passing an oral examination upon completing additional studies aimed at adequately preparing them for the doctoral programme. The amount (usually between five and 60 ECTS credits), content and duration (usually a maximum of 18 months) of these additional studies (normally master's-level courses offered by the Faculty of Biology) are determined by the doctoral examinations board (*Promotionsausschuss*); the responsible doctoral committee may submit a proposal; justification for the amount of additional requirements has to be provided. The additional studies under § 2 (7) and the result of a placement examination administered by at least three postdoctoral members of the Faculty of Biology, of whom at least two must be professors and at least one a member of the doctoral examinations board (but not the doctoral supervisor), can be taken into account for determining the additional studies required; minutes of the examination must be taken and signed by the examiners. At the request of the doctoral supervisor responsible for assigning the topic of the doctoral thesis, the placement examination can be administered – via video conference, if necessary – before the application for admission to the doctoral programme is submitted, or within one month following notification of the scope of doctoral preparatory requirements in accordance with sentence 2; the placement examination serves to determine whether and to what extent doctoral preparatory studies are necessary, provided this cannot be ascertained on the basis of the submitted documents. After completing the doctoral preparatory studies, the candidate must pass an oral examination before the corresponding doctoral committee; the committee must include at least the coordinating member from the Faculty of Biology in accordance with § 5 (4) and a second committee member as examiners; the examination should last between 30 and 60 minutes. The oral examination serves to determine whether the candidate meets the requirements for independently investigating a scientific topic in the area of biological sciences with respect to the planned doctoral project. The oral examination is graded as either “passed” or “failed”; minutes of the examination must be taken and signed by the examiners; if the candidate fails the examination, it may be retaken once more within six months.
- (4) Graduates who earned an above-average final grade in an undergraduate degree programme in biological sciences of at least six semesters in duration can prove their eligibility for admission under § 2 (1) (2) by successfully completing an additional two to four semesters (max.) of study (60-120 ECTS credits) as preparation for the doctoral programme in question. The scope and content of additional studies are to be determined by the doctoral examinations board; the responsible doctoral committee may submit a proposal; as a rule, these additional studies correspond to the required coursework (*Studienleistungen*) completed in the first, and in some cases, first and second, year of study in a master's programme (MSc) at the Faculty of Biology.
- (5) In case of doubt regarding the equivalence of degrees from abroad in accordance with § 2 (2) to (4), the doctoral examinations board must decide on the matter in consultation with the responsible doctoral committee; where applicable, it can base its decision on an expert assessment issued by the Secretariat of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of

Germany (KMK).

- (6) Candidates are required to submit a written application to the doctoral examinations board of the Faculty of Biology for admission to the doctoral programme. The application must be submitted within the first six months following commencement of the doctoral thesis* and, as a rule, at least two years prior to submission of the doctoral thesis. Six months after commencement of the doctoral thesis at the latest, candidates must present the doctoral agreement (*Promotionsvereinbarung*) or supervision agreement (*Betreuungsvereinbarung*) of their respective structured doctoral programme (*Strukturiertes Promotionsprogramm*, SDP) to the Examinations Office, signed by the candidate and the principal supervisor (*Themensteller*in*) responsible for assigning the topic of the doctoral thesis. The doctoral examinations board may only approve extensions to these deadlines in cases of hardship upon substantiated request by the candidate; the request must be signed by the thesis supervisor or, if they are not a member of the Faculty of Biology, by the representative of the Faculty of Biology who sits on the doctoral committee. The application under sentence 1 must include the following documents in German or English:
1. a CV containing a complete list of the candidate's prior academic studies;
 2. a written statement from a doctoral committee confirming its intention to supervise the doctoral thesis in accordance with § 5 or, alternatively, a statement from the executive committee of a structured doctoral programme to which responsibilities have been delegated in accordance with § 3 (7) confirming its commitment to suggest a doctoral committee in a timely manner that conforms to the provisions of § 5 (2)*
 3. an authenticated copy or translation of one of the university qualifications required under § 2 (2) to (4).

* Only if the executive committee of an SDP to which responsibilities have been delegated in accordance with § 3 (7) declares (or has declared for all its candidates) that a doctoral committee will be proposed within six months, confirmation of a supervision agreement through a doctoral committee may be waived at this time. The executive committee's proposal is to be forwarded to the Doctoral Examinations Office early enough to allow the doctoral committee to take up its supervisory duties no later than six months following the candidate's request for admission to the doctoral programme. The provisions of § 5 (2) apply accordingly.

If there is doubt as to whether the candidate meets the requirements stipulated in § 2 (2) to (4), the candidate can ask the doctoral examinations board to preassess their eligibility in advance; for holders of university degrees from abroad, candidates should submit their request for a preassessment early, i.e. about three months prior to starting the doctoral programme. Candidates who desire a preassessment of their chances of admission should submit all documents listed under sentence 4 in so far as these are available at the time; the doctoral examinations board can only make a legally binding decision if all of the documents listed in sentence 4 have been submitted.

- (7) Under certain circumstances, e.g. the candidate possesses special aptitude or qualification, the doctoral examinations board may exempt the candidate from certain admission requirements stipulated in § 2 (2) to (4). The doctoral examinations board may in particular consider academic or professional achievements gained during a prior degree programme or occupation and recognise these as fulfilling certain academic requirements for admission. Furthermore, the doctoral examinations board can make admission to the doctoral procedure (*Zulassung zum Promotionsverfahren*) contingent not only on completing a qualifying university degree, but also on additional studies or other achievements that demonstrate the candidate's aptitude for doctoral study.

