

Doctoral Procedure: The Oral Examination

Notes
Dates / Deadlines
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The research and the oral examination must be completed no later than 6 years following admission of the doctoral candidate. Any additional extension must be approved by the thesis committee. Insofar as the thesis committee does not agree to the extension, the doctoral committee shall make its decision based on a statement by the thesis committee on the end of the doctoral studies as defined in § 7 VII PromO. A new thesis committee must be appointed if the doctoral studies are not ended. (§ 7 IV PromO*) • Special regulation for doctoral candidates in the doctoral programme <i>Behavior and Cognition</i>: The research work should be completed within 3 years after admission to the doctoral programme with the submission of the dissertation. In justified exceptional cases, the processing time can be extended up to four times by half a year each time; the doctoral committee decides on this after consulting the thesis committee on the basis of an application by the doctoral candidate that must be justified at least in text form. (§ 3 II BeCog-ProgrammO**) • The doctoral candidate may propose a preferred date for the oral examination. Provided that there are no reasons to the contrary, this date will be officially set as the examination date by the examination office after receipt of all thesis reviews and after the decision on the acceptance of the dissertation. The doctoral candidate will be notified of this date in text form at least one week in advance. The oral examination should not be held later than 6 months after admission to the doctoral examination. (§ 17 III 1-2 PromO) • At the doctoral candidate's request, the oral examination may be held before the end of the thesis consultation period of at least 10 working days, if otherwise a considerable delay of the examination procedure is to be feared; in this case, admission to the oral examination is subject to an objection that may be raised by an authorised examiner of the Faculty of Humanities during the thesis consultation period. If, after receipt of an objection, the dissertation is rejected, the oral examination is regarded as not having been taken. (§ 17 III 3-4 PromO) Even if the oral examination has taken place before the end of the thesis consultation period, the certification of successful completion of the doctoral examination will of course only be issued after the end of the thesis consultation period. • Within 2 years after passing the oral examination, the obligatory copies of the dissertation must be submitted to the examination office together with the revision certificate signed by the first examiner. (§§ 24 II 3, 24 V 2 PromO) For more details: information sheet "The Publication of the Thesis" on http://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/534627.html. • The date of the passed oral examination is considered the doctoral graduation date. (§ 25 I 3 PromO) It is shown on the doctoral certificate, which will be issued after receipt of the deposit copies and the revision certificate in the examination office. • Attention: Danger of confusion! For doctoral candidates whose employment contracts as academic staff are subject to the fixed-term regulations of the Wissenschaftszeitvertragsgesetz (WissZeitVG), only the date of completion of the doctorate, i.e. the date from which the doctoral title may be used, is decisive. Since the

doctorate is not considered completed until the **doctoral certificate is presented** (§ 25 I PromO), which requires the delivery of the obligatory copies, the fixed-term contract can only be concluded after the doctorate has been completed (max. up to a duration of 6 years) from this point in time - and only if the employment contracts from before and after the doctorate merge seamlessly. If there is a time gap here, the person concerned cannot continue to be employed by the university.

- If there is an important reason, the **early completion of the doctorate** can be applied for on the basis of a publishing contract. In the event of approval, the obligatory copies must be submitted at the latest by the end of a one-year period after the oral examination. The examination board decides on the significance of the important reason presented. The application should be submitted before the date of the oral examination. A further extension may be granted once for a maximum of one additional year; the doctoral committee shall decide on this upon application. The application for extension can only be submitted if the revision certificate is presented at the same time. The obligatory copies must be submitted by the end of the granted time limit at the latest. (§§ 24 VIII, 25 II PromO) For more details, see the information sheet "The Publication of the Thesis" on the page <http://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/534627.html>.
- **Inspection:** In the period between the conclusion of the oral examination and the award of the doctoral degree, or within four weeks after return or rejection of the thesis or after failure of the oral examination, the doctoral candidate is entitled to inspect the written reviews and the minutes of the examination. Copies of the record content can also be issued. (§ 26 PromO)

Admission to sit the doctoral examination

- Please use the electronic form "**Application for doctoral examination**" for the application. You can find it in the forms section of eCampus. For more information, please see page <https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/562201.html>.
- The examination office informs the doctoral candidate in writing of the decision to accept or reject the thesis. Acceptance of the thesis shall also constitute **admission to the oral examination**. In the event of rejection on the first occasion, notification will be provided with reference to the terms of § 14 VI PromO concerning the option to resubmit the proposal. Instructions on the rights of legal recourse will be provided with a notice of rejection. (§ 14 VIII PromO)

Choice of examination type

- The oral examination can be conducted as an **oral defence (disputation)** or a **doctoral viva (rigorosum)** depending on the preference of the doctoral candidate. The first academic advisor should advise the doctoral candidate on the selection of the type for the oral examination. (§ 17 I PromO) The choice of examination type must be indicated on the form "Application for doctoral examination" (see above).

