

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

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## § 1

### Doctoral Degree

- (1) Conferral of the doctoral degree demonstrates that the candidate has achieved competence in independent scientific work beyond the general academic goal of obtaining professional qualification.
- (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 thesis (dissertation); the doctoral candidate may alternatively receive the title “Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Biology” upon request. The doctoral examination is comprised of two parts, i.e. a written thesis (dissertation) and its oral defence (disputation). By passing the doctoral examination, the candidate demonstrates that he/she
  - has gained a systematic understanding of the academic field and its relevant knowledge and skills;
  - has contributed to expanding the limits of knowledge by conducting high-quality research as compared to international standards;
  - can plan and conduct an extensive research process normally lasting several years with academic integrity;
  - is able to critically analyse theoretical and technical problems and provide innovative approaches to solving these;
  - is capable of communicating information about his/her field of expertise to the scientific community and society at large.
- (3) In recognition of outstanding academic achievement or extraordinary merits, the faculty may confer the academic degree “Honorary Doctor of Natural Sciences” (doctor rerum naturalium honoris causa - Dr. rer. nat. h.c.).

## § 2

### Admission to the Doctoral Programme

- (1) The requirements for admission to the doctoral programme are:
  1. supervision of the dissertation by a doctoral committee in accordance with § 5;
  2. proof of the necessary academic skills and cross-disciplinary 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 certificates, can meet the requirement put forth in § 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 5 and 60 ECTS credits), content and duration (usually max. 18 months) of these additional studies (normally master's-level courses offered by the Faculty of Biology) are determined by the doctoral examination board (*Promotionsausschuss*), though the responsible doctoral committee may submit a proposal. Justification for the amount of additional requirements has to be provided. The additional qualifications put forth in § 2 (7) and the result of a placement examination administered by at least three doctorate-holding members of the Faculty of Biology, of whom at least two must be professors and at least one a member of the examination board (but not the doctoral supervisor), can be taken into account for determining the additional studies required. Minutes of the examination must be drawn up and signed by the examiner(s). At the request of the doctoral supervisor responsible for assigning the topic of the dissertation, 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 have a duration of 30 to 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 drawn up 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 as put forth in § 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 examination board, the responsible doctoral committee may submit a proposal. As a rule, these additional studies correspond to the required coursework 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 comparability of degrees from foreign universities in accordance with § 2 (2-4), the examination board must decide the matter in consultation with the responsible doctoral committee. If necessary, it can base its decision on a “Statement of Comparability” 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.

- (6) Candidates are required to submit a written application to the doctoral examination 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 dissertation,\* and as a rule, at least two years prior to submission of the dissertation. At the latest six months after commencement of the dissertation, candidates need to present to the Examinations Office the doctoral or supervision agreement (*Promotionsvereinbarung* or *Betreuungsvereinbarung*) of the pertinent Structured Doctoral Programme, signed by the candidate and the principal supervisor (*Themensteller\*in*). The examination 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 doctoral supervisor, or if he/she is not a member of the Faculty of Biology, then by the representative of the Faculty of Biology who sits on the doctoral committee. The application as put forth in sentence 1 must include the following documents in German or English:
1. CV containing a complete list of the candidate's prior academic studies;
  2. written statement from a doctoral committee, confirming its intention to supervise the dissertation in accordance with § 5, or alternatively, the consent of the executive committee of a Structured Doctoral Programme to which responsibilities have been delegated in accordance with § 3 (7), to timely suggest a doctoral committee that conforms to the provisions of § 5 (2)\*
  3. authenticated copy or translation of the required university qualifications as put forth in § 2 (2-4).

\* 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 (2-4), the candidate can ask the examination board to pre-assess his/her eligibility in advance. For holders of foreign university degrees, candidates should submit their request for a pre-assessment early, i.e. about three months prior to starting the doctoral programme. Candidates who desire a pre-assessment of their chances of admission should submit all documents listed under sentence 4 in so far as these are available at the time. The examination board can only make a legally binding decision provided that it has access to all the documents listed under sentence 4.

- (7) Under certain circumstances, e.g. the candidate possesses special aptitude or qualification, the doctoral examination board may exempt the candidate from certain admission requirements stipulated in § 2 (2-4). The examination 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 examination board can make admission to the doctoral programme not only contingent on completing a qualifying university degree, but also on additional studies or other achievements which demonstrate the candidate's aptitude for doctoral study.

