

Rough translation of the 2007 version of the Doctoral Regulations of the Faculty of Biology of the University of Münster

This is a rough translation of the original German text. It is for your information only. Under German law only the official German version of the „Promotionsordnung des Fachbereichs Biologie der Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität Münster vom 29. November 2007“ is legally binding. It was published in the *Amtliche Bekanntmachungen* (AB Uni; “Official Announcements”) on [31 January 2008, 23 June 2014, 18 August 2016 and 7 September 2023].

1. Doctorate

The doctoral degree is meant to prove the outstanding independent academic skills of the applicant.

The Faculty of Biology awards the title of “Doctor of Natural Sciences” (doctor rerum naturalium – Dr. rer. nat.) based on scientifically outstanding doctoral work; alternatively if the graduate so wishes, the title “Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Biology” can be awarded. The doctoral examination consists of two components, the written thesis (dissertation) and its oral defence. The examination is meant to prove that the applicant

- has gained a systematic understanding of his/her field and the relevant knowledge and skills
- has broadened the boundaries of knowledge through his/her research, which meets high standards in international comparison
- can design and realize an extensive research process of usually several years’ duration with scientific integrity
- is able to critically analyze scientific and technological problems and solve them innovatively
- is in the position to communicate about his/her special field with the scientific community and with society in general.

The Faculty can award an honorary doctorate (doctor rerum naturalium honoris causa – Dr. rer. nat. h.c.) to recognize outstanding scientific work or exceptional services.

2. Admission

Requirements for admission to the doctoral degree programme:

- finding a doctoral committee to mentor and supervise the dissertation
- proof of the required academic skills and interdisciplinary key skills that enable the applicant to carry out scientific research, problem solving and discourse as well as to critically classify scientific findings of the chosen bioscientific special field.

This requirement is usually met when the applicant holds an academic degree higher than a

Bachelor's degree received after completing a research-oriented university degree course or a research-oriented Master's degree from a university of applied sciences in a field of Natural Sciences or Mathematics with a total standard period of study of no less than eight semesters.

Applicants with a degree higher than a Bachelor's degree in a different academic field or with a research-oriented Master's degree from a university of applied sciences in a different academic field can take part in an oral examination after having taken additional classes in preparation for the doctoral programme.

The extent and content of the additional credits needed – usually this means following classes of the Master's degree at the Faculty of Biology – are determined by the doctoral examination board. The doctoral committee responsible for the applicant can submit a proposal. Up to one additional semester or 30 ECTS credit points are usually required from an applicant who majored in a related academic field. In other cases where the degree held is of a less related subject, up to two semesters or 60 ECTS credit points might be required. When the doctoral degree programme is organized in a structured doctoral programme or in a competitive selection process, the additional studies required are usually reduced to one semester. The oral examination is conducted by the respective doctoral committee; at minimum the coordinating member of the Faculty of Biology and one other member of the committee have to act as examiners; the examination should last between 30 and 60 minutes and is graded with "pass" or "fail"; minutes of the examination have to be taken. Should the applicant fail the test, he/she can repeat the examination once within six months' time.

Students who completed a bioscientific course with a standard period of study of at least six semesters with an outstanding grade can be admitted to the doctoral programme according to the integrated Master's/doctoral programme. They, too, will have to collect additional credits of usually two semesters (60 ECTS credit points). Extent and content of the additionally needed credits are determined by the doctoral examination board. The doctoral committee responsible can submit a proposal. Usually the extent and content equal that of the first year of an MSc degree programme at the Faculty of Biology.

If there is doubt as to where the degree of the applicant ranks, the doctoral examination board decides together with the responsible doctoral committee, if necessary after having consulted the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany, about the recognition of international degrees.

Students who are enrolled in a bioscientific MSc degree programme at the University and are writing their Master's thesis have to submit a written request to the doctoral examination board according to their respective study and examination regulations to be accepted into the integrated Master's/doctoral programme.

