

Doctoral Studies Dr. phil. and Dr. rer. pol.
Otto-Suhr-Institut für Politik- und Sozialwissenschaften
Freie Universität Berlin

The new doctoral regulations for Dr. rer. pol. and Dr. phil entered into force in August and December of 2008 respectively. Since the end of the transitional period in April 2012, the new regulations automatically apply for all doctoral candidates who were registered before the new regulations entered into force. Please find the regulations on the website.

1. Admission Requirements

1.1 University Degree

Precondition for admission is a university degree in political science or another academic field relevant to the dissertation with a focus on economic and social sciences, in the area of application of the German Basic Law:

- Master of Arts or Master of Science with 300 ECTS total (including undergraduate degree)
- Diplom examination
- First state examination for secondary-school teachers (“Studienrat”) with specialization in two fields, each completed minimum with the grade “good”

Bachelor degree

Admission is also possible with a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree in a relevant academic field if the degree was obtained with the best grade possible and if a qualification assessment examination (“Feststellungsprüfung”) in a relevant academic field with two university lecturers has been passed. The doctoral board decides upon the form of the “Feststellungsprüfung”.

Other degrees

Admission is also possible with an academic degree other than those above if the candidate’s qualification for the doctoral dissertation is ensured. The doctoral board may decide to make admission conditional to additional program achievements within a certain period of time in order to complement existing qualifications up to the qualification level required.

Degrees outside the area of application of the German Basic Law

An academic degree obtained outside the area of application of the German Basic Law is considered equivalent to those above if approved by the “Zentralstelle für ausländisches Bildungswesen”. If it has not been approved yet, the candidate needs to apply for a confirmation of equivalence (“Äquivalenzbestätigung”) at the “Zentralstelle für ausländisches Bildungswesen”. If the “Zentralstelle für ausländisches Bildungswesen” does not issue a scale of grades to classify the academic degree, the doctoral board will test the comparability and equivalence of grades to the final grade “good”.

Degrees from universities of applied sciences

If the candidate holds a degree from a university of applied sciences, his/her qualification needs to be established by means of passing the final examination in a relevant academic field at a university of applied sciences with the best grade possible. The doctoral board decides how to proceed in the following.

1.2 Supervisor

Candidates are responsible for finding a supervisor for their doctoral dissertation. Supervisors should be professors at the Otto-Suhr-Institut für Politik- und Sozialwissenschaften (OSI). Selected representatives of research institutions with cooperation agreements could act as additional supervisors. In duly justified cases, professors from other university institutes may also be first supervisors.

One of the two reviewers (one being the supervisor) must be an *active tenured* professor of the Otto-Suhr-Institut. If the supervisor/first reviewer is retired or non-tenured, a letter of confirmation of an active tenured professor of the Otto-Suhr-Institut regarding the co-supervision is required.

2. Admission

2.1 Documents

The following form and documents need to be sent to the examination office (Daphne Stelter; Ihnestr. 21, room 309):

- “Antrag auf Zulassung zum Promotionsverfahren” (pdf download on website)
- Diploma of university degree (see above; certified copy or regular copy with original)
- Curriculum Vita with activities and experiences relevant to doctoral studies
- Exposé and time schedule for doctoral dissertation (ca. 5 pages)
- Written consent of supervisor
- Proof of language skill if doctoral dissertation is written in a language other than native language (DSH, C1 of European Reference Framework, or University degree in language concerned)
- Formal confirmation of the candidate that he/she has read and understood the doctoral regulations
- Proof of qualification if university degree is neither Master, Diplom nor first state examination

Candidates for individual doctoral studies do not need additional application material.

Candidates for structured doctoral studies need to apply at one of the Graduate Schools of Dahlem Research School.

2.2 Deadlines

Candidates can hand in the admission documents at any time.

In applying to one of the Graduate Schools of Dahlem Research School, candidates for structured doctoral studies need to meet the respective application deadline.

2.3 Next Steps

The doctoral board admits the applicant to the doctoral studies. The admission takes place prior to the opening of the doctoral examination process (see below). Candidates will receive a letter confirming their admission, detailing further conditions, if applicable. If the candidate is not an employee of Freie Universität Berlin, he/she has to enroll within four weeks at the students’ service center (“Studierendenverwaltung”). Otherwise, the admission will expire.

3. Doctoral Dissertation

3.1 Duration of Doctoral Studies

Candidates should normally finish their doctoral studies within three years. The entire doctoral studies (including the doctoral examination process) should be terminated within four years. Many candidates cannot meet this deadline due to other professional obligations. If candidates can foresee that they will not be able to meet the deadline, they have to inform the doctoral board in an informal letter and indicate a new deadline. The confirmation by the doctoral board needs to be presented at the “Studierendenverwaltung” within three months. Otherwise, the admission expires.

