



## **Guidelines: Towards a culture of doctoral education at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin**

*These guidelines are drawn up in German, the English translation is provided for convenience only. Only the German version is binding.*

Based on the recommendations by the Wissenschaftsrat (Science Council) (2002 and 2011) and on the experiences of its faculties, graduate schools, Research Training Groups and the Humboldt Graduate School, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin aims at steadily improving the rigorous and internationally competitive culture of its doctoral education.

The guidelines passed by the University Senate of Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin on June 26, 2012 are intended to ensure the transparency of the doctoral educational process and to strengthen the integrity of scientific quality management at HU. The guidelines serve as a standard for the revision of doctorate regulations by the faculties of Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.

1. Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin acknowledges the time of doctoral research as a phase of independent scholarly activity.
2. The right to confer a doctoral degree lies with the faculties of Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Each faculty sets the standards for its own doctoral examination procedure in the form of doctorate regulations based on the present guidelines.
3. Doctoral degrees may be awarded by faculties in the areas of expertise of their professional academic/research staff, i.e. professor and junior professor. Faculties may specify doctorate subjects and specializations in their doctorate regulations. The latter also determine the faculty's competence for doctoral examination procedures in which persons from outside the faculty supervise a doctoral student.
4. A master's degree in a pertinent course of study from a state or state-accredited university is generally the prerequisite for admission as a doctorate candidate. Alternatively, degrees such as Magister, Diplom, or first state exam in humanities, science or theology (Staatsexamen) are accepted. Admission as doctorate candidate immediately following the successful completion of a bachelor's degree (fast track) or

a master's degree without previous corresponding bachelor studies requires an individual assessment of the candidate's academic record details of which are set forth in the PhD regulations.

5. The faculty board decides about admission to the doctoral track, the opening of the doctoral process, and the determination of the overall result; this responsibility may be transferred to the dean or a Doctoral Degree Committee.
6. To ensure the quality of doctoral research supervision, it is recommended that every doctoral project at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin is supervised by two academic supervisors.
7. The key element for successful completion of the doctoral degree is the independent preparation of a dissertation that answers an original research question using suitable scholarly methods. Both the doctoral candidate and their academic supervisors commit themselves to adhere to the rules of good scientific practice [1].
8. Doctoral candidates receive regular advice from their academic supervisors. The content and form of the supervision is governed by a binding supervision agreement which is annually updated according to the requirements of the progress of the doctorate. The independent nature of the doctoral candidate's scientific work remains unaffected by the supervision agreement.
9. Successful scholarly work requires specialised methodological qualifications which generally go beyond the content of a master's course and only become necessary during the doctoral phase. The content, size and timing of the courses to be attended during the doctoral phase can be governed by the supervision agreement. The agreement can also cover the candidate's involvement in and exchange with national and international research communities.
10. Attendance at conferences and other events is listed in a supplement that can be appended to the doctoral certificate if so desired by the candidate. If successful participation in certain events is specified as a requirement for admission to doctoral studies, this participation becomes a prerequisite for a successful completion of the doctoral degree.
11. If prior publications are used as part of the dissertation, doctorate regulations require that the dissertation be a substantially original achievement that goes beyond work previously submitted for publication or published. In particular, doctorate regulations

govern how the doctoral candidate's proportionate contribution is to be determined in the event of multiple authors.

12. In addition to the written form, the doctoral thesis must also be submitted electronically. This ensures that, if appropriate, the work can be checked for unauthorised plagiarism and for incorrect citations.
13. To ensure the quality of the doctoral work, an independent assessment of the doctoral thesis will be undertaken by at least two reviewers in accordance with the quality standards in place in the relevant scholarly community. These thesis assessment reports will be prepared independently of each other. It is strongly recommended that at least one thesis assessment report be prepared by a university lecturer outside of Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Before the reviewers are appointed, they must be asked about and assessed for any possible grounds for bias towards the doctoral candidate, in order to ensure that other individuals may be included in the assessment procedure in good time if required. This rule does not apply to reviewers who have supervised the dissertation.
14. A public doctoral defence is part of the doctoral examination process. It provides the doctoral candidate with the opportunity to prove his or her scholarly aptitude in a presentation and scholarly discussion. Doctoral candidates are entitled to inspect the thesis assessment reports at least 14 days before their doctoral defence. The discussion should relate to the dissertation and presentation, and may require knowledge of the environment of the topic being treated.
15. In accordance with its PhD regulations, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin awards the grades of 'summa cum laude', 'magna cum laude', 'cum laude', 'rite' and 'non sufficit'. The overall grade is composed by both the assessment report grades and the grade for presentation and discussion during the defence. The overall grade 'summa cum laude' is only awarded if all individual achievements have been graded 'summa cum laude' and at least three thesis assessment reports are available for the doctoral work. The overall grade of 'non sufficit' (fail) is used if a grade lower than 'rite' has been awarded for the majority of individual sections. The grading scale is formally communicated to all those involved in the doctoral examination procedure, and in particular, the reviewers, when the procedure is initiated.

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[1] **Ensuring good scientific practice:** Regulation/Ordinance governing Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin's principles for ensuring good scientific practice and dealing with allegations of scientific misconduct. Adopted by the University Senate of Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin on 11 February 2014, as amended.