



University  
of Basel

Faculty of  
Psychology



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## **Guidelines on the Doctoral Study Regulations of the Faculty of Psychology, University of Basel**

Approved by the Faculty Assembly on 15.09.2025

The information provided in these guidelines serves to explain the doctoral regulations of the Faculty of Psychology at the University of Basel dated **17 September 2014**.

### **General information and components of the doctoral studies program**

The aim and function of the doctorate is to acquire scientific skills and develop methodological knowledge. Enrolment (matriculation) is compulsory for admission to the doctoral studies. The University of Basel offers various forms of support (advice, advanced training, financing).

The doctoral studies program comprises a doctoral thesis, doctoral degree procedure with doctoral examination, academic program, and, if stipulated as an admission requirement, a colloquium. It is accompanied by various governance instruments and concludes with a graduation ceremony.

### **Doctoral thesis**

The doctoral thesis is an independent research project and must demonstrate the doctoral candidate's competence to conduct independent scientific work and meet the scientific requirements of the subject. Either a cumulative doctoral thesis or a monograph can be submitted as a doctoral thesis. The cumulative doctoral thesis is the default at the Faculty of Psychology; the monograph is the rare exception. For both a cumulative doctoral thesis and a monograph, a detailed publication plan must be attached to the doctoral agreement and submitted to the office of the Dean of Studies. If you switch from a cumulative doctoral thesis to a monograph or vice versa during the course of your doctoral studies, you must notify the doctoral board by submitting the updated doctoral agreement, including a detailed publication plan.

A cumulative doctoral thesis comprises (a) a 10- to 20-page synopsis that integrates the research results into a coherent research strategy and question and clearly demonstrates the doctoral candidate's own contribution. The synopsis is based on (b) at least one peer-reviewed article published or accepted for publication in a scientific journal, of which the doctoral candidate is the first author; and (c) at least two further articles submitted for publication, accepted for publication or published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal, in which the doctoral candidate is the first author or co-author. A peer-reviewed study protocol may be submitted as a written doctoral thesis. The prerequisite is that the peer-reviewed study protocol forms part of the written doctoral thesis project and is the only study protocol in the publication plan.

A monograph is a coherent, self-contained piece of research, including an introduction and conclusion. The monograph represents a comprehensive treatise on a research question. A monographic doctoral thesis generally has only one author. Once the monograph has been accepted by the doctoral board, the contents and/or parts of a monograph may be used in manuscripts for publication in a scientific journal. However, at the time of submission of the doctoral thesis to the office of the Dean of Studies, it is not permitted to use verbatim passages from one or more manuscripts that have been submitted to, accepted by, or published in a peer-reviewed journal for the monograph. In order to comply with the principle of equal treatment, a monograph must meet the same requirements in terms of quality and quantity as a cumulative doctoral thesis; in case of doubt, the doctoral board shall decide and may obtain a further evaluation to assess equivalence to the cumulative doctoral thesis. The Faculty of Psychology draws attention to any problems that may arise, such as (self-) plagiarism, when content and/or parts of a dissertation are subsequently used for another publication.

Except for the cover page, the format of the doctoral thesis is not specified, but must include a declaration of scientific integrity and a curriculum vitae, and is agreed in consultation with the first supervisor.

The declaration of scientific integrity is made in accordance with §17 d) of the doctoral regulations, requiring that the individual manuscripts of the doctoral thesis are listed and the doctoral candidate's own contribution to each individual manuscript is specified for evaluation by the reviewers (for example, by using the 'Contributor Role Taxonomy', CRediT, cf. [credit.niso.org](http://credit.niso.org)). If co-authors have already submitted the manuscripts elsewhere as a dissertation thesis, this must be stated.

### **Doctoral degree procedure with doctoral examination**

After completing their doctoral thesis and fulfilling the requirements of the academic program (see below) and any additional requirements, doctoral candidates submit their application to initiate the doctoral degree procedure together with three copies of their doctoral thesis to the office of the Dean of Studies. The office of the Dean of Studies forwards the doctoral thesis to the PhD Committee, whose members each write an independent evaluation, grade the doctoral thesis, and send the evaluations together with a recommendation for acceptance or rejection to the office of the Dean of Studies within three months. At least two evaluations must be submitted, one from the first supervisor and one from the second supervisor. As soon as two evaluations have been submitted to the office of the Dean of Studies, the office of the Dean of Studies forwards the evaluations to the doctoral board for final acceptance or rejection of the doctoral thesis.