- (8) The candidate is admitted to the doctoral programme if he/she meets all the admission requirements. The preparatory studies mentioned 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 examination 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 candidate's options of legal recourse. Upon rectifying the reasons for rejection indicated by the examination board, the candidate may reapply for admission to the doctoral programme.

### § 3

#### Doctoral Examination Board

- (1) The Faculty of Biology appoints a doctoral examination board (*Promotionsausschuss*) to oversee the organisation of the doctoral programme and to carry out the tasks set out in these doctoral regulations. The examination board is comprised of a chairperson, his/her permanent deputy and six additional members. The chairperson, his/her deputy and three members are selected from the group of university professors, and one member is selected from the group of academic staff, non-academic staff and the student body\*, respectively. The term of office for members from the group of professors, academic staff and non-academic staff is three years, and the term of office for the student member is one year.

\* preferably doctoral students

- (2) The faculty board (*Fachbereichsrat*) of the Faculty of Biology is responsible for appointing the members of the examination board and their deputies at the recommendation of its member groups for the terms of office as put forth in § 3 (1) sentence 4. Re-appointment is permitted. Should a member resign their position prior to the end of their term, a substitute is to be selected to complete the remainder of the term. The faculty board chooses the chairperson and his/her deputy from the group of professors on the examination board.
- (3) The examination board ensures compliance with the stipulations put forth in these doctoral regulations. It commissions the corresponding doctoral committee (*Promotionskomitee*) to ensure that the doctoral process is properly conducted. It reviews the candidate's application and accompanying documents and is responsible for granting or denying admission to the doctoral programme in accordance with § 2 and § 7. It may also propose changes to the doctoral regulations.
- (4) Concerning decisions on the grading of doctoral examinations, committee members who do not belong to the group of professors generally serve in an advisory function.
- (5) The examination board has a quorum when the chairperson or his/her deputy as well as at least two additional 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 chairperson's vote decides the matter. In the case of decisions falling under § 3 (4), the examination board has a quorum when the chairperson or his/her deputy as well as at least two additional voting members from the group of professors are present. Abstentions are not permitted on decisions related to the grading of doctoral examinations.

- (6) Meetings of the examination board are not open to the public. The members of the examination board and their deputies are obliged to maintain confidentiality. Members who are not employed as civil servants are bound to professional discretion by the chairperson.
- (7) The examination board can delegate the task of managing regular matters to its chairperson 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 appeals.
- (8) The seat of the examination board is 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 process. The ombudspersons are appointed by the faculty board for a term of three years. Re-appointment is permitted. Each doctoral candidate and each supervisor can contact one of the ombudspersons at any time if he/she encounters problems in their supervisory relationship, for example. All matters are treated with strict confidentiality even after the doctoral examinations process 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: Prof. em. Dr. rer. nat. Hans-Joachim Galla, Institute of Biochemistry, Faculty of Chemistry and Pharmacy, University of Münster, Wilhelm Klemm Str. 2, 48149 Münster

#### **§ 5**

##### **Doctoral Committee**

- (1) Based on the candidate's recommendations [or that of the executive committee of the responsible doctoral programme](#), the examination board appoints a doctoral committee (*Promotionskomitee*) in accordance with § 6 (2). A prerequisite for admission to the doctoral programme as stated in § 2 (1) is a written statement by the members of the doctoral committee confirming doctoral supervision, or [a commitment by the executive committee of the responsible doctoral programme to timely suggest a doctoral committee that conforms to the provisions of § 5 \(2\)\\*](#). The members of the doctoral committee supervise the candidate's progress throughout the doctoral process and may serve as assessors for the dissertation in accordance with § 9 and as examiners at the 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 dissertation 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 examination 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 comprised of three members, one of whom is the principal supervisor responsible for assigning the topic of the dissertation (*Themensteller/in*). 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 his/her 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 examination board can 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 examination 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 equivalent qualification. Decisions regarding equivalence are taken by the examination board upon written, substantiated request. At least one member of the doctoral committee must belong to the Faculty of Biology at 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 examination board decides whether the recommendation as put forth in § 5 (1) sentence 1 must be denied in order to avoid the appearance of bias (see also § 9 (1)). The examination 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 he/she is financing the candidate with their own third-party resources and is therefore the principal supervisor, or because of his/her particular subject-related expertise. The request is to be submitted by the principal supervisor – or if he/she is not a member of the Faculty of Biology – by the coordinating member of the Faculty of Biology to the doctoral committee 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 examination 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.
- (4) The principal supervisor, or if he/she does not belong to the Faculty of Biology at the University of Münster, a member of the doctoral committee who does belong to the Faculty of Biology, is responsible for coordinating the doctoral process within the faculty, ensuring compliance with the provisions of the doctoral regulations. This includes regular committee meetings.\* The faculty board is responsible for deciding on exceptions to the 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 take place in the third year of doctoral study with the aim of planning the conclusion of the doctoral process; the goal is to have the candidate complete the programme within three to four years. The dissertation should be submitted no later than 18 months following this committee meeting. Exceptions to the rule are only