- (8) The candidate is admitted to the doctoral programme if they meet all the admission requirements. The preparatory studies referred to in § 2 (3) and (4) can be completed during the doctoral programme, but should be completed, as a rule, within the first 18 months at the latest. In this case, admission to the doctoral programme is granted conditionally.
- (9) The doctoral examinations board makes its admission decision based on the candidate's application and submitted documents. If admission is denied, the candidate must be notified in writing with corresponding justification; notification must include information on the legal remedies available. Upon rectifying the reasons for rejection indicated by the doctoral examinations board, the candidate may reapply for admission to the doctoral programme.

§ 3

Doctoral Examinations Board

- (1) The Faculty of Biology establishes a doctoral examinations board to organise doctoral degrees and to carry out the tasks assigned to it by these Doctoral Regulations. The doctoral examinations board is made up of the chair, their permanent deputy and six additional members. The chair, their deputy and three other members are selected from the group of professors, and one member is selected from the group of academic staff, the group of technical and administrative staff and the student body*, respectively. Members who belong to the group of professors, the group of academic staff or the group of technical and administrative staff are appointed to the doctoral examinations board for a term of three years; the student member serves a one-year term.

* preferably doctoral students

- (2) The faculty board (*Fachbereichsrat*) of the Faculty of Biology appoints the members of the doctoral examinations board on the recommendation of its member groups, as well as their substitutes in the event of their being prevented from attending, for the term of office in accordance with § 3 (1) sentence 4. Reappointment is possible. Should a member resign their position before the end of their term, a replacement is to be selected to complete the remainder of the term. The faculty board selects a chair and their deputy from the group of professors on the doctoral examinations board.
- (3) The doctoral examinations board ensures compliance with the provisions of these Doctoral Regulations. It instructs the corresponding doctoral committee to duly implement the doctoral studies. It reviews the candidate's application and accompanying documents and is responsible for granting or denying admission to the doctoral procedure in accordance with § 2 and § 7. It also proposes reforms to the Doctoral Regulations.
- (4) Committee members who do not belong to the group of professors generally participate in an advisory capacity on decisions concerning the grading of doctoral examinations.
- (5) The doctoral examinations board is quorate if the chair or their deputy as well as at least two other voting members from the group of professors and two voting members from the other groups are present. Decisions are taken by simple majority of the voting members present. In the event of a tie, the chair has the casting vote. In the case of § 3 (4), the doctoral examinations board is quorate if, in addition to the chair or their deputy, at least two of the other voting members from the group of professors are

present. Abstentions are not permitted on decisions under § 3 (4).

- (6) Meetings of the doctoral examinations board are not open to the public. Members of the doctoral examinations board and their substitutes are bound by official secrecy. If they are not public-sector employees, they must be bound to secrecy by the chair of the doctoral examinations board.
- (7) The doctoral examinations board may delegate the execution of its tasks related to all general matters to the chair or the permanent deputy or, in agreement with the faculty board, to the executive committee of a structured doctoral programme in accordance with § 6 (2); duties may only be delegated in writing. Sentence 1 does not apply to decisions on objections.
- (8) The doctoral examinations board can be contacted via the Examinations Office of the Faculty of Biology. The Examinations Office also appoints the minute-taker.

§ 4

Ombudsperson

- (1) The Faculty of Biology appoints one or more ombudspersons* to serve as independent and neutral advisors to all doctoral candidates and their supervisors, and to mediate in situations of conflict during the doctoral procedure. The ombudspersons are appointed by the faculty board for a term of three years; re-election is possible. Each doctoral candidate and each supervisor may contact one of the ombudspersons at any time if they encounter problems in their supervisory relationship, for example. All matters are treated with strict confidentiality even after the doctoral procedure has concluded; no action is taken without the prior consent of the party seeking advice; moreover, the party seeking advice may terminate the process of mediation at any time without stating a reason.

* currently: Professor em Dr rer nat Volker Gerke, Institute of Medical Biochemistry, Center of Molecular Biology of Inflammation (ZMBE), University of Münster, von-Esmarch-Straße 56, 48149 Münster

§ 5

Doctoral Committee

- (1) Based on the candidate's recommendations, the doctoral examinations board [or the executive committee of the responsible doctoral programme](#) in accordance with § 6 (2), where applicable, appoints a doctoral committee; a prerequisite for admission to the doctoral procedure as stated in § 2 (1) (1) is a written statement by the members of the doctoral committee confirming the supervision of the candidate, or [a commitment by the executive committee of the responsible doctoral programme to suggest a doctoral committee in a timely manner that conforms to the provisions of § 5 \(2\)*](#). The members of the doctoral committee supervise the candidate's doctoral project and may serve as assessors (*Gutachter*in*) for the doctoral thesis in accordance with § 9 and as examiners at the doctoral thesis defence in accordance with § 10.

* The confirmation of doctoral supervision by the members of the doctoral committee must be submitted by the candidate six months after the commencement of the doctoral thesis at the latest, otherwise the candidate's admission to the programme is revoked. In this case, too, all rules pertaining to the composition of the committee must be observed. The

doctoral examinations board is responsible for deciding on exceptions. For this reason, the supervision agreement must be submitted to the Doctoral Examinations Office significantly before the six-month deadline to allow it enough time to assess and, if necessary, make changes to the composition of the committee.