The application for admission to the doctoral programme is to be submitted to the doctoral examination board of the Faculty of Biology in writing. The application needs to be submitted within the first six months of writing the dissertation and as a rule at least two years before submission of the dissertation. The following documents are necessary in German or English:

1. A curriculum vitae that includes complete data about the completed education
2. Written consent of the doctoral committee that they will supervise the dissertation
3. A certified copy/translation of the required degree certificates.

Should the applicant be in doubt about whether he/she fulfills the requirements, he/she can submit a preliminary application to the doctoral examination board to clarify his/her admission chances;

where degrees from foreign countries are concerned, this preliminary application should be submitted early, i.e. approx. three months before work on the doctoral project is begun. The above-mentioned documents (if available) should be included in the preliminary application. A legally binding decision can, however, only be issued after a complete application has been submitted.

For important reasons, e.g. in the case of exceptional aptitude or qualifications of an applicant, the doctoral examination board can make exceptions concerning the admission requirements. Preceding study programmes or professional work experience can be considered and be given credit for. The doctoral examination board can also make the admission to the doctoral programme dependent on proof of a qualifying degree, proof of other study credits or other qualifications that provide proof of aptitude for a doctoral programme.

An applicant is admitted when he/she fulfills all the requirements. The preparatory courses can be completed during the doctoral programme; as a rule, they should be completed after 18 months at the latest. Admission to the doctoral programme is therefore granted conditionally.

After checking the submitted application and documents, the doctoral examination board decides whether an applicant is admitted to the doctoral programme. Should admission be denied, a written notification including information on legal remedies available is issued. The applicant can repeat his/her application as soon as his/her deficiencies no longer exist.

3. Doctoral examination board

The Faculty of Biology has established a doctoral examination board to organize the doctoral programme and carry out the tasks deriving from these Regulations. The board consists of members of the Faculty of Biology. It consists of a chairperson, his/her deputy and six other members. The chairperson and his/her deputy as well as three other members are selected from the group of professors, one member is selected from the group of academic and other staff and one member is selected from the student body. The term of office for the student member is one year, for all other members it is three years.

The faculty board of the Faculty of Biology appoints the members of the doctoral examination board and their deputies according to a proposal of its member groups.

The doctoral examination board makes sure that the terms of these Regulations are met. The board asks the doctoral committees to correctly carry out the doctoral procedures. The board assesses the application and the documents and decides on admission to the doctoral procedure according to § 2. The board also suggests changes to the Regulations.

As a rule, board members who are not professors contribute to decisions on the assessment of dissertations only in an advisory capacity. The chair of the doctoral examination board decides on exceptions according to § 11 Absatz 3 *Hochschulgesetz* (Universities Act of the Federal State of North Rhine-Westphalia).

The doctoral examination board has a quorum when the chair or his/her deputy and at least two additional professors and two members of the other groups are present who are entitled to vote. The board decides with the majority of the votes of the members present who are entitled to vote. If votes are equal, the vote of the chair decides. In the case of Absatz 4 sentence 2 the doctoral examination board has a quorum when the chair or his/her deputy and at least two additional professors are present who are entitled to vote. Abstentions are not permitted concerning decisions according to Absatz 4.

Meetings of the doctoral examination board are not public; its members have an obligation to

maintain confidentiality. [...] The board's office is the Examinations Office of the Faculty of Biology.

4. Doctoral committee

The candidate asks the doctoral examination board to appoint a doctoral committee for him/her. The written consent of this doctoral committee is a pre-requirement to be admitted to the doctoral programme. The members of this doctoral committee supervise and mentor the doctoral project and usually evaluate the dissertation and its defense.

The doctoral committee consists of the supervisor (*Themenstelle*) and two other members. Only professors with a habilitation or equally qualified scientists (e.g. junior professors, Emmy Noether scholars or competitively appointed leaders of independent junior research groups) can be appointed members of the doctoral committee. At least two members of the committee have to have obtained their doctorate at a Natural Sciences faculty (Dr. rer. nat.) or be equally qualified; decisions on equivalence are taken by the doctoral committee upon written request. At least one member of the doctoral committee has to be a member of the Faculty of Biology of the University of Münster. Decisions concerning exceptions are taken by the faculty board.

