

Doctoral degree regulations of the Faculty of History, Philosophy, and Theology at Bielefeld University of 31 January 2025

Based on § 2 (4) and § 67 (3) of the Higher Education Act of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia (*Hochschulgesetz*; HG) of 16 September 2014 (GV. NRW. p. 547), last amended by Article 1 of the Act of 29 October 2024 (GV. NRW. p. 704), the Faculty of History, Philosophy, and Theology at Bielefeld University, in accordance with § 1 sentence 3 of the General Regulation of Doctoral Studies of Bielefeld University (*Rahmenpromotionsordnung*; RPO) of 1 June 2023 (Bielefeld University Gazette – Official Announcements – Vol. 52 No. 7 p. 164) issued the following doctoral degree regulations:

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1. Doctoral degree (§ 2 RPO)

(1) The Faculty of History, Philosophy, and Theology at Bielefeld University, hereinafter referred to as the Faculty, awards the academic degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Dr. phil.), alternatively also the academic degree of Doctor of Social Sciences (Dr. rer. pol.), in the subject of Diaconal Studies based on a written thesis (doctoral thesis) and an oral exam (disputation). The desired doctoral degree must be specified by the candidate in coordination with the supervisor and depending on the content and academic methods of the doctoral thesis.

(2) The Faculty may also award the doctoral degree *honoris causa* (Dr. phil. h.c.) or (Dr. rer. pol. h.c.) in recognition of outstanding academic achievements and merit (§ 18 RPO).

2. Purpose and forms of the doctoral procedure (§ 3 RPO)

The doctorate will be awarded in the subjects of History and Art History as part of the international doctoral programme in History or as a doctorate independent of a degree programme. Details on the doctoral programme in History are regulated in the study regulations of the international doctoral programme in History. In the subject of Theology, the doctorate is a doctorate independent of a degree programme. In the subject of Philosophy, doctoral studies are generally performed as part of the structured PhD phase in accordance with item 5 c. In exceptional cases, a doctorate independent of a degree programme is also possible. This is particularly the case if there is evidence that professional reasons do not allow participation, in the case of stays abroad, or in cases of social hardship. The departmental commission of Philosophy makes decisions on exceptions. In the subject of Diaconal Studies, the doctorate is performed within the scope of the doctoral programme in Diaconal Studies or, in exceptional cases, as a doctorate independent of a degree programme. Doctorates independent of degree programmes are particularly suitable for IDWM lecturers and those working on research projects. The doctoral committee in the subject of Diaconal Studies makes the decision on any further exceptions. Details on the doctoral programme in Diaconal Studies can be found in the study regulations for the doctoral programme in Diaconal Studies.

3. Responsibilities (§ 4 RPO)

- (1) The doctoral committee is responsible for the tasks and decisions specified in § 4 (1) RPO, notwithstanding the delegation options in paragraph 3. It will ensure supervision for the duration of the doctorate and mediates and arbitrates in the event of disputes arising during the doctoral procedure. The doctoral committee is also responsible for decisions in accordance with § 10 (9) sentence 4 and sentence 6 RPO and for decisions on appeals by the doctoral student.
- (2) The doctoral committee comprises: the dean, one member from the group of university lecturers of each of the three departments of the Faculty, in which representation from the subject of Diaconal Studies or the subject of Theology must be ensured depending on the doctoral procedure, one authorised examiner from amongst the group of lecturers, one member of the group of technical and administrative employees, and one doctoral student. The members are elected by the Faculty Conference for a term of two years, with the exception of the student member, whose term of office is one year. It is chaired by the dean. The doctoral committee also elects one of its members from the group of university lecturers as deputy chair. Only members of the committee with a doctorate have voting rights in any decisions relating to examination results. The doctoral committee makes its decisions by a simple majority of the voting members present in an open vote; in the event of a tie, the chair or, in their absence, the deputy chair has the casting vote. The doctoral committee has a quorum if more than half of the members, including the chair or deputy chair, and at least one other member of the group of university lecturers are present.
- (3) The doctoral committee may delegate decisions on access to the doctoral procedure and acceptance as a doctoral student, appointment of supervisors, documentation of the number of doctoral students, ensuring of supervision, of the settlement of disputes to the responsible committee of the respective department. The latter may in turn charge its chair with the respective tasks.
- (4) The Faculty Conference elects a doctoral committee for the Department of History. This committee will be responsible for doctorates in the subjects of History and Art History and comprises nine members: five members from the group of university lecturers in the Department of History, two authorised examiners from the group of lecturers in the Department of History and two doctoral students in the subject of History. The members of the Faculty Conference nominate candidates from their respective status group for election to the doctoral committee for a period of two years. The doctoral committee elects the chair from among its members for a period of two years.
- (5) The respective departmental commissions are responsible for doctorates in the subjects of Philosophy and Theology.
- (6) The Faculty Conference elects a doctoral committee for Doctoral Studies in the subject of Diaconal Studies, which comprises four members from the group of university lecturers in the Department of Theology, three of whom are assigned to the Institute of Diaconal Studies and Diaconal Management, as well as two members from the group of lecturers and one member from the group of technical and administrative employees in the Department of Theology, who are assigned to the Institute of Diaconal Studies and Diaconal Management, and one doctoral student in the subject of Diaconal Studies. In addition to this, another university lecturer from a social science discipline who is involved in the doctoral programme is a member of the doctoral committee. The members are elected by the Faculty Conference for a duration of two years. Regarding decisions relating to examination results, only those members of the committee who have a doctoral degree have the right to vote (§ 65 (1) sent. 2 HG). In addition, other advisory guests, for example other lecturers from the doctoral programme in Diaconal Studies, may be invited to the committee meetings.

