

GAUSS Information on Supervision and Examination

Every doctorate at the University of Göttingen leading to the doctoral degree Dr. rer. nat. or its Anglophone equivalent Ph.D., Division of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, takes place within the framework of one of the GAUSS programs. Information about these programs is available online at www.uni-goettingen.de/en/584578.html.

Students seeking the aforementioned doctoral degree have to apply for admission to the appropriate GAUSS program. They have to be enrolled at the University of Göttingen throughout their entire doctoral project. To enroll, they are required to submit a certificate to the Office of Student Affairs issued by the responsible faculty. The preprinted form is simultaneously used for the admission to the GAUSS program and also serves as the supervision agreement.

On supervision: Every doctoral student is guided by a thesis advisory committee (TAC) consisting of three academics: the main supervisor and one additional examination accredited person, as well as one further academic holding a doctoral degree. Depending on the program, there are additional conditions and achievement-based credit requirements to the doctoral students. Every program requires that the doctoral student reports to the thesis advisory committee at least once a year, with a detailed written and orally presented status of the doctoral project. The thesis advisory committee shall certify the meetings on the proof of performance (checklist) handed to each doctoral student upon admission. The advisory committee reviews the progress of the doctoral work and consults about its completion or continuation. Supervisors and students have to respect the “Rules of good Practice for Doctoral Supervision”, see www.uni-goettingen.de/en/586425.html.

On the doctoral examination: For each doctoral examination procedure, the dean’s office or the examination committee of the relevant program will appoint an examination board of at least six members including a chairperson. At least three members of the examination board, including the reviewers, must hold a general examination accreditation within the program in question. The other board members must similarly be authorized to examine, but may have acquired the examination accreditation for one of the other GAUSS programs. A list of GAUSS members holding examination accreditations is available at www.uni-goettingen.de/en/577092.html including the indication of the respective programs. It is possible to apply for an individual examination accreditation with respect to a single doctoral thesis, for which the corresponding form (www.uni-goettingen.de/en/586429.html) should be submitted to GAUSS via the program head.

The doctoral examination consists of a written doctoral thesis (or dissertation) and an oral examination known as the thesis defense (or disputation). The reviewers of the dissertation may propose the grades of "summa cum laude", "magna cum laude", "cum laude" or "rite". A grade of "summa cum laude" can only be awarded if all reviewers (including an additional third external reviewer) propose this distinction for the dissertation in their written report and the examination board unanimously grades the candidate’s performance in the oral examination as meriting this distinction, see §13 (6) und § 17 (2) RerNat-O. The oral examination usually is scheduled up to six weeks after submission. The defense lasts 60-90 minutes and is open to University members. The first 30 minutes are reserved for a presentation where the doctoral candidate is placing his/her dissertation in a larger scientific context. This is followed by questions, which are initially only permitted by members of the examination board. However, this board or its chairperson ensures that afterwards members of the audience are as well able to ask questions within reasonable limits. Finally, the committee is secluding to decide on an overall grade for the doctoral examination after passing the disputation. On request or depending on the program, the candidate will receive a transcript indicating her/his performance (credits and grades) during the doctoral studies and the doctoral examination.