The candidate or a member of the committee can submit to the doctoral examination board an application in writing to change the composition of the doctoral committee. If the majority of the doctoral committee in office and the new member/members agree to the change in writing, it can be granted.

The supervisor of the dissertation or, should the supervisor not belong to the Faculty of Biology, the/a member of the doctoral committee that belongs to the Faculty of Biology, is appointed coordinator of the doctoral process. He/she is responsible for compliance with these doctoral regulations.

Professors who have been exempted or are retired from university should not be made members of the doctoral committee if their term of service has ended three years ago or longer.

5. Doctoral programme

The increasingly independent work on a scientific doctoral project under the supervision of a doctoral committee is the central issue of the doctoral degree course. The work on the project is accompanied and supported by an individual, project-oriented doctoral study programme of at least two semesters which includes the participation in seminars, symposia or key skill classes as well as the co-supervision of undergraduate classes of the Faculty of Biology to the extent of 5 hours per week (SWS). In cases where these requirements pose an undue hardship for the candidate, he/she can submit a request for exemption.

6. Admission to the doctoral examination

Only candidates who were admitted to the doctoral programme can be admitted to the doctoral examination.

Application for admission has to be submitted to the doctoral examination board in writing. The application needs to include the topic of the dissertation and the name of the supervisor.

The following documents are to be included with the application:

- Eight bound or stapled copies of the dissertation, as well as two digital versions, which

- all need to include a summary and a CV in tabular form
- Declaration by the candidate that he/she has not been convicted of a crime for which he/she abused his/her academic qualification
 - Confirmation of completion of a doctoral degree course in Biology at the University of Münster issued by the coordinating member of the doctoral committee
 - Confirmation of co-supervision of undergraduate classes of the Faculty of Biology issued by the coordinating member of the doctoral committee
 - Written declaration of preceding attempts to achieve a doctoral degree and their results, if applicable
 - Written declaration that the applicant himself/herself has written the dissertation without the use of forbidden aids, that he/she has indicated any and all sources and aids in the dissertation and that he/she has not presented his/her dissertation elsewhere as an examination paper
 - Written indication in the case that the dissertation contains results relevant to patent law; in this case the dissertation is labeled with a restriction notice.
 - Clarification by the supervisor of the candidate's contribution in the case of a thesis by publication, certified by the other members of the doctoral committee
 - Candidate's statement about whether he/she will allow an audience to the non-public part of the dissertation defence
 - If applicable, a request to be awarded the degree "Doctor of Philosophy in Biology" instead of the degree "Doktor der Naturwissenschaften".

The application to be admitted to the doctoral examination can be withdrawn by the candidate as long as the dissertation has not been assessed yet. In this case, the application counts as not submitted.

7. Dissertation

The dissertation has to be scientifically noteworthy and should prove the candidate's ability to independently conduct scientific research as well as to appropriately present and discuss the results in writing.

The subject of the dissertation has to be relevant to an area of the Biosciences. It should be chosen by the candidate in agreement with his/her doctoral committee and be conducted in contact with the supervisor, usually within an Institute of the University of Münster Faculty of Biology.

The dissertation consists of either one written scientific thesis or of at least three separate but with regard to content coherent scientific articles of which at least one with first or shared first authorship by the candidate has been already published or been accepted for publication by a recognized international scientific journal with peer review-system. The doctoral examination board can on an individual basis grant exceptions to the conditions for theses by publication when the candidate provides a well-founded written application for an exception in agreement with his/her doctoral committee. In the case of a thesis by publication, the presented work has to include a comprehensive introduction and discussion of the doctoral topic with explanations of the correlations between the different articles and a general summary of the results. The supervisor can also require a general chapter about materials and methods. If the articles were written by more than two authors,

the contribution of the candidate has to be indicated for inclusion within the thesis by publication.

The dissertation may not have already been subject of a state or academic examination. An exception can, however, be made in the case of an integrated Master's/doctoral programme where parts of the Master's thesis can be part of the dissertation. In the case of a thesis by publication, papers with multiple authors can be part of the dissertations of multiple candidates.

