

# **Regulations of the Graduate School “Empirical and Applied Linguistics”**

## **UNOFFICIAL VERSION**

**[Please note: This rough translation of the official German version of the regulations for the Graduate School has been prepared as a guide and help for foreign students. All claims and complaints relating to these regulations have to make reference to the official German version (Amtliche Fassung)]**

(Doctoral College in Empirical and Applied Linguistics)  
Faculty of Philology, University of Münster  
dated 19 January 2026

On the basis of Sections 2(4) and 67(3) of the Higher Education Act of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia (Hochschulgesetz – HG) in the version of the Higher Education Future Act of 16 September 2014 (GV. NRW. p. 547), most recently amended by Article 2 of the Act of 19 December 2024 (GV. NRW. p. 1222), the University of Münster has issued the following regulations:

---

### **Table of Contents**

- § 1 Objectives
- § 2 Doctorate
- § 3 Doctoral Subjects
- § 4 Organization of the Doctoral College
- § 5 Admission to Doctoral Studies
- § 6 Supervision
- § 7 Contents of the Program
- § 8 Scope of the Program. Coursework
- § 9 Application for Admission to the Doctoral Examination
- § 10 Admission to the Doctoral Examination
- § 11 Dissertation
- § 12 Reviewers
- § 13 Acceptance and Evaluation of the Dissertation
- § 14 Final Oral Colloquium
- § 15 Overall Grade
- § 16 Invalidity of Doctoral Achievements
- § 17 Completion of the Doctoral Procedure
- § 18 Revocation of the Doctoral Degree
- § 19 Entry into Force

---

### **§ 1 Objectives**

1. Based on the Bologna recommendations, the Doctoral College in Empirical and Applied Linguistics offers particularly qualified early-career researchers the opportunity to complete a doctorate within three years as part of a structured doctoral

program under intensive supervision. Part-time study is also possible, in which case the duration of study may be extended to up to six years.

2. The Doctoral College provides doctoral candidates and participating professors in linguistics with an interdisciplinary institutional framework for intensive academic exchange and the development of joint research initiatives.
  3. The Doctoral College aims to establish linguistics in Münster as a nationally and internationally visible center of innovative and excellent linguistic research.
  4. The Doctoral College seeks to open up career opportunities for its graduates both in academia and in non-academic professional fields.
  5. The principles of gender mainstreaming adopted in the Amsterdam Treaty of 1997 shape the concept of the Doctoral College both organizationally and in terms of thematic orientation.
- 

## **§ 2 Doctorate**

1. The Doctoral College in Empirical and Applied Linguistics leads to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Dr. phil.), awarded by the Faculty of Philology or the Faculty of Psychology and Sports Science. The doctoral procedure consists of doctoral studies and the doctoral examination.
  2. Doctoral studies are governed by these regulations.
  3. Proof of the academic qualifications required for the doctorate must be provided through the doctoral examination. This consists of a written dissertation and a final oral colloquium.
  4. The doctorate is completed in one major subject.
  5. Unless otherwise specified here, the provisions of the Doctoral Regulations of Faculty 09 (Philology) apply; with regard to Psychology, the Doctoral Regulations of Faculty 07 (Psychology and Sports Science) apply.
- 

## **§ 3 Doctoral Subjects**

The doctorate may be completed in one of the following subjects:

1. General Linguistics
  2. German Philology
  3. English Philology
  4. Romance Philology
  5. Dutch Philology
  6. Scandinavian Studies
  7. Slavic Studies
  8. Arabic and Islamic Studies
  9. Indo-European Linguistics
  10. Psychology
- 

## **§ 4 Organization of the Doctoral College**

The Faculty of Philology establishes the following bodies for the organization of the doctoral procedure:

1. Assembly of Doctoral Candidate (*Plenum der Promovendinnen und Promovenden des Promotionskollegs*, PPP)

Members:

- Formally admitted doctoral candidates
- Visiting doctoral candidates admitted for a limited period

2. Assembly of Teaching Staff (*Plenum der Lehrenden*, PL)

Members:

- All members of the Faculty of Philology with the right to award doctorates in linguistics who apply for membership and are accepted
- Individually co-opted professors from other disciplines at the University of Münster or other national/international universities
- Individually co-opted doctoral researchers in linguistics or psycholinguistics (advisory, non-voting members)

Membership for teaching staff lasts three years and may be extended upon application.