- (2) The doctoral committee is made up of three members, one of whom is the principal supervisor responsible for assigning the topic of the doctoral thesis. If the principal supervisor is not a permanent employee of the University of Münster, a qualified academic (as defined in sentence 4) who is permanently employed at the University of Münster must submit a written statement confirming their willingness to assume the role of doctoral supervisor if necessary; compliance with the rules stipulated in sentences 5 to 7 is to be ensured. The doctoral examinations board may authorise exceptions with regard to sentence 2 for academics who are permanently employed at a different academic facility. To be appointed to the doctoral committee, members must have earned their habilitation or equivalent qualification (e.g. assistant professor, Emmy Noether or Heisenberg scholarship holder); decisions regarding equivalence are to be decided by the doctoral examinations board upon written, substantiated request. At least two members of the doctoral committee must hold doctorates from a natural science faculty (Dr rer nat) or an equivalent qualification; decisions regarding equivalence are taken by the doctoral examinations board upon written, substantiated request. At least one member of the doctoral committee must belong to the Faculty of Biology of the University of Münster; the faculty board of the Faculty of Biology is responsible for deciding on exceptions to this rule. If two members of the doctoral committee are bound in an employment relationship of dependence, the doctoral examinations board decides whether the recommendation under § 5 (1) sentence 1 must be denied in order to avoid the appearance of bias (see also § 9 (1)). The doctoral examinations board may appoint an academic who does not hold a habilitation or equivalent qualification as a third member if there is good cause, e.g. because they are financing the candidate with their own external resources and are therefore the principal supervisor, or because of their particular subject-related expertise. The request is to be submitted to the doctoral committee by the principal supervisor or –if they are not a member of the Faculty of Biology – by the coordinating member of the Faculty of Biology in accordance with § 5 (4).
- (3) The composition of the doctoral committee can be changed, provided that a written, substantiated request to this effect is submitted to the doctoral examinations board by the candidate or a member of the doctoral committee in agreement with the majority of sitting members of the doctoral committee and with written consent of the new member(s).
- (4) The principal supervisor, or if they do not belong to the Faculty of Biology of the University of Münster, a member of the doctoral committee who does belong to the Faculty of Biology, is responsible for coordinating the doctoral procedure within the faculty, ensuring compliance with the provisions of these Doctoral Regulations; this includes regular committee meetings.* The faculty board is responsible for deciding on exceptions to this rule (see § 5 (2) sentence 6).

* The candidate is responsible for organising the committee meetings.

- (5) The doctoral committee should convene at least three times during the doctoral programme (see § 6 (1))* to ensure that the candidate receives competent supervision.** The first committee meeting should take place in the first year of doctoral study, at which the candidate should present the doctoral project. The third committee meeting should usually take place in the third year of doctoral study with the aim of planning the conclusion of the doctoral procedure; the goal is to have the candidate complete the programme within three to four years. The doctoral thesis should be

submitted no later than 18 months following this committee meeting; exceptions to this rule are only possible with a written, substantiated request by the doctoral candidate and their principal supervisor to the doctoral examinations board.***

- * What is meant is one meeting per year, as specified in § 6 (1), i.e. three meetings within the space of three years, and an additional meeting each year thereafter, with an updated plan for completion each time.
- ** In addition to the candidate presenting the latest results and discussing their plans for the doctoral thesis with all the committee members, the committee meetings should provide an opportunity for the members to discuss matters in the absence of the candidate and, if need be, with the doctoral candidate in the absence of the principal supervisor. Minutes of the committee meetings should be taken and subsequently signed by the candidate and the principal supervisor (an optional form for these minutes is provided on the SDP Biosciences website) and, if applicable, filed into the candidate's course record book (*Studienbuch*). In any case, the principal supervisor must confirm that the annual committee meetings have taken place (e.g. in the course record book).
- *** The following documents should be included with the substantiated request:
 - a list containing the date when the candidate began the doctoral degree and the dates of previous committee meetings;
 - the minutes of the committee meetings held in the third and fourth years, each containing the relevant plan for completion, signed by all of the committee members.
- (6) Professors emeriti, retired professors or professors who are no longer in office at the University should not usually serve as members of a doctoral committee if they left office at the University of Münster more than three years previously.*
- * Naturally, professors who have transferred to a different university may continue to serve as (external) members on the doctoral committee.

§ 6

Doctoral Study and Doctoral Programmes

- (1) The doctoral programme requires the candidate to complete a doctoral project in an increasingly independent manner under the supervision of a doctoral committee in accordance with § 5. The project work is accompanied and supported by personalised, project-oriented doctoral studies in the framework of a structured doctoral programme which normally take at least six semesters to complete. The goal of the structured doctoral programme is to support the candidate in completing their doctoral project and preparing for an academic career either within or outside the University. The doctoral programme requires the candidate to participate in seminars, conferences and events at which they can gain key qualifications; the candidate is also expected to regularly attend a cross-departmental academic seminar, participate in a cross-departmental event on good scientific practice, assist with teaching undergraduate courses in the degree programmes of the Faculty of Biology to the extent of at least five hours of instruction per week in total and attend the annual meeting of the doctoral committee in accordance with § 5. If fulfilling these requirements proves to be infeasible, the doctoral examinations board may waive proof of completion of individual requirements upon admission to the doctoral examination (*Zulassung zur Promotionsprüfung*) at the candidate's request.
- (2) The Faculty of Biology has established the structured doctoral programme BioSciences; it may establish further structured doctoral programmes as well as permit its doctoral candidates to enrol in structured doctoral programmes in other faculties.* A doctoral programme can have a thematic focus. In addition to the mandatory requirements under § 6 (1), structured doctoral programmes comprise elements from the areas of academic

and professional competence; the faculty board is responsible for deciding on exceptions to this rule in consultation with the doctoral examinations board**. Each structured doctoral programme is managed by an executive committee. Each doctoral programme is responsible for issuing regulations or statutes that are passed by the faculty board based on the recommendation of the doctoral examinations board;** the regulations or statutes specify the content and scope of the doctoral programme in accordance with § 6 (1) and § 6 (2) sentence 3, as well as the constitution, rights and duties of the programme's responsible bodies, including those of the executive committee. In addition, each structured doctoral programme drafts a doctoral agreement or supervision agreement stipulating the rights and obligations of the candidates and principal supervisors.