4 a. Access requirements in the subjects of History and Art History (§ 5 RPO)

(1) A study programme generally is relevant within the meaning of § 5 (1) RPO if it is completed with a degree in the subject of History or Art History. A qualified degree with an overall grade of generally at least "good" is required. The doctoral committee will decide on whether the applicant has the special aptitude and motivation for academic work for the doctoral degree in the subject of History or Art History. If necessary, the decision will be made based on an admission interview.

(2) A qualified degree with an overall grade of at least 1.3 is required in the case of § 5 (1) b) RPO. Academic studies that prepare for the doctorate generally are to be completed as part of relevant Master courses and should generally have a scope of 60 credit points. The doctoral committee decides on the type and scope of pre-doctoral studies in accordance with the circumstances from case to case. The committee's decision will be included in the notice of acceptance as a doctoral student in accordance with § 6 (4), (6) RPO and must be complied with until the doctoral procedure is opened.

(3) The doctoral committee of the Department of History may grant exemption from the requirements of paragraph 1 sentences 1 and 2 and paragraph 2 sentence 1 wholly or in part upon application, if necessary also subject to conditions, if the applicant's previous knowledge indicates that they are likely to successfully complete a doctorate. If the applicant has completed a degree programme other than a relevant study programme within the meaning of paragraph 1 sentence 1, a further prerequisite for access is an endorsement of acceptance in accordance with item 5 by an authorised examiner of the relevant department who has suggested or will supervise the doctoral thesis. The decision must be documented; paragraph 2 sentence 4 applies accordingly. If necessary, the committee will request further documents from the applicant. If necessary, the decision will be made based on an admission interview.

(4) The applicant must provide evidence of knowledge of two foreign languages that enable them to compile and use sources and academic literature in the subject of history at the latest when applying for the doctoral procedure (item 7). These are usually English and another foreign language. The respective language level is determined by the doctoral committee by resolution; the resolution is publicised in an appropriate manner. The decision on deviations from the language requirements is made by the doctoral committee. Knowledge generally must be proven by written academic achievements in the study programme or by examinations already taken.

(5) Access may be granted subject to conditions if the equivalence of foreign degrees is not given after consultation with the Central Office for Foreign Education in accordance with § 5 (5) RPO. The doctoral committee decides on the academic achievements required to establish equivalence.

4 b. Access requirements in the subjects of Philosophy and Theology (§ 5 RPO)

(1) A study programme generally is relevant within the meaning of § 5 (1) RPO if it is completed with a degree in Philosophy or Theology. A qualified degree with an overall grade of generally at least "good" is required. The respective departmental commission will decide whether the applicant's academic aptitude for the doctoral degree in the subject of Philosophy or Theology has been proven.

(2) A qualified degree in the doctoral subject with an overall grade of at least 1.3 is required along with subsequent, adequate studies in the doctoral subject in preparation for the doctorate, generally at a scope of 60 credit points, in the case of § 5 (1) b) RPO. The scope, focus, and performance requirements for the doctoral preparatory studies are determined in detail by the departmental commissions of Philosophy or Theology in consultation with the applicant and the supervisor.

(3) The departmental commissions of the subjects of Philosophy or Theology may grant exemption from the requirements of paragraph 1 sentences 1 and 2 and paragraph 2 sentence 1 wholly or in part upon application if the applicant's previous knowledge indicates that they are likely to successfully complete a doctorate. If the doctoral student has completed a degree programme other than a relevant study programme within the meaning of paragraph 1 sentence 1, a further prerequisite for access is an endorsement of acceptance or admission in accordance with item 5 by an authorised examiner of the relevant department who has suggested or will supervise the doctoral thesis. The decision must be documented; item 4 a (2) sent. 4 applies accordingly.

(4) Access may be granted subject to conditions if applicable if the equivalence of foreign degrees is not given after consultation with the Central Office for Foreign Education in accordance with § 5 (5) RPO. The departmental commission decides on the services required to establish equivalence.

(5) The applicant must provide evidence of knowledge of generally two foreign languages that enable them to comprehend and use sources and academic literature in the subjects of Philosophy or Theology at the latest with the application for the opening of the doctoral procedure (item 7). These are usually English and another foreign language. If English is one of the foreign languages in the subject of Theology, proof of English proficiency at B2 level must be provided with the application for acceptance; proof of English proficiency at C1 level must be provided at the latest when applying for the opening of the doctoral procedure. This applies accordingly if German is one of the foreign languages. If

a foreign language other than German or English is required for the doctoral project, the required language level will be determined by the departmental commission; the decision will be publicised in an appropriate manner. The respective departmental commission decides on exceptions. Knowledge generally must be proven by written academic achievements in the study programme or by examinations already taken. Item 18 c (1) sentence 2 is not affected by this.

(6) If not all access requirements in accordance with paragraphs 1 to 5 have been met, access may be granted on condition that the relevant evidence is submitted with the application to open the examination procedure.

4 c. Access requirements for the subject of Diaconal Studies (§ 5 RPO)

(1) A study programme generally is relevant within the meaning of § 5 (1) RPO if it is completed with a degree in Diaconal Management or in another degree programme that qualifies for diaconal management (e.g., health sciences, medicine, educational science, law, social sciences, theology, economics) at a university with 300 credit points in accordance with the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). A qualified degree with an overall grade of generally at least "good" is required. The doctoral committee will decide on whether the applicant's suitability for a doctorate in the subject of Diaconal Studies has been proven.

(2) A qualified degree in one of the degree programmes mentioned in paragraph 1 with an overall grade of at least "very good" is required along with subsequent, adequate studies in the doctoral subject in preparation for the doctorate, generally at a scope of 60 credit points, in the case of § 5 (1) b) RPO. The scope, focus, and performance requirements for the doctoral preparatory studies are determined in detail by the doctoral committee in consultation with the doctoral student and the supervisor.