The PL elects a spokesperson and deputy for a two-year duration.

The PL decides by simple majority on:

- Admission to the Doctoral College and appointment of supervisors
- Admission of members to the PL
- Election of spokesperson and deputy
- Election of the three members (and two deputies) of the committee evaluating the final colloquium

Decisions are taken by simple majority of members present. Circulation procedures are possible in exceptional cases.

3. Executive Board: It consists of the spokesperson, the deputy spokesperson, and the representative of the PPP. It represents the doctoral program within and outside the university, prepares decisions of the PL, and is responsible for the teaching and supervision program as well as the management and budget of the doctoral program.

For doctoral candidates and applicants, it is the primary contact for all questions concerning the doctoral program.

4. Advisory Board (optional): The PL may appoint an advisory board consisting of three to five members. For doctoral candidates and applicants, it is the primary contact for all questions concerning the doctoral program.

---

## § 5 Admission to Doctoral Studies

1. Requirement: completed university degree in accordance with the relevant doctoral regulations.

2. Applicants must demonstrate required foreign language proficiency (as specified in the Faculty regulations). Exceptions may be granted. Missing language skills may be acquired during doctoral studies.
  3. Special suitability for doctoral work in Empirical and Applied Linguistics is required.
  4. Application (in writing) must include:
    - Proof of qualifications
    - CV
    - Copy of Master's thesis (PDF)
    - Dissertation proposal (1500–1750 words) with timeline
    - List of publications/presentations (if applicable)
    - Specification of doctoral subject and proposed supervisory panel
  5. 1–2 letters of reference are recommended.
  6. The Executive Board shall examine whether the application meets the requirements of paragraphs 1 and 2
  7. and whether the proposed topic corresponds to the profile of the doctoral program within the meaning of § 7. If the requirements are not met, the application shall be rejected by the spokesperson of the doctoral program. In cases of doubt, applicants may be offered a selection interview conducted by two potential supervisors. Participation in this interview is open to all members of the teaching staff. A brief report on the course and evaluation of the interview by the teaching staff present shall be included in the application files.
  8. Based on the documents referred to in paragraphs 4 and 6, the plenary session of the teaching staff shall decide on the existence of special aptitude for doctoral studies within the framework of the Empirical and Applied Linguistics Research Training Group.
  9. If the plenary session of teaching staff determines that the applicant is particularly suitable for doctoral studies within the framework of the Empirical and Applied Linguistics Doctoral Program, but recognizes significant gaps in one or more of the subfields of (applied) linguistics that are important for the planned doctoral studies, admission to the doctoral program may be granted on the condition that a series of further courses, to be specified in detail, must be successfully completed before the actual doctoral studies can begin. This regulation applies in particular to foreign applicants.
- 

## **§ 6 Supervision**

1. Doctoral studies at the doctoral college are conducted within the framework of structured and cooperative supervision. Each doctoral candidate is assigned a primary supervisor and one or two additional supervisors. The two supervisors form the individual supervision panel for the doctoral candidate. There should be no significant difference in the intensity of supervision between the primary and secondary supervisor's supervision. However, the primary supervisor is responsible for fundamental methodological issues and for determining the basic structure of the thesis. The primary supervisor must be a full-time member of the University of Münster and have a doctorate in one of the subjects listed in § 3 or an equivalent foreign subject. In the event of a transfer after the start of the supervision relationship, he/she may complete the supervision within the framework of these doctoral regulations.

