

Doctoral Degree Regulations of the Faculty of Educational Science at Bielefeld University of 1 April 2026

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 2 of the Act of 19 December 2024 (GV. NRW. p. 1222), the Faculty of Educational Science at Bielefeld University has enacted the following doctoral degree regulations 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 – year 52 No. 7 p. 164):

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§ 1

Scope of application (§ 1 RPO)

These doctoral degree regulations apply to all doctoral procedures conducted at the Faculty of Educational Science at Bielefeld University and in cooperation with other universities. They supplement the general provisions of the general regulation of doctoral studies of Bielefeld University for conducting of doctoral procedures with subject-specific content and requirements. In addition to this, the doctoral degree regulations ensure the implementation of doctoral procedures that encompass cross-faculty research topics.

§ 2

Right to award doctorates and doctoral degrees (§ 2 RPO)

(1) The Faculty of Educational Science awards the academic degree of “Doktor*in der Philosophie”, Dr. phil. (doctor philosophiae). Upon application, the faculty may alternatively award the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, PhD.

(2) The Faculty of Educational Science may also award the degree of honorary doctor (“Doktor ehrenhalber”, doctor honoris causa, Dr. h.c.) in accordance with § 18 in recognition of outstanding academic achievements and merits. The doctoral degrees to be conferred in accordance with paragraph 1 then carry the additional specification “honoris causa” h.c.

§ 3

Purpose and forms of the doctorate (§ 3 RPO)

(1) The award of a doctorate is to evidence the ability to work independently on an academic field related to one of the areas of expertise or focuses of research offered by the faculty, exceeding the general study objective as defined by § 58 (1) HG.

(2) The doctoral procedure at the Faculty of Educational Science comprises the production of an academically significant paper (doctoral thesis) and an oral exam (colloquium).

(3) Persons who have been accepted as doctoral students by the faculty in accordance with § 6 must enrol in accordance with § 2 (4) of the Enrolment Rules as amended and remain enrolled until completion of their oral exam; they may remain enrolled as doctoral students at Bielefeld University until completion of their doctoral procedure in accordance with § 13. The provisions on leaves of absence in accordance with § 8 of the Enrolment Rules apply accordingly and remain unaffected.

(4) The doctoral procedure can take place within a doctoral study programme provided for by one or several faculties or as part of another recognised programme of structured PhD studies (e.g., in graduate schools or Research Training Groups), or outside of such a course or degree programme (referred to as doctoral studies independent of study programmes).

§ 4

Responsibilities (§ 4 RPO)

(1) A doctoral committee is in charge of organising the doctoral procedure, in particular of deciding on the access to the doctorate and of accepting a doctoral student, opening of the doctoral procedure, of appointing the reviewers, of choosing the members of the examination committee, of supervising the expeditious course of the doctoral procedure, including the documentation of the number of doctoral students of the faculty as well as all tasks assigned by these rules. The dean's responsibility will not be affected in any other respect.

(2) The doctoral committee is composed of two members from the group of university teachers, one member from the group of lecturers who is an authorised examiner, one member from the group of students, and one member from the group of technical and administrative employees, to be elected by the Faculty Conference. The committee elects a chairperson and a deputy from among its members who are authorised examiners. The term of office of the members from the student group is one year, the term of office of the other members is two years each. Re-election is permitted. Regarding decisions relating to exams, only those members of the doctoral committee who have a doctoral degree are entitled to vote (§ 65 (1) HG).

(3) The committee is quorate if at least three members are present physically or by way of electronic communication, including the chairperson or the deputy chairperson as well as a total of two additional members who are authorised examiners. It decides by simple majority of the present members with voting rights. The members of the group of university teachers have two votes each; the other members have one vote each. In the case of a tie, the chairperson has the casting vote.

(4) The doctoral committee can authorise the chairperson to conduct its business or individual tasks on its behalf by way of resolution. This does not apply in any cases involving unfavourable decisions relating to legal remedies.

(5) The doctoral committee and the dean are authorities within the meaning of administrative procedural law.

§ 5

Access requirements (§ 5 RPO)

(1) Access to the doctoral procedure requires having successfully completed a qualified degree

- a) In relevant university studies in a standard period of study of at least eight semesters for which a degree other than "Bachelor" is conferred;
- b) or in relevant university studies with a general standard period of study of at least six semesters and appropriate subsequent studies in the doctoral subjects in preparation for the doctorate. These generally are to be completed as part of relevant Master courses with a scope of up to 60 credit points. The doctoral committee decides on the content requirements, under consideration of a written statement from the supervisor. The type and scope of the studies preparing for the doctorate must be included in the notice of acceptance as a doctoral student. The conditions must be met by the time of opening of the doctoral procedure;
- c) or a relevant Master course within the meaning of § 61 (2) sentence 2 HG.