* The regulations or statutes of a doctoral programme contain additional regulations that need to be considered.

** Upon request, the faculty board approves the doctoral programmes, along with the regulations/statutes of the SDPs in existence at this time (OCC, CiM/IMPRS, MGSE, ...) without prior review. The sole exception is that the regulations/statutes must include a provision on a doctoral agreement or supervision agreement which the doctoral candidate and the principal supervisor must sign and submit no later than six months after commencement of the doctoral programme.

§ 7

Admission to the Doctoral Examination

- (1) Candidates may only gain admission to the doctoral examination if they have been granted admission to the doctoral programme in accordance with § 2.
- (2) The candidate must submit a written application to the doctoral examinations board for admission to the doctoral examination. The application must include the topic of the doctoral thesis and the name of the principal supervisor responsible for assigning the topic of the doctoral thesis.
- (3) The application must also include:
 1. eight* bound or fastened copies of the doctoral thesis as well as two digital versions of the same as referred to in § 8, containing a summary and a CV in tabular form;
 2. a declaration by the candidate affirming that they have not been convicted of a criminal offence involving the misuse of their academic qualification;
 3. confirmation of participation in the doctoral programme in biology at the University of Münster in accordance with § 6 (enrolment certificates);
 4. a certificate** issued by the coordinating member of the doctoral committee specifying the activities conducted as part of the doctoral programme, including assisting in teaching undergraduate courses in the degree programmes offered by the Faculty of Biology in accordance with § 6; the certificate must specify the date and scope of the corresponding activities and courses;
 5. a written declaration of previous attempts at earning a doctorate and their corresponding results, if applicable;
 6. a written declaration that the candidate completed the submitted doctoral thesis by themselves without impermissible aids, that all sources and aids*** used in the doctoral thesis are properly cited and that the doctoral thesis has not been submitted elsewhere for consideration as an examination paper;
 7. a written notification should the doctoral thesis contain results to be protected by patent; in this case, the doctoral thesis is flagged with a blocking notice;
 8. in the case of a doctorate in accordance with § 8 (3) sentence 5****, a declaration by the candidate indicating their contribution to the presented scientific articles

confirmed by the principal supervisor and, if the principal supervisor responsible for assigning the topic is not a member of the Faculty of Biology, a declaration by the coordinating member from the Faculty of Biology that the submitted doctoral thesis complies with the provisions of these Doctoral Regulations;

9. a statement by the candidate as to whether they consent to having silent observers present at the non-public part of the doctoral thesis defence;
10. if applicable, a request by the candidate to be granted the academic title “Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Biology” instead of “Doctor of Natural Sciences” (Dr rer nat).

* Since circulation is now electronic, five copies are sufficient.

** This proof should be given by presenting a relevant certificate from the respective doctoral programme, e.g. in the form of a course record book.

*** The use of generative AI must be indicated in the doctoral thesis by citing the relevant location (e.g. Chapter X, Figure Y). Generative AI may only be used for linguistic correction, not for creating text.

**** What is meant is in accordance with § 8 (3) sentences 3 to 5, i.e. in the case of every cumulative doctorate.

- (4) The candidate may withdraw their request for admission to the doctoral examination as long as none of the assessors have yet assessed the doctoral thesis. In this case, the application is considered as having never been submitted.
- (5) Admission can only be denied if the candidate has failed to meet one of the requirements under § 7 (1) to (3).

§ 8

Doctoral Thesis

- (1) The doctoral thesis must be academically noteworthy and demonstrate the candidate’s ability to conduct independent research and present their findings with an appropriate written description and discussion.
- (2) The topic of the doctoral thesis must originate from the field of biological sciences. The topic should be chosen by the candidate in agreement with their doctoral committee. As a rule, the doctoral thesis should be written at an institute of the Faculty of Biology of the University of Münster in consultation with the principal supervisor responsible for assigning the topic.
- (3) The doctoral thesis consists of a written scholarly treatise in the form of a monograph or cumulative doctorate (*kumulative Dissertation*). A monograph can be supplemented by one or more manuscripts or academic publications*. A cumulative doctorate consists of at least three separate, but thematically coherent manuscripts which are suited for publication in academic journals, as well as an overarching introduction and [an overarching](#) discussion of the entire doctorate with explanations on how the various manuscripts relate to one another, as well as a general summary of all findings; the principal supervisor can request that a general section on materials and methods be included. At least two of the manuscripts in a cumulative doctorate must be original papers, at least one of which the candidate must claim lead authorship for, including lead authorship shared with others and which must have been already published or accepted for publication by a prestigious international scientific journal via a peer-review system. A cumulative doctorate may contain an overview (review article) if the candidate is the lead author and the overview has been requested or accepted for review by a journal with a peer-review system; the contribution must be clearly set apart from the general introduction. If all the manuscripts in a cumulative doctorate in accordance with sentence 3 were written solely by the candidate and contain the

candidate's own data, the requirement under sentence 4 with regard to acceptance for publication does not apply. If the manuscripts in accordance with sentences 2 and 3 were written by more than two authors, the candidate must include a statement detailing their own contribution with respect to the aspects of experimental implementation/development/writing of the manuscript; the statement is to be signed by the principal supervisor. In singular cases, the doctoral examinations board may waive the requirements for a cumulative doctorate under sentences 3 to 5 upon substantiated request by the candidate in agreement with the doctoral committee**.