2. One of the supervisors should be a tenured professor at the University of Münster or have another permanent employment relationship and be habilitated or have equivalent qualifications. The second supervisor may also represent a subject other than those listed in §3 and belong to another faculty /department or another domestic or foreign university. The second supervisor may be appointed at a later date.
3. A written supervision agreement shall be concluded between the doctoral candidate and the supervisory panel.
 

This supervision agreement shall specify:

  1. the plans and objectives of the doctoral candidate,
  2. the further qualifications to be acquired by the doctoral candidate in the opinion of the supervisory panel,
  3. the individual study program, in particular the courses to be attended in accordance with section § 8 (5), the individual study program, in particular the courses to be attended in accordance with § 8 (5),
  4. in the event that admission is only granted subject to conditions, the study program to be completed before commencing the actual doctoral studies,
  5. the work schedule and timetable,
  6. the tasks and obligations of the supervisors.
4. The central task of the supervisory panel is to provide advice and academic supervision tailored to the individual strengths and developmental needs of the doctoral candidate on the basis of continuous review and evaluation of their study and doctoral progress.
5. Doctoral candidates may submit proposals for the composition of their supervisory panel
6. By concluding the agreement pursuant to paragraph 3, the applicant and the supervisor undertake to seek solutions immediately in the event of a conflict. If such conflict resolutions cannot be achieved within a reasonable period of time, the plenary session of the teaching staff shall be called upon to mediate. The plenary session shall deliberate on the continuation or termination of the supervisory relationship and, in the event of termination of the supervisory relationship, shall appoint a new supervisor.

## **§ 7 Contents of the Program**

Doctoral studies within the framework of the Empirical and Applied Linguistics Research Training Group can relate to all subfields of linguistics, including linguistic research in the context of individual philologies and language teaching research. When choosing a dissertation topic, emphasis can be placed on theory formation or on the investigation of application aspects. It is essential that the research is based on a solid empirical foundation. The primary goal of the doctoral program in the narrower sense is therefore to ensure that doctoral candidates have a firm command of various methods of linguistic data collection and analysis and are able to apply them in a reflective and critical manner.

---

## **§ 8 Scope of the Program and Coursework**

1. The doctoral program in Empirical and Applied Linguistics is considered the third phase of the three-part study structure at European universities as proposed in the Bologna Process.
2. The program generally lasts six semesters. Exceptions to this duration may be made. Admission to the graduate school is initially for six semesters; an extension of the

duration of study is possible for one additional year upon justified request, subject to the decision of the plenary session of the teaching staff. Part-time study is also possible (e.g., in the case of simultaneous employment, childcare, or similar circumstances). In this case, the duration of study can be extended to up to 12 semesters.

3. The doctoral program in the doctoral college comprises a total of 180 ECTS credits (credit points). One credit point corresponds to 30 hours of work.
4. The dissertation is calculated at 130 ECTS credits. The remaining 50 ECTS credits are earned through participation in colloquia, project groups, and an individually tailored compulsory study program (25 ECTS), elective courses (20 ECTS), and the final colloquium (5 ECTS).

#### Compulsory courses (25 ECTS)

1. Doctoral colloquium (3 x 3 ECTS credits =) 9 ECTS credits  
The colloquium usually takes place as a block event and includes active participation (= presentation of doctoral progress) per academic year. The following requirements must be met: In the first colloquium (typically at the end of the first semester), a concept for the dissertation must be presented and defended. In the second colloquium (typically in the third semester), the progress of the work and any problems that may have arisen must be reported. In the third and possibly subsequent colloquia (typically in the fifth semester), key results are presented and discussed.
2. Workshop/Project Group (3 x 2 ECTS credits =) 6 ECTS credits.  
In the workshop, doctoral students work together in a self-organized manner, with a mentor from the teaching staff available to assist them. The workshop takes place during the lecture period, and, in addition to discussing theoretical and methodological issues, also serves to plan and coordinate the activities of the research training group carried out by the doctoral candidates. In order to intensify methodological and theoretical cooperation, smaller project groups of three to five doctoral candidates whose dissertations are methodologically or systematically related can also be formed. Each project group is also assigned a mentor from among the teaching staff.