(3) Further access requirements for the doctoral programme in Diaconal Studies can be found in the study regulations for the doctoral programme in Diaconal Studies at the Faculty of History, Philosophy, and Theology at Bielefeld University as amended from time to time.

(4) The doctoral committee may grant exemption from the requirements of paragraph 1 sentences 1 and 2 and paragraph 2 sentence 1 wholly or in part upon application if the applicant's previous knowledge indicates that they are likely to successfully complete a doctorate. Item 4 a (2) sentence 4 applies accordingly.

(5) Proof of knowledge of German at B2 level and knowledge of English at B2 level in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages must be provided upon acceptance as a doctoral student. Bielefeld University's guidelines on language proficiency in German and English, as amended, specifies which certificates can be accepted. Knowledge of the examination language (German or English) at C1 level in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages must be demonstrated at the latest by the time the doctoral procedure commences. The doctoral committee will make the decision on exceptions.

(6) In the case of foreign degrees, the doctoral committee decides on equivalence, under consideration of the equivalence agreements approved by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder and the German University Rectors' Conference; if there are any doubts about equivalence, the Central Office for Foreign Education may be consulted. Access may be granted subject to conditions if no equivalence is present. The doctoral committee decides on the academic achievements required to establish equivalence.

5 a. Acceptance as a doctoral student in the subjects of History and Art History (§ 6 RPO)

(1) The application for acceptance as a doctoral student, which must be submitted to the dean electronically, must be accompanied by the requirements specified in § 6 (3) RPO:

- a) an exposé of the doctoral project (max. 4,000 words including bibliography),
- b) naming of two references (name, function, and postal and email addresses), and
- c) if applicable, details of previously published academic work.

(2) The doctoral committee may request a revision of the exposé, stating the reasons. The exposé must reflect the academic quality and feasibility of the doctoral project and give the impression that the applicant will be able to successfully complete their doctorate. The committee makes a final decision on acceptance upon resubmission.

(3) Acceptance as a doctoral student is limited to five years. It may be extended by the competent body in accordance with item 3 upon justified request by the doctoral student. The supervisor(s) will provide a statement on the status of the doctoral thesis at the request of the responsible body. The acceptance decision may also include the scope of the pre-doctoral studies.

**5 b. Acceptance as a doctoral student
in the subjects of Philosophy and Theology
(§ 6 RPO)**

- (1) The application for acceptance as a doctoral student must be accompanied by the documents listed in § 6 (3) RPO:
- a) documentation of the previous degree programme(s) and copies of the university degrees obtained,
 - b) an exposé of the doctoral project (max. 4000 words including bibliography),
 - c) naming of two references (name, function, and postal and email addresses for each).

(2) The responsible departmental commission may request a revision of the exposé, stating the reasons. The exposé must reflect the academic quality and feasibility of the doctoral project and give the impression that the applicant will be able to successfully complete their doctorate. The committee makes a final decision on acceptance upon resubmission.

(3) Item 5 a (3) applies accordingly.

**5 c. Admission to the structured PhD phase in the
subject of Philosophy (§ 6 RPO)**

(1) The doctorate will usually take place within the scope of a structured PhD phase (cf. item 2) in the subject of Philosophy. The content and scope of the structured PhD phase do not correspond to a doctoral programme. Doctoral students are offered research-orientated studies and the opportunity to acquire key qualifications in the structured PhD phase. The departmental commission of Philosophy will decide on admission to the structured PhD phase based on the application. Candidates will be selected based on their particular aptitude and motivation for academic work.

(2) For the application for admission to the structured PhD phase, item 5 b (1) and (2) apply accordingly.

- (3) The following academic achievements in particular are required within the scope of the structured doctoral phase:
- a) regular participation in and presentation of the doctoral project twice in a relevant research colloquium, usually by the supervisor in the second and third year after admission. This research colloquium can also be a relevant workshop seminar of the Master course;
 - b) further academic activities and acquisition of key qualifications by
 - participation in courses from the area of key qualifications of the international doctoral programme in History or other relevant university didactic courses,
 - research activities such as organising and/or contributing to workshops and symposia or publications,
 - participation in the teaching of courses.

The academic achievements to be submitted are determined by the competent departmental commission in consultation with the candidate and the supervisor, under consideration of the individual training programme and the topic of the doctoral thesis. They should be included in the supervision agreement and must be proven at the start of the doctoral procedure.

(4) Item 5 a (3) applies accordingly.

**5 d. Acceptance as a doctoral student in the subject of Diaconal Studies
(§ 6 RPO) and access to the doctoral programme in Diaconal Studies**

Students who meet the access requirements in accordance with item 4 c must apply to the doctoral committee in the subject of Diaconal Studies to be accepted as doctoral students. If a corresponding application is submitted, the committee will also decide on access to the doctoral programme in accordance with § 5 of the study regulations for the doctoral programme in Diaconal Studies. The documents specified in § 5 (5) of the study regulations must be submitted in addition to the documents specified in § 6 (3) RPO in this case. The supervisor must be named and the supervision agreement concluded by the end of the first semester of the degree programme or by the end of the first semester after acceptance as a doctoral student.

Item 5 a (3) applies accordingly.

6. Supervision (§ 7 RPO)

(1) The doctoral committee appoints at least one supervisor with primary responsibility when accepting a doctoral student. The doctoral student has the right to make a proposal. The supervisor generally is a member of the group of university lecturers with voting rights or a Privatdozent [senior lecturer] of the Faculty with voting rights. The supervisor may be a member of the group of the Faculty's lecturers who hold a doctorate in justified cases. The doctoral committee makes decisions on exceptions and justified cases. At least one of the supervisors must be a university lecturer with voting rights or a Privatdozent [senior lecturer] of the Faculty with voting rights if more than one supervisor is appointed. In the case of interdisciplinary or cross-faculty theses or cooperative doctoral projects, a supervisor from another faculty, university, or research institution should be appointed. In the scope of a cooperative doctoral project with a university of applied sciences,

the supervisor appointed by the University of Applied Sciences must have a habilitation or equivalent academic achievements. This must be formally determined by the Faculty. This determination will be valid for five years in each case.