(2) A degree is qualified within the meaning of paragraph 1 if it has been awarded a grade of at least "good" (2.0). A study programme generally is relevant within the meaning of paragraph 1 if it is completed with a degree in educational science. The doctoral committee will make decisions on any exceptions from sentences 1 and 2. In this context, it decides on whether access to the doctorate is granted under consideration of a written statement from the supervisor on the applicant's academic suitability; in this case, it also decides on the conditions to be met. Two examination results in research methods and two examination results in educational theory are generally required in order to comply with the conditions.

(3) Excellent students from a Master course, whose academic achievements were examined after one year in accordance with the regulations of the Master's examination regulations, will have completed the studies in preparation for the doctorate through these academic achievements. The outstanding academic achievements must be documented to the doctoral committee with a very good grade and two letters of recommendation from lecturers in the faculty.

(4) Foreign degrees must be recognised by the doctoral committee. The following apply to evaluation of international qualifications apart from the rules of the Higher Education Act:

- the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region of 11 April 1997 (BGBl. 2007 II p. 712, et seq. – Lisbon Convention) and the implementing provisions issued in this regard, each as amended,
- equivalence agreements of the Federal Republic of Germany with any other states, and
- bilateral declarations of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs/university rectors' conference.

The evaluation proposals of the secretary's office of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the States – Central Office for Foreign Education - will be used for the evaluation.

(5) Proof of language skills is not required.

§ 6

Acceptance as a doctoral student (§ 6 RPO)

(1) Anyone who intends to write a doctoral thesis and fulfils the access requirements in accordance with § 5 must apply electronically to the doctoral committee for acceptance as a doctoral student.

(2) Acceptance as a doctoral student expresses the general willingness of the faculty to supervise and support the doctoral student in preparation of their thesis and to evaluate a doctoral thesis on the intended topic as academic work. Acceptance as a doctoral student is limited to five years; it can be extended upon application, which must be accompanied by an updated schedule and work plan.

(3) The application for acceptance as a doctoral student must be accompanied by:

- a) evidence of meeting the access requirements in accordance with § 5,
- b) indication of the proposed topic of the doctoral thesis and indication of the supervisor,
- c) the supervisor's statement that they will supervise the student (corresponds to the supervision agreement form at the Faculty of Educational Science),
- d) a CV detailing personal and professional development,
- e) a declaration regarding any current or previous doctoral procedures, also indicating the point of time, the topic, and the faculty/university department where the candidate applied to open the doctoral procedure, and how/with what result the procedure ended,
- f) an exposé that includes the intended schedule.

(4) The doctoral committee usually decides on the application within two months, and for doctoral programmes at the respective commencement of the degree programme. Acceptance as a doctoral student will be denied

- a) if access requirements are not met,
- b) if the proposed topic is not within the specific direction of the faculty, or if no supervisor can be identified who has the appropriate expertise to supervise the topic, or if supervision cannot be ensured for the duration of the doctoral procedure,
- c) if none of the intended supervisors regards the proposed topic as meritable or considers the qualification of the applicant to be appropriate, or
- d) if the provision of resources to conduct the proposed project is not assured.

(5) Being accepted as a doctoral student does not imply a legal claim to commence the doctoral procedure.

(6) The applicant is to be informed in writing or electronically of the decision on acceptance or rejection as a doctoral student. Reasons will be given for a rejection and the decision must be accompanied by an instruction on the legal right to appeal.

(7) Acceptance as a doctoral student may be revoked in particular

- a) if any reasons for a rejection of the acceptance as a doctoral student appear subsequently, or
- b) if there is no prospect that the doctoral thesis can be successfully completed within an appropriate period of time, or
- c) if the supervision agreement (§ 7, (3)) is legally invalid or has been revoked.

(8) Once a doctoral student has been accepted, they are obligated to enrol at Bielefeld University as a doctoral student.

§ 7

Supervision (§ 7 RPO)

(1) Supervisors can generally be members of the group of university teachers of the faculty or habilitated members of the faculty. Members of the faculty in accordance with sentence 1 can be appointed as supervisors for up to five years after their retirement or emeritus status. Temporary professors generally are not authorised to supervise. The doctoral committee will make decisions on any exceptions from sentences 2 and 3. A member of the faculty with a doctorate may also act as the supervisor upon application if this is intended and necessary within the scope of their project; the request must be addressed to the doctoral committee. An additional

supervisor should be appointed as part of a cooperative doctoral procedure with a university of applied sciences; they must be habilitated or have completed academic achievements equivalent to habilitation. This must be formally determined by the faculty. This determination will be valid for five years in each case.