If regular participation in the workshop is not possible due to simultaneous employment, an adequate substitute performance worth 6 ECTS credits will be agreed upon with the supervisory panel.

3. Individual compulsory study program 10 ECTS credits.  
At the beginning of their studies, each doctoral candidate will have an individual study program comprising 10 ECTS credits put together and recorded in the supervision agreement in accordance with § 6 (3). The main purpose of this study program is to close any gaps in the doctoral candidates' education and to familiarize them with alternative methods of empirical linguistics. This may include attending lectures, advanced seminars, special methodology or statistics exercises, and the like—usually with proof of performance. However, an individual reading package or a small pilot study to test a method not yet used independently may also be agreed upon, whereby the results must be reported concisely to the supervision panel.

## Elective courses (20 ECTS)

The elective area consists of two areas, Area A "Core scientific activities: Teaching, lecturing, publishing" and Area B "Scientific organization and supplementary studies". At least 8 ECTS must be earned in Area A.

### A. Core Academic Activities: Teaching, Lecturing, Publishing

#### 1. Teaching (with guidance and supervision by an experienced university lecturer)

There are three options here, which can also be chosen multiple times or in combination:

- a) A single event as part of a lecture or similar (1-2 hours) 1 ECTS credit
- b) Holding your own course, 2 SWS 10 ECTS credits
- c) Tutorial 4 ECTS credits

#### 2. Participation in a scientific conference with your own presentation of at least 20 minutes duration 8 ECTS

#### 3. Publication of an essay in a peer-reviewed publication 10 ECTS

The topic of the publication or presentation may be related to the topic of the dissertation. For the publication (e.g., in a journal or anthology), it is essential that it be subject to a peer review process. Acceptance of the article for publication is considered adequate fulfillment of the performance requirement.

### B. Scientific organization and supplementary studies

The following are examples of possible achievements in this area. In principle, doctoral students are free to suggest further options. However, these must always be discussed with the supervisory panel in advance and will be credited on the basis of a realistic estimate of the amount of work involved (30 hours = 1 ECTS).

Main/advanced seminar (with proof of achievement): 5 ECTS

Participation in lecture: 1 ECTS

Participation in workshop/symposium: 1 ECTS

Master Class (2-3 days, 6-8 hours per day): 3-4 ECTS

Reading group (self-organized): 2-4 ECTS

Lecture attendance: 1 ECTS

Workshop/symposium attendance: 1 ECTS

Master class (2-3 days, 6-8 hours each): 1 ECTS

Language course: 2-3 ECTS

Workshop on "key qualifications": 1 ECTS point, e.g.:

- Rhetoric and communication
- Academic writing
- Writing for the public/science journalism
- Didactics of university teaching
- Time management and organization
- Intercultural competence
- Job application training
- Third-party funding acquisition

Organization of an academic conference 2-6 ECTS credits. The number of ECTS credits depends on the actual amount of work involved (length of the conference, number of participants, number of co-organizers, etc.).

Internship/relevant professional activity/field research 4-12 ECTS credits

Organization of a stay abroad 3 ECTS credits

If a doctoral candidate has not yet completed a longer stay abroad during the course of their studies to date, a stay abroad of at least three to six months should be planned for the doctoral program. Achievements made during this stay abroad will be credited toward the academic achievements required in this paragraph. The organization of the stay abroad itself will be credited with 3 ECTS points. The organization of the stay abroad itself will be credited with 3 ECTS points. The organization of the stay abroad itself will be credited with 3 ECTS credits.