The dissertation has to be written in German or English.

Members of the Faculty of Biology have to be given the chance to view the dissertation and give their opinion. For that reason the dissertation together with both written evaluations is publically accessible at the Dean's Office of the Faculty of Biology. The other seven copies are sent to the members of the Faculty for them to read the dissertation. Papers with a restriction notice are kept at the Dean's Office to be stored in secrecy. They are not sent to the other members of the Faculty.

8. Assessment of the dissertation

The doctoral examination board of the Faculty of Biology appoints two examiners based on the candidate's proposal (usually two members of the doctoral committee) to assess the dissertation. One of the examiners has to be the supervisor. One examiner has to be a member of the Faculty of Biology of the University of Münster. Decisions concerning exceptions are taken by the faculty board.

Every examiner has to present a written detailed assessment of the dissertation and recommend the acceptance or refusal no later than one month after receiving the dissertation. If the dissertation is accepted, the report has to assess the dissertation with one of the following grades:

summa cum laude (with distinction = 0)

magna cum laude (very good = 1)

cum laude (good = 2)

rite (pass = 3).

For the grades "magna cum laude" and "cum laude" the additions "plus" (= 0.7 or 1.7) and "minus" (= 1.3 or 2.3) can be used for further differentiation.

After the reports have been submitted, the professors of the Faculty of Biology have the opportunity to read and comment on them. An objection is effective only in written form and with detailed explanation of reasons and has to be submitted to the Dean's Office within a week after the period for public inspection has ended.

Should both examiners recommend accepting the dissertation and no objection is made, the dissertation is considered accepted.

Should both evaluators recommend refusing the dissertation and no objection is made, the dissertation is considered as rejected. The candidate will be informed about the refusal together with information on the legal remedies available.

The dissertation cannot be accepted with only one recommendation for acceptance. In this case another assessment by a professor at the Faculty of Biology has to be obtained. The period of public inspection starts anew upon receipt of this assessment. Should this assessment recommend acceptance of the dissertation and should there be no objection, the dissertation is considered accepted. If refusal is recommended and no objection is made, the dissertation is considered refused.

The candidate is informed about this refusal together with information on the legal remedies available.

If an objection has been made in due time against the acceptance or refusal of the dissertation or its grade, the doctoral examination board decides how to proceed after consulting with the objector and with the examiners. It can decide to have the dissertation evaluated through an external review. The acceptance of the dissertation can be made dependent on handing in a revised version; this revision has to be submitted within a time frame determined by the doctoral examination board. The original version has to be submitted together with the new version, and all the objectionable passages have to be marked. The new version will usually be graded by the same examiners as the original version.

When both examiners grade the dissertation with “summa cum laude”, the doctoral examination board – upon commencement of the review period as indicated - requests an external assessor to evaluate the dissertation; the supervisor proposes three qualified experts for this task after consulting the two committee members. These qualified experts must hold a *Habilitation* or equivalent qualification and may not be regarded as biased according to the guidelines of the DFG (German Research Foundation). This evaluation has to be received before the defence starts.

9. Defence

In order for the candidate to be admitted to the defence, the dissertation has to have been accepted.

The candidate, together with his/her examiners, determines the time and place for the defence and passes this information on to the doctoral examination board, which in turn officially invites three examiners and the candidate to the defence. The date is announced on the Faculty homepage at least seven days before the defence is scheduled.

The defence is conducted by the Dean. In the case that the Dean himself/herself is the candidate's supervisor, the defence is conducted by his/her deputy. The Dean or his/her deputy can pass the conducting of the defence to the supervisor.

The defence has to take place within two months after the dissertation has been accepted; should the candidate miss this due date, the defence is considered failed. In the case that the defence is delayed or interrupted through a cause that the candidate is not responsible for, the doctoral examination board has to grant an appropriate extension.

Usually the members of the doctoral committee are the examiners of the defence. If one or more member/s of the doctoral committee cannot be present at the defence, the doctoral examination board appoints a substitute after consulting with the candidate and the doctoral committee.