possible with a written, substantiated request by the doctoral candidate and his/her supervisor to the examination board.

\* In addition to the candidate presenting the latest results and discussing his/her plans for the dissertation 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 drawn up and subsequently signed by the candidate and 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).

- (6) As a rule, former professors of the University of Münster who are no longer in office or who have retired should only serve as members in a doctoral committee for up to three years after leaving office.\*

\* 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 his/her 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 he/she 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 5 SWS (hours of instruction) in total and attend the annual meeting of the doctoral committee in accordance with § 5. If fulfilling these requirements proves to be infeasible, the examination board may waive proof of completion of individual requirements upon admission to the doctoral examination at the candidate's request.
- (2) [The Faculty of Biology implements the Structured Doctoral Programme BioSciences; it may implement further Structure Doctoral Programmes for structured doctoral studies and it can accept Structural Programmes of other Faculties for the structured doctoral studies of its doctoral candidates.](#)\* A doctoral programme can have a thematic focus. In addition to the mandatory requirements put forth in § 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 the rule in consultation with the examination board\*\*. Each structured doctoral programme is managed by an executive committee. Each doctoral programme is responsible for issuing regulations or statutes which are passed by the faculty board based on the recommendation of the examination board.\*\* The regulations or statutes specify the content and scope of the doctoral programme in accordance with § 6 (1), 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 enacts a doctoral or supervision agreement (*Promotionsvereinbarung* or *Betreuungsvereinbarung*) in which the rights and obligations of candidates and principle supervisors are stipulated.

- \* The regulations or statute of a doctoral programme contains additional regulations which needs to be considered.
- \*\* Upon request, the faculty board approves the doctoral programmes, along with the regulations/statutes of the SDPs which exist 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 or supervision agreement which the doctoral candidate and 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 examination board for admission to the doctoral examination. The application must include the topic of the dissertation and the name of the principal supervisor responsible for assigning the topic of the dissertation.
- (3) The application must also include:
  1. eight bound or fastened copies of the dissertation as well as two digital versions of the same as indicated in § 8, containing a summary and a CV in tabular form;
  2. a declaration by the candidate affirming that he/she has not been convicted of a serious crime resulting from the misuse of his/her 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 dissertation by himself/herself without impermissible aids, that all sources and aids used in the dissertation are properly cited and that the dissertation has not been submitted elsewhere for consideration as an examination paper;
  7. a written notification should the dissertation contain results to be protected by patent; in this case, the dissertation is flagged with a blocking notice;
  8. in the case of a cumulative dissertation in accordance with § 8 (3) sentence 5, a declaration by the candidate indicating his/her 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 dissertation complies with the provisions of these doctoral

regulations;

9. a statement by the candidate as to whether he/she consents to having listeners present at the non-public part of the defence;

10. if applicable, a request by the candidate to be granted the academic title of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Biology instead of a Doctor of Natural Sciences (Dr. rer. nat.).

*\* the form of which depends on the respective SDP, e.g. a course record book (Studienbuch).*

- (4) The candidate may withdraw his/her request for admission to the doctoral examination as long as none of the examiners have yet assessed the dissertation. If so, the application for admission is rendered null and void.
- (5) Admission can only be denied if the candidate has failed to meet one or more of the requirements put forth in § 7 (1-3).