(2) The rights and obligations in connection with supervision in reference to university lecturers in accordance with these rules apply accordingly to all persons authorised to supervise in accordance with paragraph 1.

(3) A supervision agreement that corresponds to the model of the respective department is concluded between the doctoral student and the supervisor. The supervision relationship established by the supervision agreement can only be terminated by the supervisor for cause.

7. Opening of the doctoral procedure (§ 8 RPO)

(1) The doctoral procedure is initiated by a decision of the doctoral committee at the request of the doctoral student. The application must be addressed to the chair of the doctoral committee.

(2) The application to open the doctoral procedure must be accompanied by the following documents:

- a) notice of acceptance as a doctoral student;
- b) if applicable, proof of fulfilment of the pre-doctoral studies or other requirements and, if applicable, proof of a proper study programme in a doctoral programme;
- c) a curriculum vitae;
- d) details of previously published academic papers and academic presentations, if applicable;
- e) at least one copy of the doctoral thesis as well as an electronic version (pdf), which can also be used for the purpose of excluding plagiarism; in the case of a cumulative doctoral thesis, also the detailed presentation in accordance with item 9 (4) sentence 3;
- f) the names, academic degrees, and addresses of the persons involved in the case of group work, a joint report by the authors on progress of the collaboration, in particular on the doctoral student's contribution to the joint work and on whether the other participants in the group work have applied for or completed a doctoral procedure and used parts of the submitted paper for their own doctoral procedure. Proof of methodological and factual appropriateness must be provided in the case of group work in accordance with § 9 (3) of these rules.
- g) a declaration stating
 - that the doctoral student is familiar with the applicable doctoral degree regulations of the Faculty,
 - that the doctoral student has prepared the doctoral thesis personally (declaration of independence), has not taken over any text sections from third parties or their own examination papers without marking them as such, and has indicated all tools and sources used by them in their work (the doctoral committee reserves the right to request this declaration in the form of an affidavit in accordance with § 63 (5) HG),
 - that no third party has received any monetary benefits from the doctoral student, directly or indirectly, for services of an intermediary nature, or for any work associated with the content of the submitted doctoral thesis,
 - that the doctoral student has not yet submitted the doctoral thesis for examination for a public or other academic examination, and
 - whether the doctoral student has submitted the same paper, a paper similar in essential parts, or another paper as a doctoral thesis to another university and, if applicable, with which results.
- h) suggestions for the appointment of reviewers for the doctoral thesis;
- i) for any previous doctoral procedures, a declaration of the place, time, and Faculty as well as the topic of the doctoral thesis;
- j) proof of the access requirements for the doctorate (proof of university admission, proof of university degrees);
- k) if applicable, a declaration that the doctoral student objects to the admission of members of the audience to the oral exam. This declaration can be submitted or withdrawn up to one week before the oral exam;
- l) proof of foreign language skills in accordance with item 4 a (4), or 4 b (5), or 4 c (5);
- m) indication of the doctoral degree sought in the of subject Diaconal Studies.

(3) The doctoral committee will examine the application and the documents for completeness and decide on the opening of the doctoral procedure and the composition of the examination committee. If the requirements for opening of the procedure are not met, it will reject the application after hearing the doctoral student. Grounds for the rejection must be stated and a notice of rejection must be issued with instruction on the legal right to appeal.

(4) The doctoral procedure permits use of the statutory maternity protection periods, parental leave periods and care periods in accordance with the Caregiver Leave Act (*Pflegezeitgesetz*).

8. Examination committee (§ 9 RPO)

(1) The examination committee will usually comprise the reviewers of the doctoral thesis and one further examiner for the oral exam. The doctoral committee will appoint the members of the respective examination committee for the individual doctoral procedure after consultation with the representatives of the doctoral subject. The doctoral student's proposals should be considered when appointing the reviewers; the doctoral committee may deviate from the proposals with justification. If a member of the group of

university lecturers or a Privatdozent [senior lecturer] with voting rights in the Faculty has suggested and / or supervised the doctoral thesis, they can be appointed as a reviewer. The doctoral committee will take precautions to ensure the independence of the reviewer regarding the second opinion. One reviewer generally is a member of the group of university lecturers with voting rights or a Privatdozent [senior lecturer] of the Faculty with voting rights. The second reviewer usually is a member of the group of university lecturers or a habilitated member of the Faculty; in exceptional cases, an academic employee of the Faculty with a doctorate may also be appointed as the second reviewer in accordance with paragraph 2. Item 9 (4) sentence 4 e) must be observed in the case of a cumulative doctoral thesis. A reviewer from another faculty and, if applicable, another university or research institution may be involved; the doctoral committee decides whether such a case exists in suitable cases. If a person appointed within the scope of a cooperative doctoral project with a university of applied sciences is to be appointed as a reviewer, item 6 (1) sentences 8 – 10 will apply accordingly. The appointment of the first reviewer and the second reviewer by the doctoral committee requires their consent; consent can only be refused for important reasons to be specified. The doctoral committee also appoints a chair from among the members of the examination committee, who must be a member of the group of university lecturers of the Faculty of History, Philosophy, and Theology with voting rights. The supervisor and the reviewers of the doctoral thesis must not be the chair of the examination committee.

(2) The members of the examination committee must be university lecturers or habilitated; in exceptional cases, one member may also be a research assistant with a doctorate. This decision will be made by the doctoral committee. At least two members of the examination committee must be university lecturers. The members of the Faculty must have a majority on the examination committee.