(2) A supervisor with primary responsibility must be appointed.

(3) A supervision agreement is entered into between the doctoral student and the supervisor(s) (supervision agreement form of the Faculty of Educational Science).

(4) The faculty ensures supervision for the duration of the doctorate. The university's guidelines on good supervision must be observed.

(5) If a supervisor leaves the faculty or becomes emeritus or retires, they retain the right to complete the supervision of a doctorate that has already begun for a period of five years, with the consent of the doctoral student and the doctoral committee.

§ 8

Opening of the doctoral procedure (§ 8 RPO)

(1) The application to open the doctoral procedure (form of the Faculty of Educational Science) must be submitted electronically to the doctoral committee. The following documents have to be enclosed with the application:

- a) notice of acceptance as a doctoral student in accordance with § 6,
- b) proof of the pre-doctoral studies in accordance with § 5 (1b) or compliance with conditions in accordance with § 5 (2), if applicable,
- c) a CV detailing personal and professional development,
- d) if applicable, a list of academic publications and academic presentations,
- e) an electronic version of the doctoral thesis, usually as a PDF file. The members of the examination committee have the right to request a printed version that corresponds to the digitally submitted version. This also applies to a cumulative doctoral thesis,
- f) a summary of the doctoral thesis of no more than five pages,
- g) a proposal for the appointment of the reviewers and the further composition of the examination committee in accordance with § 9; a supervisor can be proposed as a reviewer; the proposal of the doctoral student for appointment of the reviewers should be complied with if possible,
- h) if applicable, a declaration that the candidate objects to the admission of an audience to the colloquium. This declaration can be submitted or withdrawn up to one week before the oral exam,
- i) in the case of a cumulative doctoral thesis with submitted articles in co-authorship, a sworn statement regarding the candidate's own contribution as well as a confirmation of the reported own contribution from the co-authors in accordance with § 10 (2b),
- j) in the case of team work: a report jointly written by the persons involved regarding the collaboration on the doctoral thesis, indication of the individual authorship of the respective parts of the doctoral thesis in accordance with § 10 (3b), furthermore indication of names, academic titles, addresses of the persons involved in the group work as well as information on the question as to whether any persons and – if applicable – which persons have already applied for a doctoral procedure, or completed such a procedure, using parts of the submitted paper,
- k) proof of enrolment as a doctoral student at the Faculty of Educational Science,
- l) a declaration stating
 - 1) that the doctoral student is familiar with the applicable doctoral degree regulations of the faculty,
 - 2) that the doctoral student has written the doctoral thesis on their own (declaration of authorship), no texts or parts of texts have been copied from a third party or the candidate's own academic work without due attribution and tools, and any sources used by the doctoral student have been duly referenced and attributed in their paper,
 - 3) that no third party has received any money or monetary benefits from the doctoral student, directly or indirectly, for services of an intermediary nature, or for any work associated with the production of the submitted doctoral thesis,
 - 4) that the doctoral student has not yet submitted the doctoral thesis for a public or other academic examination, and
 - 5) 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.

(2) The application may be withdrawn. Withdrawal is excluded if an opinion has already been submitted to the competent body.

(3) The doctoral committee decides on the opening of the doctoral procedure; the doctoral student will receive a notice of this. Opening of the doctoral examination procedure is to be refused if one of the requirements in accordance with paragraph 1 is not met or if any documents are missing; in the latter case, the doctoral committee will set a deadline of generally two weeks for submission of the missing documents. If the composition of the examination committee differs from the doctoral student's proposal, this must be justified.

(4) Evaluation of exam results shall be completed no later than six months after receipt of the request to open the proceedings.

§ 9

Examination committee (§ 9 RPO)

(1) The doctoral exam is conducted by an examination committee that is appointed by the doctoral committee when the decision is made to open the doctoral procedure. The members of the Faculty of Educational Science must have a majority on the examination committee. The doctoral student has the right to nominate the members of the examination committee.

(2) As a rule, the examination committee comprises two reviewers, one additional examiner for the oral exam and one additional faculty member from the group of university lecturers who is entitled to vote and who chairs the examination committee. If the topic of the doctoral thesis requires it, an additional reviewer can be proposed and appointed for the doctoral thesis. The additional reviewer is an additional member of the examination committee; sentence 2 of paragraph 1 applies accordingly. The members of the examination committee represent different focus areas.