---

## **§ 9 Application for Admission to the Doctoral Examination**

1. The applicant shall submit to the body responsible under the relevant doctoral regulations an application for admission to the doctoral examination written in German. The application must specify the topic of the dissertation, the primary supervisor, and the examination subject.
2. The application must be accompanied by:
  1. a curriculum vitae providing information in particular about the applicant's course of study and, if applicable, professional activities
  2. proof of the acquisition of 45 ECTS credits in accordance with § 8 (5)
  3. proof of language proficiency in accordance with § 5 (2) and Appendix A
  3. proof of language skills in accordance with § 5 (2) and Appendix A
  4. two copies of the dissertation, which has not yet been the subject of a state or academic examination
  5. if applicable, a list of the applicant's published scientific works
  6. a written statement that the applicant is writing the dissertation independently and that all
  6. a written statement that the applicant has written the dissertation independently, has cited all sources and aids (including artificial intelligence) used in the dissertation, and has not already submitted the dissertation elsewhere as an examination paper
  7. a written statement indicating whether the applicant has previously undergone a doctoral procedure.

---

## **§ 10 Admission to the Doctoral Examination**

1. Based on the application and the documents submitted, the body responsible under the relevant doctoral regulations shall decide on the admission of the applicant to the doctoral examination.
2. Admission may only be refused if
  - a. the documents submitted are incomplete or
  - b. the requirements under § 9 are not met.
3. After rectifying any deficiencies within the meaning of paragraph 2, the applicant may resubmit the application for admission to the doctoral examination.
4. If admission is refused, the applicant shall be notified in writing, stating the reasons. The notification shall be accompanied by information on the right of appeal. Before the negative decision is issued, the applicant shall be given the opportunity to comment on the facts relevant to the decision.
5. An appeal may be lodged against the negative decision. The appeal shall be decided upon by the body responsible under the relevant doctoral regulations after consultation

with the executive committee of the doctoral program. The appeal decision must be justified, accompanied by information on the right of appeal, and delivered.

---

## **§ 11 Dissertation**

1. The main task of the doctoral candidate is to write a dissertation. This is an independent academic work, which should generally not exceed 90,000 words (no more than 120,000 words for dissertations written in English).
2. The dissertation must deal with a topic from one of the doctoral subjects listed in § 3 that corresponds to the profile of the doctoral program. It must make an independent, academically
  1. significant contribution to the further development of the subject area in which it is written.
  2. The dissertation must be written in German or English. In justified cases, the body responsible under the relevant doctoral regulations may allow exceptions to this rule.
  3. The dissertation must be typewritten.
  4. In accordance with the provisions of the Department of Philology at the University of Münster, with regard to the subject of psychology in the doctoral regulations of the Department of Psychology and Sports Science at the University of Münster, the dissertation may be replaced by a cumulative dissertation, if this is permitted by the relevant doctoral regulations for the respective subject. Upon submission of a cumulative dissertation, the supervisory group must confirm that it meets the requirements of a monographic dissertation.
  5. For general linguistics and Indo-European linguistics, it also applies that the partial publications recognized as a cumulative dissertation must be closely related in terms of time and theme and must meet the requirements for a dissertation as a whole. The cumulative dissertation is submitted as a printed book (paper version) with uniform formatting and contains, in addition to the publications, a detailed summary and framing of the partial publications. For each of the publications, the respective status (submitted, reviewed, accepted, published in which publication medium and the like) as well as the authors involved must be indicated.

---

## **§ 12 Reviewers**

The body responsible, under the relevant doctoral regulations, appoints two reviewers for the submitted dissertation on the recommendation of the Executive Board. As a rule, one of the two reviews is prepared by the primary supervisor of the thesis, and the second by an external reviewer who is not a member of the university. The participation of foreign scientists is desirable.

In special cases, a third review may be obtained from a professor, who should generally be a member or affiliate of the University of Münster. Special cases are specified in the overarching doctoral examination regulations of FB 09 and FB 07. The review reports are submitted to the Executive Board, which decides on the acceptance of the dissertation.

---

## **§ 13 Acceptance and Evaluation**

The reviewers examine the dissertation and report on it to the PL in written reviews. The reviews should be available within a period of three months. Furthermore, the regulations of the higher-level doctoral examination regulations of FB 09 and FB 07 apply.