(3) If a supervisor or reviewer moves to a position at another university or research institution during the course of the doctoral project, they may continue to supervise and review the thesis and be a voting member of the examination committee. This applies accordingly to emeritus or retired professors in the course of the doctoral procedure.

(4) The examination committee meets in a closed session. Its decisions are to be documented in a record. The examination committee will decide in an open vote by a simple majority; if the vote ends in a tie, the chair has the casting vote. Abstentions are not permitted.

(5) In the subject of Diaconal Studies, the examination committee comprises the members of the group of university lecturers of the doctoral committee and the reviewers. The doctoral committee may request a vote by a supervisor who is not a member of the examination committee in addition to the two reviewers when opening the doctoral procedure for interdisciplinary theses in the subject of Diaconal Studies at the suggestion of the examination committee.

(6) The doctoral student may lodge an appeal against decisions of the examination committee and the doctoral committee in accordance with § 3 (1).

9. Doctoral thesis (§ 10 RPO)

(1) This doctoral exam result comprises an independent and methodologically flawless academic paper written in an appropriate presentation, through which the doctoral student makes their own contribution to research, which expands the boundaries of knowledge and stands up to peer review (doctoral thesis). The subject and method of the doctoral thesis must be related to one of the subjects represented at the Faculty.

(2) The doctoral thesis is a monographic, usually unpublished work. The doctoral thesis can also be submitted as a cumulative thesis for the subject of Philosophy; details on this are regulated in paragraph 4. A monographic doctoral thesis may include previously published academic papers by the doctoral student, provided that there is a thematic connection and a uniform research question in exceptional cases. The exceptions are regulated by the doctoral committee for the subjects of History and Art History, by the respective departmental commission for the subjects of Philosophy and Theology, and by the doctoral committee for the subject of Diaconal Studies.

(3) A substantial contribution to a group thesis may be recognised as a doctoral thesis in suitable cases. Proof of methodological and factual appropriateness must be provided when submitting the group work. The individual academic achievements must be clearly distinguishable and capable of evaluation and must meet the requirements of an independent examination result in terms of scope and quality for evaluation.

(4) A cumulative doctoral thesis in the subject of Philosophy requires that the main supervisor has agreed to this format and that this type of doctoral thesis is recorded in the supervision agreement. Academic research articles are submitted as a written doctoral exam result that have been developed under a common philosophical research question and which, taken together, have the academic rank of an individual thesis in this case. Detailed presentation to be submitted with the articles must elaborate on the philosophical research question common to the articles and categorise the research question and the most important results obtained in the course of this work within the academic debate on the topic. The following applies beyond this:

- a) The cumulative doctoral thesis comprises at least three research articles.
- b) All three research articles must be ready for publication and submitted to internationally recognised, technically relevant

academic journals or collections for publication. At least one of the submitted articles must have appeared in an internationally recognised, relevant, and peer-reviewed journal or have been accepted for publication in writing. Articles that have not yet been accepted for publication require a certificate from the main supervisor, certifying that the article is ready for publication to be submitted. The departmental commission for philosophy will make the decision on whether a journal or collection meets the formulated requirements.

- c) In the doctoral procedure, the submitted articles are evaluated independently of any peer review procedure that has already taken place and the place or places of publication.
- d) The published article or the article accepted for publication and one of the other two submitted research articles must be written by a single author. A third article must be written as the first or single author.
- e) In the case of co-authored articles, the doctoral student must also submit written confirmations from the co-authors that precisely identify the shares of all authors, agree to the use of the articles in the cumulative doctoral thesis and confirm that no copyrights are infringed by the publication of the doctoral thesis. Co-authors of submitted articles are not eligible as reviewers for the cumulative doctoral thesis.
- f) Exceptions to the requirements phrased are only possible in well-founded individual cases. The departmental commission for Philosophy will decide on these exceptions based on a written justification from the main supervisor prior to submission of the thesis. At least three articles ready for publication must be submitted. It is also not possible to deviate from the requirement that one of these articles must have appeared in an internationally recognised, relevant, and peer-reviewed journal or have been accepted for publication in writing.

(5) The doctoral thesis usually must be written in German; in the subjects of History and Art History, the doctoral thesis may be written in English or French; in the subjects of Philosophy and Theology, the doctoral thesis may be written in English; in the subject of Diaconal Studies, the doctoral thesis may be written in German or English; any other languages of the world will require advance approval by the doctoral committee in the subjects of History and Art History, the departmental commission for philosophy for doctoral studies in the subject of Philosophy, the departmental commission for theology for doctoral studies in the subject of Theology, and the doctoral committee in the subject of Diaconal Studies.

(6) The reviewers each independently prepare a written opinion on the doctoral thesis and recommend the acceptance, rejection, or return of the doctoral thesis for revision. The deadline for submitting the opinions is two months.

(7) If the reviewers recommend acceptance of the doctoral thesis, they will evaluate it with a distinction. Possible distinctions are:

- a. magna cum laude (very good),
- b. cum laude (good),
- c. rite (sufficient).

The distinction "summa cum laude (outstanding)" may be awarded for exceptional academic achievements. A thesis that is rejected will be evaluated as "non rite (failed)". The doctoral committee issues grading rules.

(8) If the reviewers have unanimously proposed that the doctoral thesis be returned for revision, the doctoral student has the opportunity to resubmit the revised doctoral thesis once within a period of six months. There will not be any prior display. The doctoral procedure will be suspended until this revised version is submitted on time. The doctoral thesis is deemed to have been rejected if the doctoral student fails to meet the deadline without cause. Paragraph 15 applies in this case.

(9) If the reviewers have unanimously proposed acceptance of the doctoral thesis, it is thereby accepted, provided that no objection has been lodged in accordance with paragraph 12 sentence 5. If the reviewers have unanimously proposed refusal of the doctoral thesis, it is thereby refused, provided that no objection has been lodged in accordance with paragraph 12 sentence 5. There will be no oral exam in this case; paragraph 15 applies.