## § 8

### Dissertation

- (1) The dissertation must be academically noteworthy and demonstrate the candidate's ability to conduct independent research and present his/her findings with an appropriate written description and discussion.
- (2) The topic of the dissertation must originate from the field of biological sciences. The topic should be chosen by the candidate in agreement with his/her doctoral committee. As a rule, the dissertation should be written at an institute of the Faculty of Biology at the University of Münster in consultation with the principal supervisor responsible for assigning the topic.
- (3) The dissertation is comprised of a written academic treatment in the form of a monograph or cumulative dissertation. A monograph can be supplemented by one or more manuscripts or academic publications. A cumulative dissertation is comprised 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 dissertation 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 dissertation must be original papers, 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 dissertation 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 dissertation in accordance with sentence 3 were written solely by the candidate and contain the candidate's own data, the requirement put forth in sentence 4 pertaining 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 his/her 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 examination board may waive the requirements for a cumulative dissertation put forth in sentences 3-5 upon substantiated request by the candidate in agreement with the doctoral committee.

- (4) The dissertation must never have been submitted for consideration in any state or academic examination. In the case of a cumulative dissertation as provided for in § 8 (3) sentence 1 or 2, papers by several authors can form part of the dissertation of several doctoral candidates.
- (5) The dissertation must be written in German or English.
- (6) Members of the Faculty of Biology must be given the opportunity to review and state their opinion on the dissertation. To this end, the dissertation and the two written assessments must be publicly displayed for three weeks after receipt of the second assessment in the Dean's Office in accordance with § 9. The remaining seven copies are sent to members of the faculty for review. Dissertations flagged with a blocking notice in accordance with § 7 (3) 7 are subject to confidentiality agreements and are to remain in the Dean's Office, i.e. copies of the dissertation are not distributed to members of the faculty for review.

## § 9

### Grading the Dissertation

- (1) The examination board of the Faculty of Biology selects two assessors proposed by the candidate to evaluate the dissertation. 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 examination board is to decide whether the recommendation must be denied in order to avoid the appearance of bias. Persons may only be selected as assessors if they are sufficiently qualified in accordance with § 5 (2) sentence 4. One of the assessors can be the doctoral supervisor responsible for assigning the topic of the dissertation. Furthermore, one of the assessors must hold a doctorate from a natural science faculty (Dr. rer. nat.) or a comparable qualification. Decisions regarding comparability are taken by the examination board upon written, substantiated request.
- (2) Each assessor must submit a detailed, substantiated, written assessment of the dissertation 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 dissertation be accepted, the assessor must also include a recommended grade based on the following grading scale:
  - summa cum laude (*ausgezeichnet* / excellent = 0);
  - magna cum laude (*sehr gut* / very good = 1);
  - cum laude (*gut* / good = 2);
  - rite (*bestanden* / pass = 3);
 In order to differentiate, "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 professorial staff of the Faculty of Biology are given the opportunity to review and state their opinion on the assessments in accordance with § 8 (6). If a professor raises an objection to a given grade, 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 Dean's Office within the review period.
- (4) If both assessors recommend that the dissertation be accepted, and no objection is raised within the period stated in § 9 (3), the dissertation is accepted.
- (5) If both assessors recommend that the dissertation be rejected, and no objection is

raised within the period stated in § 9 (3), the dissertation is rejected. The rejection notice is sent to the candidate with information on his/her options of legal recourse.

- (6) The dissertation cannot be accepted if only one assessment recommends acceptance. In this case, the dissertation must undergo a third assessment by a professor of the Faculty of Biology. The period of review as provided in § 8 (6) begins anew with the submission of the third assessment. If the third assessor appointed in accordance with § 9 (6) sentence 2 recommends that the dissertation be accepted, and no objection is raised within the period stated in § 9 (3), the dissertation is accepted. If the third assessor appointed in accordance with § 9 (6) sentence 2 recommends that the dissertation be rejected, and no objection is raised within the period stated in § 9 (3), the dissertation is rejected. The rejection notice is sent to the candidate with information on his/her options of legal recourse.
- (7) If an objection is raised within the allotted period as stated in § 9 (3) with regard to the acceptance or rejection of the dissertation or its recommended grade, the examination board is responsible for deciding on further action in consultation with the objecting party and the assessors. The examination board may choose to seek the expertise of a further assessor, perhaps from another university. The board may decide to accept the dissertation on the condition that the candidate revise the dissertation within a certain period of time specified by the examination 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.
- (8) If both assessors recommend that the dissertation receive the grade “summa cum laude”, the examination board – upon commencement of the review period as indicated in § 9 (3) – requests an external assessor to evaluate the dissertation; 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 comparable qualification, and a habilitation or comparable academic qualification, and are not considered to be biased in accordance with DFG guidelines. Decisions regarding comparability are to be taken by the examination board upon written, substantiated request.