* This can take the form of either a separate chapter in the doctoral thesis or, if the candidate's own results contained in the publication(s) are presented in the results section of the thesis, an appendix to the thesis. In the case of inclusion as an appendix, sentence 7 does not apply.

** In exceptional cases where the doctoral thesis contains the results of other authors that are not included in the inserted or appended publications – for example because the results were obtained jointly or because this is essential for understanding – these results must be identified as such (e.g. via a note in the corresponding figure caption) and the author's own contribution must be presented as described in sentence 7.

- (4) The doctoral thesis may not have previously been the subject of a state or academic examination. In the case of a doctorate as referred to in § 8 (3) sentence 1 or 2, the doctorate may include co-authored academic papers.
- (5) The doctoral thesis must be written in either German or English.
- (6) Members of the Faculty of Biology must be given the opportunity to inspect and state their opinion on the doctoral thesis. To this end, the doctoral thesis and the two written assessments must be publicly displayed for three weeks after receipt of the second assessment in the Faculty Office (*Dekanat*) in accordance with § 9. The other seven copies are sent to members of the faculty for inspection*. Doctoral theses flagged with a blocking notice in accordance with § 7 (3) (7) are subject to confidentiality agreements and are to remain in the Faculty Office; copies of the doctoral thesis are not distributed to members of the faculty for inspection.

* Instead, circulation takes place electronically via the Sciebo data platform.

§ 9

Assessment of the Doctoral Thesis

- (1) The doctoral examinations board of the Faculty of Biology appoints two assessors proposed by the candidate to evaluate the doctoral thesis; as a rule, the assessors are members of the respective doctoral committee*. If the two proposed assessors are bound in an employment relationship of dependence, the doctoral examinations board is to decide whether the recommendation must be denied in order to avoid the appearance of bias. Persons may only be appointed assessors if they are sufficiently qualified in accordance with § 5 (2) sentence 4. One of the assessors can be the principal supervisor responsible for assigning the topic of the doctoral thesis. One of the assessors must hold a doctorate from a natural science faculty (Dr rer nat) or an equivalent qualification; decisions regarding equivalence are taken by the doctoral examinations board upon written, substantiated request.

* Unless otherwise proposed, the principal supervisor and the second member of the doctoral committee will be appointed as assessors. Sentences 2 and 5 are to be observed.

- (2) Each assessor should submit a detailed, substantiated, written assessment of the doctoral thesis with a recommendation to accept or reject it within one month upon receiving it. The assessments must be written in German or English. Should the doctoral thesis be accepted, the assessor must also include a recommended grade based on the following grading scale:

- *summa cum laude* (excellent = 0);

- *magna cum laude* (very good = 1);
- *cum laude* (good = 2);
- *rite* (pass = 3);

in order to differentiate better, “plus” and “minus” may be added to “*magna cum laude*” (0.7 or 1.3) and “*cum laude*” (1.7 or 2.3).

- (3) After the assessments have been returned, the professors of the Faculty of Biology are given the opportunity to inspect and state their opinion on the doctoral thesis and the assessments in accordance with § 8 (6). If a professor raises an objection to the doctoral thesis, the objection can only be officially recognised if it is expressed in written form and justified in detail; the objection must be lodged with the Faculty Office within the inspection period.
 - (4) If both assessors recommend that the doctoral thesis be accepted, and no objection is raised within the period stated in § 9 (3), the doctoral thesis is accepted.
 - (5) If both assessors recommend that the doctoral thesis be rejected, and no objection is raised within the period stated in § 9 (3), the doctoral thesis is rejected. The rejection notice is sent to the candidate with written information on the legal remedies available.
 - (6) The doctoral thesis cannot be accepted if only one assessment recommends acceptance. In this case, the doctoral thesis must undergo a third assessment by a professor of the Faculty of Biology; the inspection period under § 8 (6) begins anew with the submission of the third assessment. If the third assessor appointed in accordance with sentence 2 recommends that the doctoral thesis be accepted, and no objection is raised within the period stated in § 9 (3), the doctoral thesis is accepted. If the third assessor appointed in accordance with sentence 2 recommends that the doctoral thesis be rejected, and no objection is raised within the period stated in § 9 (3), the doctoral thesis is rejected. The rejection notice is sent to the candidate with written information on the legal remedies available.
 - (7) If an objection is raised within the allotted period as stated in § 9 (3) with regard to the acceptance or rejection of the doctoral thesis or its recommended grade, the doctoral examinations board is responsible for deciding on further action in consultation with the objecting party and the assessors. The doctoral examinations board may choose to seek the expertise of external assessors. The board may decide to accept the doctoral thesis on the condition that the candidate revise the doctoral thesis within a certain period of time specified by the doctoral examinations board. The revised version must be submitted together with the original version and its contentious passages marked accordingly; as a rule, the new version is to be assessed by the same assessors who evaluated the original version*.
- * the same deadline as in § 9 (2), i.e. within one month.
- (8) If both assessors recommend that the doctoral thesis receive the grade “*summa cum laude*”, the doctoral examinations board – upon commencement of the inspection period as indicated in 9 (3) – requests a third, external assessor to evaluate the doctoral thesis; the principal supervisor in consultation with the two other committee members must suggest three external assessors with expertise in the subject who hold a doctoral degree from a natural science faculty (Dr rer nat) or an equivalent qualification, and a habilitation or an equivalent academic qualification, and are not considered to be biased in accordance with DFG guidelines. Decisions regarding equivalence are to be taken by the doctoral examinations board upon written, substantiated request.