Examination type: oral defence (disputation)

- **Demands:** In the oral defence (disputation), the doctoral candidate should prove that he or she is familiar with the state of current research in the research area of the thesis and that he or she has fundamental specialised knowledge even beyond the specific research area contained in the thesis and that he or she is equipped to independently consider scientific problems and to present and defend them in argument. (§ 18 I PromO)
- The oral defence consists of **two parts**. In the first part, the doctoral candidate shall explain the goals and results of his or her thesis in the form of a presentation lasting a maximum of 20 minutes, and shall furthermore answer relevant questions. In the second part of the oral defence, the doctoral candidate will receive questions from the ex-

aminers that relate to the subject areas and methodical questions concerning the speciality as a whole and related research areas, as well as on the larger scientific context that includes the thesis. (§ 18 II PromO)

- The oral defence shall last **at least 90 and no more than 120 minutes**. (§ 18 III PromO)
- The **examination board** will take the examination, and at least two thirds of its members must be in attendance, including at least two evaluators of the thesis. The examination board is entitled to allow questions to be put to the doctoral candidate from the university public. (§ 18 IV PromO)
- The oral defence is **open to the university public**. Upon application of the doctoral candidate, the university public may be excluded, provided there is an important reason. Ruling thereon is passed by the examination board. (§ 18 V PromO) The university public must be informed of the date of the oral defence in a suitable form. The university public is informed about the dates of the upcoming disputations on page <https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/534904.html>.

Examination type: doctoral viva (rigorosum)

- **Demands:** In the doctoral viva (rigorosum) the doctoral candidate should prove thorough and interdisciplinary education in the humanities and decision-making capability. (§ 19 I PromO)
- The examination shall cover **two or three research areas** and shall last **approx. 120 minutes in total**. The examination will focus for approx. 60 minutes on the research area of the thesis as the main subject, and will then proceed to focus for approx. 60 minutes on a second research area as a main subject, or for approx. 30 minutes respectively on two other research areas as subsidiary subjects. Besides the research areas as indicated in Appendix I PromO, electable main and subsidiary subjects shall also include all of the research areas that can be taken as module packages outside of the specific subject as part of a Master degree course at the Faculty of Humanities. The doctoral committee can approve further exceptions on application, provided that there are authorised examiners available at the University of Göttingen for the research area in question. An application does not constitute a legal entitlement. (§ 19 II PromO)
- The **examination board** presides over the examination. At least two thirds of the members of the examination board, and no fewer than three members, must be in attendance, including at least one authorised examiner in each of the selected examination research areas, respectively. (§ 19 III PromO)
- **Audience:** Doctoral candidates, who will soon be taking the oral examination themselves, can follow the examination, provided the examinee provides consent. This right does not extend to advice and notification of the examination result. (§ 19 IV PromO)

Permissible examination languages

- The examination language is German or English. (§ 17 II 1 PromO)
- Other languages: By way of derogation, the oral examination may also be taken in a different language approved for the research area according to Appendix I PromO (see below). The doctoral committee decides on exceptions upon application by the doctoral candidate (applications must be submitted using the form "**Application for doctoral examination**", see: <https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/562201.html>); the application can be rejected without statement of reasons. All members of the examination board must have a sufficient command of the examination language. (§ 17 II 2-4 PromO)
- **Special regulation** for doctoral candidates in the **doctoral programme *Behavior and Cognition***: In deviation from §§ 11 III 1, 17 II 1 PromO, the dissertation and oral examination must be written or taken in English. The oral examination may also be conducted in German upon request. (§ 5 BeCog-ProgramO)

Minutes

- Minutes must be taken on the **progression of the oral examination**. It must be signed by the attending members of the examination board. The examination board can call on an assessor holding a doctoral degree to produce the minutes. (§ 17 IV PromO)

Grading

- Immediately **upon conclusion of the oral examination**, the examination board decides in a non-public procedure whether the entire examination has been passed. (§ 20 I PromO)

- The following **grades** can be awarded for the oral examination:

summa cum laude (with distinction) (0)

magna cum laude (very good) (1)

cum laude (good) (2)

rite (satisfactory) (3).

In the case of the **doctoral viva (rigorosum)**, the grades (apart from the grade “summa cum laude”) can be increased by 0.3 or (with the exception of the grade “rite”) reduced by the same amount; it is also possible to grade certain parts of the examination as “non rite” (insufficient). (§ 20 II PromO)

- The grade of the **oral defence (disputation)** is awarded by resolution of the examination board. (§ 20 III PromO)

- The grade in the **doctoral viva (rigorosum)** represents the **weighted grade point average** of the grades in the individual examination subjects. An assessment of individual examination parts as “non rite” constitutes the award of a grade point of 4. Here, a multiplier of 2 is applied to the main subject, and a multiplier of 1 to the subsidiary subject. The grade is, for an average of

up to and including 0.50 summa cum laude,

up to and including 1.50 magna cum laude,

up to and including 2.50 cum laude,

up to and including 3.50 rite.