The aim of the defence is a scientific debate between the examiners and the candidate about the dissertation. The defence consists of the candidate's presentation of his/her scientific work and a discussion thereof which is open to all members of the University, followed by a non-public oral examination conducted by the examiners. The candidate should use the defence to show that he/she is able to evaluate and discuss the theses and findings of the dissertation including relevant secondary aspects in the context of a broader field of questions. The defence should last at least 60 minutes and no longer than 120 minutes. A rough segmentation of this time span into the different parts of the examination (presentation, discussion, oral examination) is given by the examiners beforehand. Minutes have to be taken. If technical capabilities permit, the defence may be conducted in the form of a video conference, provided that all participants agree.

The defence can take place in German or English.

The public can be excluded from the presentation and discussion if the candidate or the doctoral committee have submitted a well-founded written request, e.g. in cases where the dissertation has a restriction notice. Nevertheless for the professors of the Faculty of Biology the right to take part in the defence remains.

10. Assessment of the defence

The defence is graded immediately after the oral examination by the examiners with:

summa cum laude (with distinction = 0)

magna cum laude (very good = 1)

cum laude (good = 2)

rite (pass = 3).

For the grades “magna cum laude” and “cum laude” the addition of “plus” (= 0.7 or 1.7) and “minus” (= 1.3 or 2.3) is permitted for better differentiation. If the grade “rite” has not at least been obtained, the candidate has failed the defence.

The candidate is to be informed about the assessment of the defence immediately afterwards.

11. Repeating part of the doctoral process

If a dissertation has not been accepted, a new request for admittance to the doctoral examination is only accepted once and not before one year has passed in the meantime. A new or improved dissertation has to be submitted, the failed attempt reported.

If a defence has not been passed, it can be repeated after two months at the earliest and after five at the latest. It can only be repeated once. The candidate is informed about this in writing and with information on the legal remedies available. Usually the second attempt at the defence is evaluated by the same examiners that evaluated the first attempt. If necessary, the doctoral examination board can appoint new examiners.

12. Assessment of the doctoral degree

The doctoral degree is completed when the defence has been passed. The overall grade of the doctorate is calculated as follows:

An arithmetically unrounded mean is calculated from the single grades of the dissertation. The resulting grade and the grade from the defence are used to calculate an arithmetically unrounded mean. The dissertation's grade weighs twice as much as that of the defence.

The final overall grade of the doctoral degree is

summa cum laude (with distinction) (grade 0)

magna cum laude (very good) (grade 0.7 to 1.5)

cum laude (good) (grade >1.5 to 2.5)

rite (pass) (grade >2.5 to 3.5).

The overall grade summa cum laude can only be awarded if the dissertation was graded summa cum laude both by the two examiners and the external expert, and if the defence, too, was graded summa cum laude.

13. Awarding of doctoral degree

After the doctoral examination has been passed, the Dean, on behalf of the Faculty, awards the candidate the title of “Doktor der Naturwissenschaften” (Doctor of Natural Sciences/doctor rerum naturalium) or, if the candidate has requested this in writing, of “Doctor of Philosophy in Biology”. The candidate has to swear an oath to always preserve this title from any blemish, act worthy of this title and seek the scientific truth to his/her best knowledge and belief. This promise is sealed with a handshake.

With this the candidate receives a doctoral examination certificate that states the title of the dissertation, the grade of the dissertation mathematically rounded without decimal places, the grade of the defence and the overall grade.

If the dissertation has not been published yet, this certificate alone does not entitle its owner to use the doctoral title.

If the dissertation has been published, the doctoral candidate is presented with the doctoral degree certificate and thus entitled to use the doctoral title.

14. Publication of the dissertation

The doctoral process is only considered as completed when the entire dissertation, a considerable part or considerable parts of it have been published or accepted to be published; this should take place within one year after the defence. Only then will the doctoral degree certificate be presented by the Dean of the Faculty and may the doctoral title be used.

The doctoral committee has to declare the entire dissertation, a considerable part or considerable parts of it ready for publication before it can be published.