The evaluations are intended to make the academic achievement of the doctoral thesis accessible to outsiders as a coherent text. The evaluations provide a brief summary of the work or individual publications and highlight the key findings and results. The evaluations highlight the strengths and limitations of the submitted work. The evaluations may include comments relating to the theoretical basis, experimental design, appropriateness of statistical analyses, interpretation of results, utility of tables and figures, practical relevance of the research, and overall clarity of the text. The proposed grade should be clearly derived from the presentation of the overall performance. The evaluations should comply with the guidelines of the Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) and thus focus on the content and quality of the doctoral thesis rather than on the ranking of the scientific journal in which the work was submitted or published.

The doctoral thesis and the evaluations shall be made available to the members of the Faculty Assembly for confidential inspection at the Dean's office no less than two weeks prior to the doctoral examination. The candidate shall be given access to the evaluations no less

than two weeks prior to the doctoral examination. After receiving the decision of the doctoral board regarding the final acceptance of the dissertation, the office of the Dean of Studies shall request the candidate to submit proof of fulfilment of any admission requirements and the credits acquired during the doctorate together with the performance overview in accordance with the doctoral agreement. Upon receipt of this information, the office of the Dean of Studies will arrange a date for the public doctoral examination in consultation with the candidate. The doctoral examination will be conducted by the members of the PhD Committee. It will be chaired by a faculty member appointed by the doctoral board who is not a member of the PhD Committee. The doctoral examination is an oral examination lasting at least 60 minutes and no more than 90 minutes. It begins with a 30-minute presentation by the candidate. This is followed by a scientific discussion lasting at least 30 minutes. At the end of the discussion, the members of the PhD Committee award a joint grade, which is entered on the confirmation of the doctoral examination.

The final grade used to determine the degree grade is calculated as two thirds of the grade for the doctoral thesis and one third of the grade for the doctoral examination. The grade for the doctoral thesis is calculated as the average of the grades given in the evaluations and rounded to two decimal places (see Section 16(4) of the doctoral regulations). For example, a doctoral thesis graded 6.0 and 5.5 results in an average grade of 5.75; taken together with a doctoral examination graded 5.5 results in a final degree grade of 5.67, from which the grade of very good (*insigni cum laude*) is derived (see §19 paragraph 3 of the doctoral regulations).

After successfully passing the doctoral examination, the pledge is taken and a certificate confirming completion of the doctoral examination is issued. The doctoral graduate may then use the title “Dr. phil. des.”. After the doctoral examination, two copies of the doctoral thesis must be submitted to the University of Basel Library in accordance with the provisions of the university library, together with the cover sheet designated for the doctoral thesis and the candidate's curriculum vitae. The doctoral degree certificate shall be issued within six weeks of receipt of confirmation from the University of Basel Library that the publication requirement has been fulfilled. It entitles the holder to use the academic title “Dr. phil.”.

## Academic program

Doctoral students are responsible for completing the minimum of 12 ECTS credits required as part of the academic program specified for doctoral researchers. The necessary ECTS credits can be earned in the following three areas (1 to 3), with at least two thirds of the credits having to be earned in areas 1 and 2:

1. External academic courses related to the topic of their doctoral thesis
2. Internal academic courses related to the topic of their doctoral thesis
3. Didactics and other continuing education

Areas 1 and 2 include doctoral-level courses related to the doctoral thesis topic at the Faculty of Psychology or other universities. Attendance at summer schools is credited according to the credits awarded by the summer schools. Other doctoral-level courses are credited with the corresponding credits, provided they are listed in the University of Basel's course directory. Performance is assessed on the basis of the criteria specified there. With regard to attendance at internal academic courses, care should be taken to ensure that PhD courses are attended. Under certain circumstances, it may make sense also to attend courses from the bachelor's or master's programs. However, the crediting of these courses should be an exception and must be discussed in advance with the first supervisor. ECTS credits already earned during bachelor's or master's programs cannot be credited towards the doctorate. ECTS credits earned outside the University of Basel can be credited if they meet the necessary criteria for the doctoral level academic program. Before enrolling in such courses, students should ensure that their first supervisor will accept the credits. The courses must be agreed upon in a Learning Contract. External academic courses typically include

contributions to international conferences. Attendance at conferences with one's own contribution can be credited with 1 ECTS credit. Doctoral students are encouraged to attend research lectures regularly at the Faculty of Psychology, even if they are not directly related to the topic of their doctoral thesis. Other selected events and courses can be credited towards the academic program if they meet the criteria. These include, for example, events offered in other doctorates at Swiss universities. Passed courses are credited with the number of credit points assigned to them. The first supervisor decides upon the creditability of achievements towards the doctorate. Creditability is recorded in the Learning Contract. All doctoral students at the Faculty of Psychology are required to be enrolled at the University of Basel for the entire duration of their doctoral studies. Doctoral students must enroll for their doctoral studies at the next possible date.