3.2 Doctoral Dissertation

As doctoral dissertation in German or English language or (upon application) another academic language, the following is accepted:

- An unpublished dissertation or parts thereof displaying the research and its results. Pre-publications are allowed in consultation with the first supervisor.
- A cumulative dissertation consisting of unpublished and published single pieces which is equivalent to a one-piece dissertation. The candidate must present at least three thematically related articles that have been accepted for publication by a peer-reviewed journal. In case of

co-authorship, the candidate must present at least four articles, of which at least half must be written independently (see more information in doctoral regulations).

4. Doctoral Examination Process

4.1 Opening of the Doctoral Examination Process

The candidate submits:

- 6 copies of his/her dissertation and one electronic version (the title page includes the candidate's name, the name of the department at Freie Universität Berlin, and the date; the first page leaves room for the names of the doctoral review committee),
- A written summary of the doctoral dissertation and its results in German and English (min. one page),
- The form "Eröffnung des Promotionsverfahrens" (pdf download on website),
- The doctoral studies diploma of one of the Graduate Schools of Dahlem Research School in order to apply for the title "PhD" instead of Dr. rer. pol. / Dr. phil., if applicable,
- A suggestion as to who will serve on the doctoral review committee. The doctoral review committee consists of four professors of which at least three must be from the department. The fifth member is usually a postdoctoral research fellow but could also be another professor. The second reviewer can be from an external department (see doctoral regulations),
- A list of previously published parts of the doctoral dissertation and 3 copies of each.

The doctoral board then opens the doctoral examination process and sets the five-person doctoral review committee. The chair of the review committee is usually the first supervisor.

4.1 Evaluation

The reviewers evaluate the doctoral dissertation within the evaluation deadline of 10 weeks. They then submit the evaluations to the examinations office. The evaluations should also be made available to the other members of the doctoral review committee and the candidate (for example in an email-attachment) in preparation for the oral examination.

4.2 Display Period

After the evaluations are finished, a 14-day display period begins (4 weeks if within semester breaks) in which all postdoctoral members of the department can look at the dissertation and the evaluations. A post on the bulletin board at the examination office announces the display period. The display period is obligatory and the oral examination can only take place after its completion.

4.3 Oral Examination

The doctoral review committee, in particular the chair (usually the first reviewer), is responsible for the coordination of, and invitation to, the oral examination. The examination should take place within four months after the last evaluation has been handed in. All members of the committee must participate in the oral examination and the grading process. If one of the members cannot take part, a new date must be set. Only in the case of an unexpected absence of one of the committee members would the cancellation of the oral examination represent an unreasonable hardship for the candidate.

The doctoral review committee appoints a leader for the academic discussion, either the first supervisor or any other member of the committee. The review committee agrees on a grade for the dissertation before the oral examination. Directly following the oral examination, the grade for the oral examination and the final grade will be determined. The oral examination should take no less than 60 minutes and no more than 90 minutes, including the candidate's presentation of 30 minutes. After the presentation, the candidate responds to the criticism of the evaluations and to questions of the review committee. Afterwards, questions from the public are accepted.

The oral examination is public, unless the candidate objects.

The oral examination is held in German, English or (upon application) another academic language.

If the candidate misses the oral examination, he/she has failed the examination.

4.4 Certificate

The examinations office supplies the candidate with a certificate confirming the completion of the doctoral examination process directly after the examination file is returned.

5. Publication and Diploma

After the doctoral examination process, the candidate is obliged to publish the doctoral dissertation within one year after the oral examination. In duly justified cases, the doctoral board can extend this deadline upon application. The published dissertation needs to be handed in at the university library, department "Hochschulzeitschriftenstelle". Candidates can choose one of the following options for publication:

- 40 copies in book or photo print, or
- 20 copies of the original publication in book or photo print, if the entire doctoral dissertation or key elements thereof have been published in a relevant peer-reviewed academic journal, or
- Three original copies, if more than 150 copies of the dissertation are published by a publishing house, or
- Three copies in copyable printing with the original copy and 50 additional copies in form of microfiches, or
- An electronic version (the format is to be coordinated with the university library) and five printed copies.

Before printing the dissertation, the text version to be published needs to be approved by the doctoral board in agreement with the dissertation's supervisors.

Doctoral dissertations that have been published in parts during the doctoral studies and cumulative dissertations do not need to be published.

Within six weeks after the obligation to publish has been fulfilled, the German-language diploma will be awarded (upon application also in English). The diploma entitles the candidate to use the title awarded. It is not sufficient to submit a contract from a publishing house.