The dissertation has to be published or accepted for publication in one of the following forms:

1. Printing or reproduction of the entire dissertation
2. Printing of the essential content of the dissertation in one or more scientific journal(s)
3. Provision of an electronic version in a file format that has been approved by the ULB (Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek/main university library)

The candidate or his/her supervisor can submit a request to extend the due date; the doctoral examination board decides about this request.

The doctoral candidate has to secure the publication of the dissertation according to the appropriate rules of the Münster University Library (ULB).

An appropriate number of copies of the dissertation is to be given to the University Library in agreement with the decision of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany. In the case that not the entire dissertation but essential parts of it were published in one or more journals, the supervisor has to confirm the fact that the essential content of the dissertation has been accepted for publication. If the

dissertation was submitted to the ULB in electronic form, the candidate has to present written confirmation by the ULB.

15. Doctoral degree certificate

If all the above mentioned conditions concerning the dissertation have been fulfilled, the candidate is presented with the doctoral degree certificate.

The certificate includes the title of the dissertation and the overall grade of the doctoral examination. It is to be dated to the date of the defence, signed by the Dean himself/herself and handed to the candidate.

After receiving this certificate, the candidate is allowed to use the doctoral title.

After the doctoral degree certificate has been given to the candidate, he/she is allowed to read the evaluations of the dissertation and the minutes of the defence upon request. This request to the doctoral examination board should be made within three months after receiving the doctoral degree certificate. The doctoral examination board determines time and date of inspection.

After the doctoral process has successfully been completed, the candidate can be denied the certificate only if the following applies.

16. Denial of doctoral degree

Should it emerge before the doctoral degree certificate is presented that the candidate used means of deception concerning the admission requirements or concerning the dissertation or defence, or that fundamental requirements for the admission to the doctoral process were assumed in error, the graduation is to be declared invalid by the doctoral examination board.

17. Revocation of doctoral degree

Should it become apparent that the doctoral degree was obtained through deception or that fundamental requirements for the awarding of the degree were assumed in error, the degree is to be withdrawn through a decision of the faculty board.

Should the doctoral graduate be convicted of committing an intentional/serious criminal offence in the preparation or execution of which he/she abused his/her scientific qualification or his/her doctoral degree, the faculty board can also withdraw the degree.

Before the decision is made, the doctoral graduate concerned has to be given the chance to argue his/her case. The graduate is to be informed about the decision of the faculty board.

The same applies for honorary doctorates.

18. Legal remedies and decision about objections

An objection against detrimental decisions can be filed with the doctoral examination board, which will decide about the objection. The decision concerning the objection has to contain the reasoning and is issued together with information on the legal remedies available.

19. Doctor honoris causa

The doctoral degree can also be awarded as an honorary doctorate (doctor honoris causa, h.c.) to recognize exceptional scientific work and exceptional services in the field of Biology. The awarding of an honorary doctoral degree (Dr. rer. nat. h.c.) has to be requested from the faculty board by at least two tenured professors of the Faculty. Upon approval, the request is forwarded to the doctoral examination board for a final decision. If the Dr. rer. nat. h.c. is awarded for exceptional work, two thirds of the members of both boards who hold a doctoral degree have to agree. If the honorary doctorate is awarded for exceptional services, the members of both boards who hold a doctoral degree must agree unanimously.

20. Doctoral process in cooperation with a partner university

The Faculty of Biology can also award the degree of Doctor of Natural Sciences (Dr. rer. nat.) in cooperation with a faculty of a partner university. The Faculty of Biology can also take part in the awarding of a corresponding degree under the leadership of a partner university. Both cases require an agreement between the faculties of the partner universities. In this agreement both faculties commit to making such a doctoral degree possible and the details of the cooperation are defined.

21. Interim regulations and coming into force

The German original of these Regulations comes into force the day after its publication in the Official Announcements of the University of Münster. It applies to all candidates that submit a request for admission after these Regulations have come into force. Candidates that requested admission under different conditions have to be given the chance to complete their degree under the conditions originally in force. They can also submit a written request to graduate under the conditions of the regulations now in force instead of the conditions of the regulations in force before.