(10) If the opinions differ with regard to their recommendation for acceptance or rejection or revision of the doctoral thesis, or if they differ by two or more grade levels in the case of acceptance, the doctoral committee will appoint a further reviewer, who is generally not a member of Bielefeld University, after hearing the doctoral student. The doctoral student's proposal can be considered when making the appointment. An additional opinion is also required if both reviewers have unanimously proposed the distinction "summa cum laude". If an external expert opinion is already available, a member of the Faculty may also be appointed in accordance with item 8 (1). The further reviewer becomes a voting member of the examination committee.

(11) An additional opinion is not required if the opinions differ by only one grade level in their recommendation for acceptance.

(12) Once all the required opinions have been submitted, the doctoral committee will make them available to the doctoral student. They may comment on this within 14 days or waive their right to submit a statement by sending an electronic message to the doctoral committee. Subsequently, the doctoral thesis, or in the case of paragraph 8 the revised version of the doctoral thesis, and all opinions and, if applicable, the statement of the doctoral student will be displayed

for two weeks in accordance with sentence 2. It can be displayed digitally. Any authorised examiner of the Faculty authorised to conduct examinations may lodge an objection to the proposal to accept, reject, or the evaluation of the doctoral thesis in writing or electronically within three weeks of the start of the display period; the objection must be substantiated. All documents displayed are to be treated confidentially by all persons receiving them.

(13) If an objection is filed in accordance with paragraph 12 sentence 5, the doctoral committee will decide whether an additional reviewer is to be appointed in accordance with item 8 (1). If an additional reviewer is appointed, the procedure is in accordance with paragraph 10.

(14) In the cases of paragraphs 10, 11, or 13, the examination committee will also decide on the distinction of the doctoral thesis in accordance with the procedure specified in item 8 (4). The distinction "summa cum laude" can only be awarded if all reviewers have proposed this grade. The doctoral student will be informed of the decision within two weeks.

(15) If the examination committee rejects the doctoral thesis, the doctorate is definitively failed.

10. Oral exam result (§ 11 RPO)

(1) The oral exam in the subjects of History and Art History, Philosophy, and Theology as well as Diaconal Studies takes the form of a disputation and is conducted by the examination committee. The oral exam may be conducted with the aid of audiovisual transmission technology authorised by the rectorate in justified cases and in agreement with the chair of the examination committee. This option refers to the digital participation of individual members of the examination committee; the chair and the doctoral student are usually present in person. Further details are stipulated in § 11 (2) sentences 2 and 3 RPO.

(2) The oral exam generally takes place no earlier than one week and at the latest eight weeks after the end of the submission period for the doctoral thesis, the opinions, and, if applicable, the statement of the doctoral student in accordance with § 9 (12). The oral exam is to demonstrate the doctoral student's ability to discuss academic problems competently and independently. The doctoral student must be consulted when the dates are set.

(3) The oral exam usually takes 90 minutes. Each doctoral student is examined individually; doctoral students who have written a group thesis can be examined in a joint session. The duration of the examination is then extended accordingly. The doctoral student may submit a presentation of the most important results of their work. This presentation may take up to 15 minutes. The chair may involve the audience in the last quarter of the disputation in Diaconal Studies.

(4) The dean may participate in the oral exam in an advisory capacity. The dean may authorise a university lecturer to perform their obligations on their behalf.

(5) A record of the essential aspects and results of the oral exam is to be kept. The person drafting the record should hold a doctorate and work at Bielefeld University. The record must be signed by the members of the examination committee and the recording person. The record may also be drafted by a member of the examination committee.

(6) The examination committee decides by a simple majority in an open vote whether the oral exam has been passed or failed following the oral exam.

(7) If the doctoral student fails to attend the oral exam without sufficient excuse, the examination is deemed to have been failed.

(8) If the oral exam is failed, it can be repeated once as part of the examination procedure. The repeat attempt usually takes place at the earliest two months and at the latest twelve months after the failed oral exam. If this deadline is exceeded, the doctorate is deemed to have failed, unless the deadline is exceeded due to circumstances for which the doctoral student is not responsible.

11. Overall grade of the doctorate (§ 12 RPO)

(1) The examination committee evaluates the result of a passed oral exam with one of the following grades:
a. magna cum laude (very good),
b. cum laude (good),
c. rite (sufficient).

The distinction "summa cum laude (outstanding)" may be awarded for exceptional academic achievements.

(2) The examination committee will decide on the distinction of the doctoral thesis in accordance with § 8 (4) after the oral exam has been passed, as far as this has not yet been determined in accordance with § 9 (14), and on the overall distinction of the doctoral exam results with one of the following evaluations:

a) magna cum laude (very good),

- b) cum laude (good),
- c) rite (sufficient).

The overall distinction results from the distinctions of the doctoral thesis and the oral exam. The doctoral thesis will be weighted more than the oral exam result. The overall evaluation of the doctoral exam results may only deviate from the evaluation of the doctoral thesis if the result of the oral exam differs from that of the doctoral thesis by at least two grades. The overall distinction "summa cum laude (outstanding)" may be awarded for generally exceptional academic achievements. The chair of the examination committee will inform the doctoral student of the overall grade and the reasons for it immediately after the decision is made.

12. Completion of the doctorate and certificate (§ 13 RPO)

(1) The dean will issue the doctoral student with a provisional certificate of passing the examination within one week of the examination committee's decision. This certificate includes the title and evaluation of the doctoral thesis, the assessment of the oral exam result, as well as the overall grade. The doctoral student is informed in an accompanying letter that they are not permitted to use the academic degree of a doctor or a similar designation until the doctoral degree certificate with the doctoral examination certificate has been issued.