§ 10

Doctoral Thesis Defence

- (1) The candidate’s doctoral thesis must be accepted before they can be admitted to the

doctoral thesis defence. Only in cases of hardship and upon substantiated request may the doctoral examinations board allow a candidate to be admitted to the doctoral thesis defence during the inspection period in accordance with § 9 (3).

- (2) The candidate arranges the date and place of the doctoral thesis defence in consultation with their examiners and notifies the doctoral examinations board accordingly. The doctoral examinations board invites at least three examiners and the candidate to attend the doctoral thesis defence. The date of the doctoral thesis defence is announced on the faculty website at least seven days in advance.
- (3) The head of faculty (*Dekan*in*) chairs the doctoral thesis defence; if the head of faculty is also the principal supervisor, the doctoral thesis defence is conducted by their deputy. The head of faculty or, if applicable, their deputy may delegate the responsibility of chairing the doctoral thesis defence to the principal supervisor or the coordinating member of the Faculty of Biology who sits on the doctoral committee in accordance with § 5.
- (4) The doctoral thesis defence must take place within two months following acceptance of the doctoral thesis; if the candidate fails to hold the doctoral thesis defence within this two-month period, the defence is graded as failed. Only in cases of hardship and upon substantiated request may the candidate be granted an extension to this deadline.
- (5) As a rule, the assessors of the doctoral thesis and members of the doctoral committee serve as examiners at the doctoral thesis defence. In exceptional cases, if one or more members of the doctoral committee are unable to attend the doctoral thesis defence, e.g. due to illness or absence, the doctoral examinations board, in consultation with the candidate and the doctoral committee, appoints one or more substitutes accordingly; the provisions of § 5 (2) are to be observed.
- (6) The purpose of the doctoral thesis defence is to give the candidate and the examiners the opportunity to engage in an academic discussion on the content of the doctoral thesis. The first part of the doctoral thesis defence is open to all University members and consists of a presentation by the candidate on their doctoral thesis and a follow-up discussion; the second part, consisting of an oral discussion between the examiners and the candidate, is closed to the public; § 10 (8) remains unaffected. During the doctoral thesis defence, the candidate should demonstrate that they are capable of assessing and discussing the hypotheses and results of the doctoral thesis, taking into account thesis-relevant secondary aspects and the context of overarching questions. The doctoral thesis defence should take at least 60 minutes but should not exceed 120 minutes. Before the examination, the examiners should outline the general structure and length of the various parts of the doctoral thesis defence (presentation, discussion, oral discussion). Minutes of the examination are to be taken and signed by the examiners. If technical capabilities permit, the doctoral thesis defence may be conducted in the form of a video conference, provided that all participants agree.
- (7) The doctoral thesis defence may be held in either German or English.
- (8) The candidate or doctoral committee may submit a written request to the doctoral examinations board with justification (e.g. in the case of a blocking notice in accordance with § 7 (3) no. 7) requesting to hold the presentation and discussion in camera. Notwithstanding sentence 1, the professors of the Faculty of Biology have the right to participate in the entire doctoral thesis defence. § 63 (4) of the Higher Education Act [HG] regulates the non-public part of the doctoral thesis defence.

§ 11

Assessment of the Doctoral Thesis Defence

- (1) The doctoral thesis defence is jointly graded by the examiners in accordance with § 10 (5) immediately following the oral discussion as follows:
 - *summa cum laude* (excellent = 0);
 - *magna cum laude* (very good = 1);
 - *cum laude* (good = 2);
 - *rite* (pass = 3);
 in order to differentiate better, “plus” and “minus” may be added to “*magna cum laude*” (0.7 or 1.3) and “*cum laude*” (1.7 or 2.3). The doctoral thesis defence is graded as failed if it does not receive a grade of at least “*rite*”.
- (2) The candidate is informed of the result of their doctoral thesis defence immediately afterwards.

§ 12

Retaking a Doctoral Examination

- (1) If the doctoral thesis is rejected, the candidate may apply to take the doctoral examination one more time and not until a year has passed; in cases of hardship and upon substantiated request, the doctoral examinations board may grant a shorter waiting period. The candidate must then submit a new or revised version of the doctoral thesis. In accordance with § 7 (3) no. 5, the candidate is obliged to disclose the previous failed attempt.
- (2) If the doctoral thesis defence is graded as failed, the candidate may repeat it only once more no earlier than two months and no later than five months after the first attempt; the candidate is notified of these conditions in writing together with information on the legal remedies available. As a rule, the candidate presents the doctoral thesis defence to the same examiners who evaluated the first attempt. If necessary, the doctoral examinations board appoints new examiners; the conditions under § 5 (2) are to be observed accordingly.

§ 13

Assessment of the Doctoral Examination

- (1) The doctoral examination is passed if the doctoral thesis defence receives a pass grade.
- (2) The overall grade is calculated as follows: An unrounded arithmetic mean is formed based on the individual grades awarded for the doctoral thesis in accordance with § 9 (2), including, if applicable, the grade recommended by an external assessor in accordance with § 9 (8). Using this result and the grade awarded for the doctoral thesis defence in accordance with § 11 (1), a second arithmetic mean is calculated and rounded to the first decimal point; the grade for the doctoral thesis is weighted double in the calculation.
- (3) The overall grade for the doctoral examination is based on the following grading scale:
 - *summa cum laude* (excellent = grade 0);
 - *magna cum laude* (very good = for grades up to 1.5);
 - *cum laude* (good = for grades up to 2.5);
 - *rite* (pass = for grades up to 3.5).

The overall grade of “*summa cum laude*” may only be awarded if the doctoral thesis was graded “*summa cum laude*” by both assessors in accordance with § 9 (1) and the additional external assessor in accordance with § 9 (8), and the doctoral thesis defence also received the grade “*summa cum laude*”.