## **§ 10**

### **Defence**

- (1) The candidate may only be permitted to hold the defence of the dissertation on the condition that his/her dissertation has been accepted. Only in cases of hardship and upon substantiated request may a candidate be allowed to hold the defence of the dissertation during the review period in accordance with § 9 (3).
- (2) The candidate arranges the date and place of the defence in consultation with his/her examiners and notifies the examination board accordingly. The examination board then invites at least three examiners and the candidate to the defence. The time and place of the defence is to be publicly announced at the University at least seven days prior to the designated date.
- (3) The Dean is responsible for conducting the defence as chairperson. If the Dean is also the principal supervisor, the defence is conducted by his/her deputy. The Dean, or if applicable, his/her deputy, may delegate the responsibility of chairing the proceedings

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 defence must take place within two months following acceptance of the dissertation. If the candidate fails to hold the defence within this two-month period, the defence is graded as failed. Only in cases of hardship and upon substantiated request may the examination board grant the candidate an extension to this deadline.
- (5) As a rule, the assessors of the dissertation and members of the doctoral committee serve as examiners at the defence. In exceptional cases, if one or more members of the doctoral committee cannot attend the defence, e.g. due to illness or absence, the examination board in consultation with the candidate and the doctoral committee appoints one or more substitutes respectively. The provisions of § 5 (2) are to be observed.
- (6) The purpose of the defence is to provide the candidate and the examiners the chance to engage in an academic discussion on the content of the dissertation. The first part of the defence is open to all University members and is comprised of a presentation by the candidate on his/her dissertation and a follow-up discussion. The second part, consisting of the oral examination of the candidate by the examiners, is closed to the public; § 10 (8) remains unaffected. During the defence, the candidate should demonstrate that he/she is capable of discussing and expressing his/her views regarding the theses and results of the dissertation, taking into account dissertation-relevant secondary aspects and the context of overarching questions. The defence should take at least 60 minutes but should not exceed 120 minutes. Before the proceedings begin, the examiners should outline the general structure and length of the various parts of the defence (presentation, discussion, oral examination). Minutes of the examination are to be taken in writing and signed by the examiners. If technical capabilities permit, the defence may be conducted in the form of a video conference, provided that all participants agree.
- (7) The defence may be held in either German or English.
- (8) The candidate or doctoral committee may submit a written request to the examination board with justification (e.g. in the case of a blocking notice in accordance with § 7 (3, no. 7) requesting to hold the defence and discussion in camera. Notwithstanding § 10 (8) sentence 1, the professors of the Faculty of Biology have the right to participate in the entire defence. § 63 (4) of the Higher Education Act (HG) regulates the non-public part of the defence.

## § 11

### Grading the Defence

- (1) The defence is jointly graded by the examiners in accordance with § 10 (5) immediately following the discussion as follows:
  - summa cum laude (*ausgezeichnet* / excellent = 0);
  - magna cum laude (*sehr gut* / very good = 1);
  - cum laude (*gut* / good = 2);
  - rite (*bestanden* / pass = 3);

In order to differentiate, “plus” and “minus” may be added to “magna cum laude” (0.7 or 1.7) and “cum laude” (1.3 or 2.3). The defence is graded as failed if it does not receive a grade of at least “rite”.

- (2) The candidate is to be informed of his/her grade immediately following completion of the defence.

## § 12

### Retaking Doctoral Examination

- (1) If the dissertation is rejected, the candidate can 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 examination board may grant a shorter waiting period. The candidate must then submit a new or revised version of the dissertation. In accordance with § 7 (3) 5, the candidate is obliged to disclose the previous failed attempt.
- (2) If the 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 his/her options of legal recourse. As a rule, the candidate presents the defence to the same examiners who evaluated the first attempt. If necessary, the examination board may appoint new examiners. The conditions put forth in § 5 (2) are to be observed accordingly.

## § 13

### Grading the Doctoral Examination

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

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

## § 14

### Conferral of the Doctoral Title

- (1) If the candidate passes the doctoral examination, the Dean, or if he/she and his/her deputy are prevented, then a vice-dean belonging to the group of professors, confers the title “Doctor of Natural Sciences” (doctor rerum naturalium, Dr. rer. nat.), or upon written request in accordance with § 7 (3) 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 he/she will strive at all times to preserve the doctoral title from every blemish, prove himself/herself worthy of this title in all future academic endeavours, and to always seek and uphold academic truth to the best of his/her knowledge and belief. The pledge by handshake or by raising the hand may be waived by the examination board only upon substantiated request in cases of hardship.