(2) The dean will award the doctorate by handing out the doctoral degree certificate and doctoral examination certificate. This doctoral degree certificate contains the doctoral degree received. The enclosed doctoral examination certificate includes the title of the doctoral thesis, its evaluation, and the evaluation of the oral exam as well as the overall grade of the doctorate. The date of the oral exam will be given as the date of the doctorate. The doctoral degree certificate and doctoral examination certificate are to be signed by the dean and applied with the Faculty's seal. The final documents contain a reference to this cooperation in accordance with the requirements of the partner institution; the Faculty must remain clearly recognisable as the institution holding the right to award doctorates in the case of cooperation with a non-university research institution. Both graduation documents are to be issued in English upon request.

13. Publication of the doctoral thesis (§ 14 RPO)

(1) The doctoral student is obligated to make the doctoral thesis available to the academic public in an adequate manner by means of reproduction and dissemination by submitting mandatory copies to the Faculty in accordance with paragraph 2 in a version approved by the reviewers. These obligations represent a unit within the meaning of an academic achievement. If any special conditions for publication have been imposed in the opinions, the reviewers are obligated to take special care to verify implementation of the conditions; before publication, the chair of the examination committee must approve compliance with the conditions based on the review by the reviewers.

(2) The doctoral thesis is made available to the academic public in an adequate manner if, in addition to the one, or in Diaconal Studies three, copies required for the Faculty, the author delivers two copies of the version disseminated by a) to d) for archiving, which must be printed on age-resistant wood- and acid-free paper and bound in a durable manner, to the university library free of charge and also ensures its dissemination by either

- a) delivery of a further 4 copies, each in book or photo print, or
- b) proof of publication in a journal, or
- c) proof of distribution in book trade by a commercial publisher via a print process with a first print run or by using a print-on-demand process with guaranteed availability for at least five years, or via an electronic version (e-book) or
- d) submission of an electronic version, the data format and data carrier of which must be agreed with the university library of Bielefeld University.

The obligation to publish will be deemed to have been met in the cases b) and c) if the copy (copies) of the doctoral thesis required for the Faculty in accordance with sentence 1 have been submitted and a contract with an editor or publisher has been concluded stating that the doctoral thesis will be published. In cases a) and d), the doctoral student will transfer the right to produce and distribute further copies of their doctoral thesis or to make it available in data networks within the scope of the statutory tasks of the university libraries.

(3) The doctoral student must submit three copies of the published doctoral thesis to the Faculty free of charge.

(4) The voucher and compulsory copies must be submitted to the Faculty within two years of passing the oral exam. The delivery period may be extended for one year at a time, but no longer than five years in total in justified cases. The dean will, on the recommendation of the doctoral committee, determine the cancellation of all rights acquired through the examination if this deadline is not met. The doctoral committee will decide on an appeal by the doctoral student in accordance with § 3 (1).

14. Fraud and withdrawal of the doctorate (§ 15 RPO)

- not applicable -

15. Inspection (§ 16 RPO)

The doctoral student has the right to inspect the examination file within one year of notification of the result.

16. Appeal against decisions in the doctoral procedure (§ 17 RPO)

- not applicable -

17. Honorary doctorate (§ 18 RPO)

(1) The Faculty may award the degree of Doctor of Philosophy honoris causa (Dr. phil. h.c.) or Doctor of Social Sciences honoris causa (Dr. rer. pol. h.c.) for outstanding academic merit or achievement.

(2) The Faculty Conference will decide on the awarding of the doctoral degree honoris causa upon application by at least two members of the Faculty Conference who hold a doctorate by a three-quarters majority of all voting members of this body who hold a doctorate.

(3) The honorary doctorate is awarded by presenting a certificate prepared for this purpose and signed by the Dean, in which the academic achievements of the recipient of the doctorate are honoured.

18 a. Joint doctorate with other universities (§ 19 RPO)

(1) The Faculty of History, Philosophy, and Theology awards the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Dr. phil.) or Doctor of Social Sciences (Dr. rer. pol.) also in cooperation with a domestic or foreign partner university or partner faculty. It also participates in awarding of a corresponding academic degree by the partner university or partner faculty.

(2) Proof of the academic qualification required for the doctorate must be rendered by the doctoral student in the form of the examination results. These comprise an academically significant written thesis (doctoral thesis) and an oral exam (disputation).

18 b. Corresponding application

The provisions of the RPO and of items 2 to 16 will apply to the doctoral procedure in accordance with item 18 a (1) sentence 1, unless otherwise specified below. The provisions contained in the agreement will apply to participation in accordance with item 18a (1) sentence 2.

18 c. Access to the doctoral procedure

(1) Items 4 a and 4 b apply with the proviso that the doctoral student must provide evidence of a degree entitling them to a doctorate from a university in the country in which one of the two partner universities or partner faculties is located. Items 4 a (4) and 4 b (5) apply with the proviso that the doctoral student must provide evidence of knowledge of two foreign languages, including the foreign language specified in the agreement.

(2) Items 5 a to 5 c apply with the proviso that the application must be accompanied by additional documents:

- a) a declaration from the partner university or faculty that access to the doctoral procedure is approved;
- b) a declaration by a member of the partner university or partner faculty that they are willing to supervise the doctoral thesis.

18 d. Doctoral thesis

The doctoral thesis and its summary must be written in the language specified in the partnership agreement.

18 e. Supervision and enrolment

(1) The supervisor of the doctoral thesis is a member of the Faculty and of the partner university or partner faculty who is an authorised examiner.

(2) The doctoral student must be enrolled as a regular student or doctoral student at the partner university or partner faculty for at least one semester while working on their doctoral thesis. This does not affect the obligation to enrol at Bielefeld University in accordance with § 2 (4) of the Bielefeld University Enrolment Rules (*Einschreibungsordnung*).

18 f. Reviewers

(1) The doctoral thesis will be reviewed by one reviewer appointed by the partner institution and one reviewer appointed by the Faculty, who is usually a member of the Faculty.