§ 14

Completion of the Doctoral Degree

- (1) If the candidate passes the doctoral examination, the head of faculty or, if they and their deputy are prevented, a vice-dean belonging to the group of professors, confers the title “Doctor of Natural Sciences” (*doctor rerum naturalium*), or upon written request by the candidate in accordance with § 7 (3) no. 10, the title “Doctor of Philosophy in Biology”; on this occasion, the conferring party accepts the candidate’s pledge by handshake **or by raising the right hand** that they undertake to protect their doctoral title from any taint at all times, to prove themselves worthy of this title in their academic work, and always to seek and uphold academic truth to the best of their knowledge and belief. The pledge by handshake **or by raising the right hand** may be waived by the doctoral examinations board only upon substantiated request in cases of hardship.
- (2) The candidate is presented with an examination certificate confirming the successful completion of the doctoral examinations, the title of the doctoral thesis, the grade of the doctoral thesis in accordance with § 9 (2) sentence 3 and, if applicable, the grade of the external assessor in accordance with § 9 (8), the grade of the doctoral thesis defence in accordance with § 11 (1) and the overall grade in accordance with § 13 (3). If the doctoral thesis received the grade “*summa cum laude*” from both assessors and the doctoral thesis defence also received the grade “*summa cum laude*”, but the grade from the third, external assessor (in accordance with § 9 (8)) is not yet available, the candidate may, upon request, receive a preliminary, ungraded certificate confirming that they have passed the doctoral examination. The successful participation in a structured doctoral programme is confirmed in a separate certificate containing a list of all the completed courses.
- (3) If the doctoral thesis has not yet been published, the certificate does not yet authorise the holder to use the doctoral title.
- (4) If the doctoral thesis has been published in accordance with § 15, the doctoral degree certificate in accordance with § 16 is also issued; this certificate entitles the candidate to use the doctoral title.

§ 15

Publication of the Doctoral Thesis

- (1) The doctoral procedure is only considered concluded when the doctoral thesis has been published or accepted for publication or, if not in its entirety, then a significant part or parts thereof; this should take place within one year following the doctoral thesis defence. Only then can the head of faculty issue the doctoral degree certificate, entitling the candidate to use the doctoral title.
- (2) Publication is only permitted if the doctoral committee confirms that the entire doctoral thesis, or a significant part or parts thereof, is ready for press.
- (3) The doctoral thesis must be published or accepted for publication in one of the following forms:
 1. printing or reproduction of the entire doctoral thesis;
 2. publication of essential content of the doctoral thesis in one or more scientific journals;
 3. submission of an electronic version, whereby the data format and data carriers must meet the criteria provided by the University Library (ULB).
 Upon request by the candidate or principal supervisor, the doctoral examinations board must decide whether to grant an extension to the deadline referred to in § 15 (1).

- (4) The candidate must ensure that the publication of the doctoral thesis complies with the corresponding rules issued by the University Library of the University of Münster.
- (5) The candidate must provide the ULB with an appropriate number of copies of the doctoral thesis in accordance with the applicable resolution of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK). In the case of § 15 (3) sentence 1 no. 2, the principal supervisor provides the doctoral examinations board with confirmation that the essential content of the doctoral thesis has been accepted for publication. In the case of § 15 (3) sentence 1 no. 3, the candidate must provide the doctoral examinations board with a letter of confirmation from the ULB that the copies were indeed delivered.

§ 16

Doctoral Degree Certificate

- (1) Upon meeting the requirements of publication stipulated in § 15, the candidate is issued the doctoral degree certificate.
- (2) The certificate includes the title of the doctoral thesis and the overall grade of the doctoral examination in accordance with § 13 (3). It is to bear the date of the day of the doctoral thesis defence, be personally signed by the head of faculty or their deputy, and be presented to the candidate.
- (3) With the presentation of the doctoral degree certificate, the candidate is entitled to use the doctoral title.
- (4) Following presentation of the doctoral degree certificate, the candidate may request access to the assessments of the doctoral thesis and the minutes of the doctoral thesis defence. The candidate should submit their written request to the doctoral examinations board within three months of receiving the doctoral degree certificate. The doctoral examinations board stipulates the time and place of access.
- (5) Upon the successful conclusion of the doctoral procedure, the candidate can only be denied the presentation of the doctoral degree certificate under the conditions referred to in § 17.

§ 17

Denial of the Doctoral Degree

- (1) If it becomes known prior to presenting the doctoral degree certificate that the candidate gained admission to the doctoral programme through deception or manipulated the result of an examination, or if significant requirements for admission to the doctoral procedure were erroneously assumed to be fulfilled, the doctoral examination may be declared null and void upon a resolution by the doctoral examinations board.

§ 18

Revocation of the Doctoral Degree

- (1) If it becomes known that the candidate gained their doctoral title through deception or that the doctoral title was conferred upon the false assumption that significant requirements had been fulfilled, the doctoral degree may be revoked upon a resolution by the faculty board.
- (2) The faculty board may also revoke the doctoral degree if the candidate has been

convicted of an intentional criminal offence involving the misuse of their academic qualification or doctoral degree in the preparation for or commission of the criminal offence.

- (3) Before a decision is made, the holder of the doctoral degree is to be given the opportunity to state their case.
The faculty board must notify the holder of the doctoral degree of the decision.
- (4) The same applies to honorary doctoral degrees under § 20.

§ 19

Legal Remedies and Decisions on Objections

- (1) Candidates may appeal decisions made to their detriment by lodging an objection notice with the doctoral examinations board. The doctoral examinations board is responsible for deciding on the matter. The notification of the decision must include justification and information on the legal remedies available.