- (2) The candidate is then presented with an examination certificate, confirming the successful completion of the doctoral requirements, the title of the dissertation, the grade of the dissertation 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 defence in accordance with § 11 (1) and the overall grade in accordance with § 13 (3). If the dissertation received the grade “summa cum laude” by both assessors and the defence received the grade “summa cum laude” as well, but the grade from the external assessor (in accordance with § 9 (8)) is not yet available, the candidate may receive a preliminary, ungraded certificate which confirms that the doctoral examination is passed. 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 dissertation has not yet been published, the certificate does not entitle the candidate to bear the doctoral title.
- (4) If the dissertation has already been published in accordance with § 15, the candidate is also presented with the doctoral degree certificate in accordance with § 16, thereby entitling the candidate to bear the doctoral title.

## **§ 15**

### **Publication of the Dissertation**

- (1) The doctoral process is only concluded when the dissertation 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 defence. Only then can the Dean of the faculty issue the doctoral degree certificate, entitling the candidate to bear the doctoral title.
- (2) Publication is only permitted if the doctoral committee confirms that the entire dissertation, or a significant part or parts thereof, is ready for press.
- (3) The dissertation must be published or accepted for publication in one of the following forms:
  1. Printing or reproduction of the entire dissertation;
  2. Publication of significant content of the dissertation in one or more scientific journals;
  3. Submission of an electronic version, whereby the data format and data carrier must meet the criteria provided by the University Library (ULB).
 Upon request by the candidate or principal supervisor, the examination board must decide whether to grant an extension to the deadline as provided in § 15 (1).
- (4) The candidate must ensure that the publication of the dissertation complies with the corresponding rules issued by the University Library (ULB) of the University of Münster.
- (5) The candidate must provide the ULB with an appropriate number of copies of the dissertation in accordance with the corresponding resolution of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK). In the case of § 15 (3) sentence 1 no. 2, the principal supervisor

provides the examination board with confirmation that the essential content of the dissertation has been accepted for publication. In the case of § 15 (3) sentence 1 no. 3, the candidate must provide the examination 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 as stipulated in § 15, the candidate is issued the doctoral degree certificate.
- (2) The certificate contains the title of the dissertation and the overall grade of the doctoral examination in accordance with § 13 (3). Dated the day of the defence, the certificate is to be personally signed and presented to the candidate by the Dean of the faculty, or if prevented, by his/her deputy.
- (3) With the presentation of the doctoral degree certificate, the candidate is entitled to bear the doctoral title.
- (4) Following presentation of the doctoral degree certificate, the candidate may submit a request to review the assessments of the dissertation and the minutes of the defence. The candidate should submit his/her written request to the examination board within three months of receiving the doctoral degree certificate. The examination board stipulates the time and place of access.
- (5) Upon the successful conclusion of the doctoral process, the candidate can be denied the presentation of the doctoral degree certificate only under the conditions provided in § 17.

## **§ 17**

### **Deprivation 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 process were erroneously assumed to be fulfilled, the doctoral examination may be declared null and void upon a resolution by the examination board.

## **§ 18**

### **Revocation of the Doctoral Degree**

- (1) If it becomes known that the candidate gained his/her 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 can also revoke the doctoral degree if the candidate has been convicted of a serious voluntary criminal act or misused his/her academic qualification or doctoral degree in the preparation or committal of said act.
- (3) Before a final decision is made, the accused is given the opportunity to state his/her

case.

The faculty board must notify the accused party of the decision.

- (4) The same applies for honorary doctoral titles in accordance with § 20.

## **§ 19**

### **Legal Recourse and Objections**

- (1) Candidates may appeal decisions made to their detriment by lodging an objection notice with the examination board. The examination board is responsible for deciding on the matter. The notification of the decision must include justification and information on the candidate's options of legal recourse.