(2) The doctoral committee generally appoints the supervisors as reviewers of the doctoral thesis, unless otherwise stipulated in the agreement.

(3) The language of the opinions is subject to the provisions of the partnership agreement.

18 g. Oral exam

(1) Item 10 applies accordingly to the oral exam, unless otherwise stipulated in the partnership agreement.

(2) The language of the oral exam is governed by the provisions of the partnership agreement.

18 h. Examination committee

The examination committee comprises at least four examiners in accordance with the partnership agreement. Two examiners should be authorised examiners of the Faculty and two should be authorised examiners of the partner university or partner faculty. Each faculty must be represented by at least one examiner. The partnership agreement also contains regulations on the position of the chair of the examination committee and the voting rights of its members.

18 i. Completion of the doctoral procedure

(1) § 13 RPO applies to completion of the doctoral procedure, with the proviso that the cross-border doctoral procedure must be referred to in the doctoral degree certificate and in the doctoral examination certificate.

(2) The certificate contains the award of a single doctoral degree, which may be used in the form awarded by the partner university or partner faculty or in the form awarded by the Faculty of History, Philosophy, and Theology. Notarisation can take place either a) in one joint document signed and sealed by the dean of the Faculty and the responsible representative of the partner university or partner faculty or b) in two documents in the respective national languages. The Faculty's dean signs and seals the German part. The candidate is informed in an accompanying letter that they must only use the title either in German or in the language specified in the partnership agreement in accordance with item 18a. The partner university or partner faculty prepares its part of the doctoral degree certificate in accordance with its own regulations and, if necessary, arranges for the state certification of the jointly supervised doctorate.

19. Withdrawal from the oral exam; disadvantage compensation

The regulations on withdrawal and the regulations on disadvantage compensation in the Examination Regulations Framework of Bielefeld University of 18 December 2020 (Bielefeld University Gazette – Official Announcements – Year 49 No. 16 p. 256) as amended apply accordingly to the withdrawal from the oral exam and the application of any disadvantage compensation.

20. Scope of application and transitional provisions

(1) These Doctoral degree regulations, hereinafter referred to as the Doctoral Degree Regulations 2025, apply to all candidates who have applied for acceptance as a doctoral student at the Faculty of History, Philosophy, and Theology after the entering into effect of these rules in accordance with item 21.

(2) Doctoral students who have applied for acceptance as a doctoral student at the Faculty of History, Philosophy, and Theology before the Doctoral Degree Regulations 2025 enter into effect will complete their doctoral procedure in accordance with the doctoral degree regulations applicable to them, notwithstanding the following paragraphs. They can switch to the Doctoral Degree Regulations 2025 as long as they have not yet submitted an application to open their doctoral procedures; the application is irrevocable upon application.

(3) Doctoral students who have been accepted or admitted as doctoral students in accordance with the doctoral degree regulations of the Faculty of History, Philosophy, and Theology of 15 July 2002, 1 February 2007, 1 September 2008, or 10 January 2012 and have not yet completed their procedure can still submit an application to open their doctoral procedure in accordance with the doctoral degree regulations applicable to them until 30 September 2025 and complete their procedure accordingly; otherwise they will automatically switch to the doctoral degree regulations 2025. Doctoral students who have been accepted as a doctoral student in accordance with the doctoral degree regulations of the Faculty of History, Philosophy, and Theology of 10 January 2017 or 15 December 2021 and have not yet completed their procedure can still submit an application to open their doctoral procedure until 30 September 2028 and complete their procedure accordingly; otherwise, they will automatically switch to the doctoral degree regulations 2025.

(4) Doctoral students in the subject of Diaconal Studies who have already completed their viva voce in accordance with item 10 paragraphs 9 to 11 by the time the Doctoral Degree Regulations 2025 enter into effect may still request opening of the doctoral procedure in accordance with the provisions of the Doctoral Degree Regulations of 15 December 2021, as amended by the regulation on the amendment of 30 June 2023, until 30 September 2028 to complete the procedure under those doctoral degree regulations. After the date named, they must submit an application to open their doctoral procedure and complete it in accordance with these doctoral regulations; after this date, they will automatically be transferred to the Doctoral Degree Regulations 2025. Doctoral students in the subject of Diaconal Studies who have not yet completed their viva voce examination by the time the Doctoral Degree Regulations 2025 enter into effect will automatically switch to the Doctoral Degree Regulations 2025 and end their doctoral procedure accordingly.

21. Entering into effect and publication

These doctoral degree regulations enter into effect on the day after their announcement in the Bielefeld University Gazette – Official Announcements. The doctoral degree regulations of the Faculty of History, Philosophy, and Theology of 15 December 2021 (Bielefeld University Gazette – Official Announcements – Vol. 50 No. 12 p. 231), as amended by the amendment of 30 June 2023 (Bielefeld University Gazette – Official Announcements Vol. 52 No. 8 p. 180), lose their effect at the same time, notwithstanding the provisions in item 20 of the Doctoral Degree Regulations 2025.

No complaints

Claims from violation of any procedural or formal rules of the HG NRW or the university's regulatory or other autonomous law by these rules can only be asserted within one year of their publication, except if

- a. the rules have not been duly published,
- b. the rectorate has previously objected to the decision of the body adopting the rules,
- c. the university has been notified of the formal or procedural defect in advance and the violated legal provision and the fact giving rise to the defect have been designated in the course of this, or
- d. the legal consequence of the exclusion of complaint was not referred to in the public announcement of the rules.

The supervisory authorisations under § 76 HG will not be affected by this.

Issued based on the resolution of the Faculty Conference of the Faculty of History, Philosophy, and Theology of 27 November 2024.

Bielefeld, 31 January 2025

The rector
of Bielefeld University, University
Professor Dr Angelika Eppler