(3) A supervisor can be appointed as a reviewer. Members of the group of university lecturers of the Faculty of Educational Science, another faculty, another university, or at least habilitated members of a research institution and, in the case of § 7 (1) sentence 5, a faculty member with a doctorate can also be appointed as reviewers. Other habilitated members of the faculty can also be appointed as reviewers. In the case of a cumulative doctoral thesis in accordance with § 10 (2), at least one reviewer must be appointed who is not involved in co-authorship of the submitted articles. The other examiner for the oral exam should be a member of the faculty with a doctorate.

(4) The examination committee consults and makes its decision in a non-public session. Its decisions are to be documented in a record.

(5) If an emeritus or retired university lecturer has been appointed as a supervisor in accordance with § 7 (1) sentence 2 or if the supervisor has left the university after the appointment or retires or becomes emeritus during this period, but completes the supervision of the doctorate started in accordance with § 7 (5), they may also be appointed as a reviewer. They will then count as a member of the faculty for a period of five years after the appointment as supervisor for the respective doctoral procedure.

§ 10

Doctoral thesis (§ 10 RPO)

(1) The doctoral thesis must deal with a topic from an area of expertise represented at the Faculty of Educational Science. This doctoral exam 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). Parts of the academic work performed within the scope of the doctoral thesis may, in agreement with the supervisor, already have been published before the application for the opening of the procedure in accordance with § 8.

(2) Provided that the supervisor(s) agree(s), a publication-based doctorate can also be submitted as a cumulative doctoral thesis. The doctoral student must provide evidence in accordance with paragraph 1 for this. The papers must have been written under a common academic question; overall, they must meet the requirements of sentence 1 of paragraph 1. The following criteria apply:

- a) At least three articles must be submitted,
 - at least one of them must have been written by the student as a single author,
 - in the case of co-authorship, they must be the result of verifiable lead authorship, and
 - they must have appeared in relevant specialist journals, handbooks, or anthologies or have been demonstrably accepted for publication, and
 - at least two of them must have appeared in peer-reviewed journals or have been demonstrably accepted for publication.

The doctoral committee decides whether a journal fulfils the formulated requirements. In the doctoral procedure, the submitted articles are evaluated independently of any peer review procedure that has already taken place.

- b) In the case of co-authorships, the student's own share must be clearly identified, and a sworn statement must be made regarding their personal contribution (form sheet). In addition, confirmation of the student's reported own contribution must be obtained from the co-authors and submitted (also on the faculty's form). In addition, the doctoral student must ensure that no copyrights are infringed by the use of the work, also with regard to the publication of the doctoral thesis.

- c) The submitted publications must be supplemented by a detailed presentation of at least 30 pages. This jacket text is to clearly state:
 - the overarching question,
 - embedding of the topic in current research and theoretical discussion,
 - the relationship of the individual contributions to the research question and the coherence of the individual contributions with each other, and
 - the methodological procedure and its implications and limitations.

(3) Instead of an individual thesis, the individual part of a completed intra- or interdisciplinary team thesis may be submitted in suitable cases; this must be submitted as a whole. In this case, the following requirements must be met in addition to the requirements specified in paragraph 1:

- a) The theoretical, methodological, or substantive content of team work as well as the scope of the academic work invested significantly exceed the requirements for an individual project.
- b) The individual authorship of the doctoral student for their contribution must be clearly evident and separately assessable, in particular if the contribution is part of a research project in which doctoral students are already involved. Each doctoral student must affirm in lieu of an oath who is responsible for which (sub)chapters. In the case of team work, the parts worked on by the individual doctoral students must be assessed separately.

(4) The doctoral thesis usually must be written in German or English. Other languages may be approved by the doctoral committee upon request.

(5) The doctoral thesis must contain a title page, a table of contents, an abstract, and a bibliography, as well as a detailed presentation in accordance with paragraph 2c) in the case of a cumulative or publication-based doctoral thesis.

(6) Each reviewer has to submit an opinion, including reasons, to the doctoral committee in electronic form, usually within two months of their appointment as reviewer.

(7) The reviewers examine in detail and independently from each other whether the submitted doctoral thesis can be accepted toward the doctoral exam results, whether it has to be rejected or returned for revision. They assess the academic achievement of the thesis in their opinions. If accepted, they award the following assessments:

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

A paper to be rejected will be evaluated as “failed (non rite)”. In the case of outstanding academic achievements, the distinction “outstanding thesis (summa cum laude)” may be awarded; the award must be specially justified.