## **§ 20**

### **Honorary Doctorates**

- (1) An honorary doctoral title (doctor honoris causa, h.c.) can be awarded in recognition of one's outstanding achievements or extraordinary merits in the field of biology. Conferral of an honorary doctorate (Dr. rer. nat. h.c.) 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 examination board for a vote. Conferral of an honorary doctorate for outstanding achievement requires the approval of two-thirds of the postdoctoral members on both boards. Conferral of an honorary doctorate for extraordinary merits requires the unanimous approval of the postdoctoral members on both boards.

## **§ 21**

### **Doctoral Programmes in Cooperation with a Partner University**

- (1) The Faculty of Biology can confer the title "Doctor of Natural Sciences (Dr. rer. nat.)" or the title "Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Biology" in conjunction with a faculty at a partner university. The Faculty of Biology can also participate in the conferral of such a title by a faculty of a partner university.
- (2) The execution of the doctoral process as put forth in § 21 (1) sentence 1 and the participation in the doctoral process as put forth in § 21 (1) sentence 2 are contingent on a cooperation agreement with the respective partner university. In the agreement, both partners pledge to allow candidates to participate in the respective doctoral programme and outline the details of their collaboration. The aspects of the collaboration which concern doctoral regulations are arranged in consultation with the examination board. The examination board determines the details of conferral of the joint degree. The cooperation agreement is signed by the Dean of the faculty. As a rule, only one doctoral title is awarded for the same dissertation. If the partner university and the University of Münster confer doctoral titles with different names, the candidate must declare which title he/she would like to bear; bearing dual titles is not permitted.
- (3) In the period during which the dissertation is being written, the candidate must be enrolled in a doctoral programme at the Faculty of Biology at 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 indicated in § 21 (2) must explicitly state that the University of Münster is to participate in the doctoral process to at least an equal degree and that all formal rules of both universities are to be observed. With regard to their practical implementation, changes to these doctoral regulations are permitted upon mutual agreement by the partners 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, he/she 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 by an authorised examiner of the partner university, confirming that he/she is willing to assess the dissertation.
- (6) The dissertation is assessed by at least one authorised examiner of the Faculty of Biology of the University of Münster and that of the partner university. Both assessments must be written in either German or English.

## **§ 22**

### **Transitional Provisions and Coming into Force**

- (1) These regulations (in their original German version) come into force on the day following their publication in the Official Announcements (*Amtliche Bekanntmachungen*) of the University of Münster. They apply to all candidates who apply for admission to the doctoral programme after these doctoral regulations entered into force. Candidates who applied for admission to this doctoral programme under terms which deviate from these regulations are to be given the opportunity to complete their doctoral programme under the regulations applicable at the time of admission. Candidates who applied for admission to this doctoral programme under previous regulations may submit a written request to pursue their doctoral degree under these new regulations.

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

Please note that in accordance with § 12 (5) of the Higher Education Act of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia (HG NRW) violations of procedural regulation as put forth by regulatory laws or other legal provisions pertaining to university autonomy may no longer be claimed after one year following this announcement, unless

1. the regulations were not properly announced,
2. the Rectorate previously raised an objection to the resolution passed by the deciding committee,
3. the University received a previous reprimand for the formal or procedural defect, and was informed of the violated legal provision and the fact that resulted in the defect,
4. the legal consequence of exclusion resulting from such reprimand was not included

in the public announcement of the regulations.

Münster, 30 October 2019

The Rector

Prof. Dr. Johannes Wessels

**Glossary**

admission to the doctoral examination .....	<i>Zulassung zur Promotionsprüfung</i>
admission to the doctoral programme .....	<i>Zulassung zum Promotionsverfahren</i>
assessor .....	<i>Gutachter</i>
course record book .....	<i>Studienbuch</i>
Dean's Office .....	<i>Dekanat</i>
defence .....	<i>Disputation</i>
doctoral agreement .....	<i>Promotionsvereinbarung</i>
doctoral committee .....	<i>Promotionskomitee</i>
doctoral requirements .....	<i>Promotionsleistungen</i>
doctoral examination board .....	<i>Promotionsausschuss</i>
faculty .....	<i>Fachbereich</i>
faculty board .....	<i>Fachbereichsrat</i>
observer .....	<i>Beisitzer</i>
principal supervisor .....	<i>Themensteller/in</i>
required coursework .....	<i>Studienleistung</i>
structured doctoral programme (SDP) .....	<i>strukturiertes Promotionsprogramm (SP)</i>
supervision agreement.....	<i>Betreuungsvereinbarung</i>

Translation: Supportstelle Englisch, WWU Münster, 2020