---

#### **§ 14 Final Oral Colloquium**

1. The doctoral procedure is concluded by a 60- to 90-minute academic discussion attended by at least the supervisory panel and one other member of the plenary of teaching staff. The additional member chairs the discussion. All members of the plenary of teaching staff present are entitled to ask questions. The colloquium is open to the department. With the written consent of the doctoral candidate and all parties involved in the final colloquium in accordance with sentences 1 to 3, the chairperson may admit additional persons as listeners.
2. The subject of the final colloquium is a topic from the broader field of the dissertation, in particular methodological questions, which is decided by the supervisory panel. This topic is communicated to the candidate 4-6 weeks before the final colloquium. The candidate opens the colloquium with a presentation on this topic lasting a maximum of 15 minutes. Follow-up research projects and career prospects may also be discussed during the final colloquium.
3. After completion of the colloquium, the committee, consisting of three members of the teaching staff, elected by the plenary session of the teaching staff (usually the two supervisors and the spokesperson), determines the grade. All other members of the teaching staff present at the examination participate in the discussion of the grade without voting rights. The assessment is based on the provisions of the relevant higher-level doctoral regulations applicable to the candidate.
4. If the candidate has culpably missed the date of the final oral examination or has withdrawn without good reason after the start of the final colloquium, the final colloquium is considered failed. The reasons for the absence or withdrawal must be communicated by the candidate in writing without delay. The decision on failure in accordance with sentence 1 shall be made by the body responsible under the relevant doctoral regulations. §13 (9) applies accordingly.
5. The candidate shall be notified of the decision regarding failure to pass by the body responsible under the relevant doctoral regulations.
6. If the candidate has passed the final colloquium, the body responsible under the relevant doctoral regulations shall issue him/her with a certificate confirming that the dissertation has been accepted and the final colloquium has been successfully completed.
7. A failed final colloquium may only be repeated once within eighteen months
8. If the candidate has failed the final colloquium, the body responsible under the relevant doctoral regulations shall issue the candidate with a written notification of this, which shall also provide information on the possibility of repeating the colloquium and the deadline to be observed for this purpose. The notification of failure to pass the final colloquium must be accompanied by information on the right of appeal. An appeal may be lodged against the negative decision. The appeal shall be decided upon by the body responsible under the relevant doctoral regulations. The appeal decision must be justified, accompanied by information on the right of appeal, and delivered. The appeal decision must be justified, accompanied by information on the right of appeal, and delivered. If the candidate misses the deadline, waives the repeat, or fails again, the doctorate has failed.

---

## **§ 15 Overall Grade**

The overall grade is calculated using the following weighting: dissertation grade 2/3 and grade for the final oral colloquium. The overall grade ‘summa cum laude’ can only be awarded if both the dissertation and the final oral colloquium have been graded ‘summa cum laude’.

---

## **§ 16 Invalidity of doctoral achievements**

Depending on the subject area of the doctoral candidate, the relevant provisions of the doctoral regulations of FB 09 or FB 07 apply. The doctoral candidate must submit a written thesis to the department.

---

## **§ 17 Completion of the doctoral procedure**

Depending on the subject area of the doctoral candidate, the relevant provisions of the doctoral regulations of FB 09 or FB 07 apply.

---

## **§ 18 Revocation of the doctoral degree**

Depending on the subject area of the doctoral candidate, the relevant provisions of the doctoral regulations of FB 09 or FB 07 apply

---

## **§ 19 Entry into Force**

These regulations enter into force the day after publication in the Official Announcements of the University of Münster. They apply to all applicants submitting an application after that date.

Issued on the basis of resolutions of Faculty 09 (Philology) of 20 October 2025 and Faculty 07 (Psychology and Sports Science) of 3 December 2025.

Münster, 19 January 2026  
The Rector  
Prof. Dr. Johannes Wessels