Each member of the examination board awards a grade for each main and subsidiary subject in which he or she is an authorised examiner. The grades in the individual examination subjects represent the grade point averages of the assessments awarded to the examination subject. (§ 20 IV PromO)

- Following the oral examination, the chairperson of the examination board shall inform the candidate of the **results of the doctoral examination**. In the event of passing, he or she shall inform the candidate immediately that the doctoral degree must not be used before award of the doctorate. Upon application, the doctoral candidate receives a **written certification that the examination has been passed**. This must also detail that the doctoral degree may not be used before award of the doctorate. (§ 20 V PromO)
Note: The examination office issues the certification by default. Therefore, it does not have to be applied for.

Failure or discontinuance of the oral examination

- An insufficient performance in the oral examination will receive the assessment “**non rite**”. An oral examination receiving the overall assessment of “non rite” is considered failed. A doctoral viva (rigorosum) is considered failed if the average grade is above 3.50 as set forth in § 20 IV PromO. (§ 21 I 1 PromO)
- If the candidate fails to attend the examination or withdraws from the examination, then the examination is considered failed, unless there is **good cause**. Good cause must be notified immediately in writing to the doctoral committee and must be made plausible. In the case of withdrawal or failure to attend due to illness, a medical certificate specifying the expected duration of the disease causing the inability to take the examination

should be produced immediately, unless the illness is obvious. If the reasons are accepted, a new examination date is scheduled. (§ 21 I 2-5 PromO)

Retaking the oral examination

- Upon application of the doctoral candidate, a failed oral examination can be repeated **within a year**. However, this shall be **no earlier than after six months**. A second repetition shall not be permitted. Failed examinations in a comparable doctoral degree programme at other universities shall be added. If the oral examination has been irrevocably failed, the doctoral examination shall also be deemed irrevocably unsuccessful. (§ 21 II PromO)
- An attempt at repetition must be completed **before the same examination board**. The doctoral committee will appoint new examiners as necessary. (§ 21 III PromO)

Permissible examination languages

(Appendix I 3 PromO)

The following examination languages are permitted in the following research areas in addition to German and English. This does not apply to minutes and reviews.

a) French:

Didactics of the French Language and Literature
 Didactics of the Italian Language and Literature
 Didactics of the Spanish Language and Literature
 Classical Archaeology (only written examination)
 Romanic Philology (French Literature Studies)
 Romanic Philology (French Linguistics)
 Romanic Philology (Ibero-Romanic Literature Studies)
 Romanic Philology (Ibero-Romanic Linguistics)
 Romanic Philology (Italian Literature Studies)
 Romanic Philology (Italian Linguistics)
 Romanic Philology (Romanic Literature Studies)
 Romanic Philology (Romanic Linguistics)

b) Italian:

Didactics of the French Language and Literature
 Didactics of the Italian Language and Literature
 Didactics of the Spanish Language and Literature
 Classical Archaeology (only written examination)
 Romanic Philology (French Literature Studies)
 Romanic Philology (French Linguistics)
 Romanic Philology (Ibero-Romanic Literature Studies)
 Romanic Philology (Ibero-Romanic Linguistics)
 Romanic Philology (Italian Literature Studies)
 Romanic Philology (Italian Linguistics)
 Romanic Philology (Romanic Literature Studies)
 Romanic Philology (Romanic Linguistics)

c) Portuguese:

Didactics of the French Language and Literature
 Didactics of the Italian Language and Literature
 Didactics of the Spanish Language and Literature
 Romanic Philology (French Literature Studies)
 Romanic Philology (French Linguistics)
 Romanic Philology (Ibero-Romanic Literature Studies)
 Romanic Philology (Ibero-Romanic Linguistics)
 Romanic Philology (Italian Literature Studies)
 Romanic Philology (Italian Linguistics)
 Romanic Philology (Romanic Literature Studies)
 Romanic Philology (Romanic Linguistics)

d) Spanish:

Didactics of the French Language and Literature
 Didactics of the Italian Language and Literature
 Didactics of the Spanish Language and Literature
 Linguistic Anthropology and Indigenous American Studies
 Romanic Philology (French Literature Studies)
 Romanic Philology (French Linguistics)
 Romanic Philology (Ibero-Romanic Literature Studies)
 Romanic Philology (Ibero-Romanic Linguistics)
 Romanic Philology (Italian Literature Studies)
 Romanic Philology (Italian Linguistics)
 Romanic Philology (Romanic Literature Studies)
 Romanic Philology (Romanic Linguistics)

For more information see „Doing a doctorate at the Faculty of Humanities“ at

<https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/209402.html>

* PromO = Promotionsordnung der Philosophischen Fakultät [Doctoral degree regulations of the Faculty of Humanities]

** BeCog-ProgrammO = Behavior-and-Cognition-Programmordnung [Programme regulations of the doctoral programme *Behavior and Cognition*]