§ 20

Honorary Doctoral Degrees

- (1) An honorary doctoral title (doctor honoris causa, hc) may be awarded in recognition of outstanding academic achievement or exceptional contributions to the field of biology. Conferral of an honorary doctoral degree (Dr rer nat hc) is considered by the faculty board upon the written request of at least two full-time professors of the faculty. If endorsed, the petition is forwarded to the doctoral examinations board for a vote. Conferral of an honorary doctoral degree for outstanding achievement requires the approval of two-thirds of the postdoctoral members on both boards. Conferral of an honorary doctoral degree for exceptional contributions requires the unanimous approval of the postdoctoral members on both boards.

§ 21

Doctoral Procedure in Cooperation with a Partner University

- (1) The Faculty of Biology may award the title “Doctor of Natural Sciences (Dr rer nat)” or the title “Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Biology” in collaboration with a faculty at a partner university. The Faculty of Biology may also participate in the conferral of such a title by a faculty of a partner university.
- (2) The execution of the doctoral procedure in accordance with § 21 (1) sentence 1 and the participation in the doctoral procedure in accordance with § 21 (1) sentence 2 are contingent on a cooperation agreement with the institution of the partner university that is to award the degree. In the agreement, both partners undertake to allow candidates to participate in the respective doctoral programme and outline the details of their collaboration. The aspects of the collaboration that concern doctoral regulations are arranged in consultation with the doctoral examinations board, which determines the details of conferral of the joint degree. The cooperation agreement is signed by the head of faculty. As a rule, only one doctoral title is awarded for the same doctoral thesis. If the partner university and the University of Münster confer doctoral titles with different names, the candidate must declare which title they would like to use; dual titles are not permitted.
- (3) In the period during which the doctoral thesis is being written, the candidate must be enrolled as a student in a doctoral programme at the Faculty of Biology of the University of Münster for at least twelve months. Similarly, the candidate must provide

documentation of having spent at least twelve months conducting research at the partner university.

- (4) The agreement referred to in § 21 (2) must explicitly state that the University of Münster is to participate in the doctoral procedure to at least an equal degree and that all formal rules of both universities are to be observed. With regard to the practical implementation, altered agreements that differ from these Doctoral Regulations are permitted as long as the substance of the Doctoral Regulations remains unaltered.
- (5) Before the candidate can be admitted to the doctoral programme in accordance with § 2, they must also include the following documents with the application for admission:
 1. a statement from the partner university confirming its intention to grant the candidate admission to its doctoral programme;
 2. a statement from an authorised examiner of the partner university confirming that they are willing to assess the doctoral thesis.
- (6) The doctoral thesis is assessed by at least one authorised examiner of the Faculty of Biology of the University of Münster and one authorised examiner of the partner university. Both assessments must be written in either German or English.

§ 22

Transitional Provisions and Entry into Force

- (1) These Doctoral Regulations (in their original German version) enter into force on the day following their publication in the *Amtliche Bekanntmachungen* (Official Announcements – AB Uni) of the University of Münster. These Doctoral Regulations apply to all candidates who submit an application for admission to the doctoral procedure after they have come into force. Candidates who applied for admission to this doctoral procedure under terms that deviate from these Doctoral Regulations are to be given the opportunity to complete their doctoral degree under the regulations applicable at the time of admission. Candidates who applied for admission to this doctoral procedure under previous regulations may submit a written request to pursue their doctoral degree under these new Doctoral Regulations.

Issued (in the original German version) upon the resolution of the faculty board of the Faculty of Biology (FB 13) of the University of Münster on 29 May 2019 and 9 October 2019. The above regulations (in the original German version) are hereby announced.

Please note that in accordance with § 12 (5) of the Higher Education Act of the Federal State of North Rhine-Westphalia [*Hochschulgesetz* – HG NRW], violations of procedural or formal requirements of the University's regulations or other legal provisions pertaining to university autonomy can no longer be asserted more than one year after this announcement, unless

1. these Regulations were not properly published,
2. the Rectorate previously raised an objection to the resolution passed by the deciding committee,
3. the University had already been given notice of a formal or procedural defect and had been informed of the legal provision that has been violated and of the fact giving rise to the defect or
4. the legal consequence of a deadline for violation notifications was not included

in the public announcement of the Regulations.

Münster, 30 October 2019

The Rector

Professor Dr Johannes Wessels

Glossary

admission to the doctoral examination	<i>Zulassung zur Promotionsprüfung</i>
admission to the doctoral procedure	<i>Zulassung zum Promotionsverfahren</i>
assessor	<i>Gutachter*in</i>
course record book.....	<i>Studienbuch</i>
cumulative doctorate.....	<i>kumulative Dissertation</i>
degree-relevant examination	<i>Prüfungsleistung</i>
doctoral agreement	<i>Promotionsvereinbarung</i>
doctoral committee	<i>Promotionskomitee</i>
doctoral examinations board	<i>Promotionsausschuss</i>
doctoral thesis	<i>Dissertation</i>
doctoral thesis defence	<i>Disputation</i>
faculty.....	<i>Fachbereich</i>
faculty board.....	<i>Fachbereichsrat</i>
Faculty Office	<i>Dekanat</i>
head of faculty	<i>Dekan*in</i>
principal supervisor	<i>Themensteller*in</i>
required coursework.....	<i>Studienleistung</i>
structured doctoral programme (SDP)	<i>strukturiertes Promotionsprogramm</i>
supervision agreement.....	<i>Betreuungsvereinbarung</i>

Translation: Supportstelle Englisch, University of Münster, 2025