## **Colloquium**

Admission to the doctoral studies requires a Master of Science in Psychology from the University of Basel. Other degrees from the University of Basel or a university recognized by the University of Basel may be recognized as fully or partially equivalent by the doctoral board. In the case of partial equivalence, admission is subject additional requirements with a maximum of 24 ECTS credits. Requirements may include either individual courses from the master's program or the colloquium.

The colloquium is a one-hour oral examination in which candidates must demonstrate their knowledge of psychology in relation to their specific doctoral thesis project. Candidates will be informed of the requirements at least two months before the colloquium. The minimum requirements are the literature specifications for the master's oral examination in the relevant department. The colloquium is conducted by two members of Group I at the Faculty of Psychology, chaired by a person elected by the Faculty Assembly, and is graded as either pass or fail. If the colloquium is graded as a fail, it can be repeated once after a minimum of three months. Therefore, the first date for the colloquium should be scheduled no later than the beginning of the ninth month after admission so that it can be repeated within the one-year period if necessary. A second failure of the colloquium or exceeding the deadline will result in termination of the supervisory relationship and doctoral training.

## **Governance Instruments**

- The doctoral board is the governing body of the doctorate and oversees the content and procedure of doctoral training at the Faculty of Psychology. The doctoral board consists of three members of Group I of the Faculty of Psychology (Dean of Studies, Dean of Research, and one other faculty member from Group I).
- The PhD Committee is made up of the supervisors of the respective doctoral candidates. At the request of the first supervisor and the doctoral candidate, the doctoral board determines the composition of the PhD Committee. One of the two supervisors of the doctoral thesis must be a member of Group I of the faculty. Once this is established, holders of assistant professorships without tenure track, adjunct professorships, or lectureships may supervise doctorates as either first or second supervisors. Upon application to the doctoral board, non-faculty members of Group I or Group II may also be approved as first or second supervisors. Upon application to the doctoral board, qualified experts from outside the University of Basel may also supervise doctoral theses as second supervisors. In the case of supervisors from outside the faculty, the doctoral board expects the supervisor to have postdoctoral equivalent qualifications. Further information on the composition of the PhD Committee can be found in the doctoral regulations of the Faculty of Psychology. The PhD Committee supervises and supports the development of the doctoral thesis.

- A doctoral agreement is concluded between the doctoral candidate and the first supervisor or the PhD Committee within the first semester after commencement of the doctorate. The doctoral agreement includes a concept and schedule for the dissertation, any additional requirements, the general conditions and the envisaged realization of the academic program (number of credits) as an individual study plan. Furthermore, regular status review meetings are recommended in which the progress of the doctorate is explicitly discussed in accordance with the doctoral agreement. If significant changes arise during this process, the doctoral agreement must be updated.
- A doctoral student survey is usually conducted every two years and assesses the satisfaction of doctoral students at the Faculty of Psychology. The main topics covered include motivation for pursuing a doctorate, doctoral students' expectations, questions about everyday research life and the research environment, and the supervision situation. The doctoral student survey is conducted by the Graduate Centre in collaboration with the Quality Development Team and organized in consultation with the faculty. The faculty receives access to the anonymized results.
- Within the framework of the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB), doctoral studies are generally discussed as a key topic every four years. The members of the SAB assess current developments and challenges in the field of doctoral studies and discuss recommendations for further development.

### **Doctoral degree certificate and graduation ceremony**

Upon successful completion of their doctoral studies, doctoral graduates are presented at the graduation ceremony with their doctoral degree certificate, which states the degree program they have completed and their degree grade. The graduation ceremony takes place in fall semester and requires registration. Doctoral degree certificates for the respective spring semester are handed out directly during the ceremony whereas doctoral graduates from the autumn semester receive their doctoral degree certificates in advance by post.

Basel, 15.09.2025