(8) Once all the required opinions have been submitted, the doctoral committee will first 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. The doctoral thesis, all opinions, and, if applicable, the doctoral student's statement are then made available electronically for two weeks. The doctoral committee informs the members of the examination committee, the members of the group of university teachers, and the doctoral members of the faculty of the display. The authorised examiners of the faculties of Bielefeld University providing the reviewers and the members of the examination committee have the right to inspect the doctoral thesis during the display period; they may lodge objection to the acceptance, rejection, or the evaluation of the doctoral thesis in electronic form during this period. Objections must include a statement of reasons.

(9) If the reviewers have unanimously proposed acceptance of the doctoral thesis, it is thereby accepted, provided that no objection has been lodged. If the reviewers have unanimously proposed rejection of the doctoral thesis, it is thereby rejected, provided that no objection has been lodged; an oral exam will then no longer take place. If the reviewers have unanimously proposed the revision, the doctoral thesis is returned for revision; at the same time, the doctoral committee sets a deadline for resubmission, which shall not exceed six months; in this case, the doctoral thesis will only be displayed in accordance with paragraph 8 after receipt of the opinions of the revised doctoral thesis. If the opinions differ with regard to their recommendation for acceptance or rejection or revision of the doctoral thesis, if they differ by more than two distinctions in the case of acceptance, or if an objection against the acceptance or rejection is lodged within the display period in accordance with paragraph 8, the doctoral committee appoints another reviewer without undue delay after hearing the doctoral student; this additional reviewer will be subject to § 9 accordingly; they also become a member of the examination committee. The opinion of the further reviewer should be available within two months after their appointment. The doctoral committee decides under consideration of the recommendation in the additional opinion whether the doctoral thesis is accepted, returned for revision, or rejected. If the decision is made to return the thesis for revision, the doctoral committee sets an appropriate deadline.

(10) In the case of acceptance, the reviewers determine the overall grade of the doctoral thesis before the colloquium after consulting the further examiner of the examination committee. If the reviewers do not reach a joint assessment, the chairperson of the examination committee decides on the evaluation of the doctoral thesis.

(11) When deciding on the overall grade of the doctoral thesis, the examination committee also decides if the publication of the doctoral thesis (in accordance with § 14) is to be subject to any requirements. This decision must be recorded and the candidate must be informed of it.

§ 11

Oral exam results (§ 11 RPO)

(1) The oral exam will take place after the doctoral thesis has been formally accepted. In it, the candidate is to demonstrate that they are able to competently discuss relevant academic issues in their area of expertise based on special academic knowledge and skills. The colloquium usually takes 90 minutes and is conducted by the examination committee as a peer examination.

(2) In exceptional cases, the oral exam may be conducted with the aid of audiovisual transmission technology authorised by the rectorate. The corresponding requirements in the Examination Regulations of Bielefeld University of 18 December 2020 (Bielefeld University Gazette – Official Announcements – year 49 No. 16 p. 256) as amended must be observed. It must be ensured that there are no disturbances in the mutual perception of the participants throughout the examination; otherwise, the examination must be interrupted and continued after the interference has been remedied or, if the interference cannot be remedied in the short term, a new appointment must be scheduled.

(3) The oral exam shall take place no later than eight weeks after acceptance of the doctoral thesis; the date shall be announced in time. A longer deadline can only be permitted with the agreement of the doctoral student.

(4) The candidate must submit four theses from different areas of educational science to the examination committee no later than 14 days before the date of the colloquium. Two theses can be related to the doctoral thesis. The colloquium will take place under consideration of the submitted theses.

(5) The colloquium is deemed to have been failed if the candidate does not attend it without an important reason.

(6) A record of the essential aspects and results of the oral exam is to be kept. This includes a corresponding notice if the examination was performed in accordance with paragraph 2.

(7) The oral exam is open to the entire university unless the doctoral student has objected to this. The public is to be excluded from the assessment discussions and announcement of the exam result. The right to speak is the responsibility of the members of the examination committee and does not extend to the public.

(8) The examination committee decides in open vote in a non-public session following the oral exam whether the oral exam has been passed; it evaluates the oral exam in accordance with § 10 (7) sentences 3 to 5. If assessments differ, a decision is taken by voting. Abstentions are not permitted. In the case of a tie, the chairperson has the casting vote.

(9) Upon application, a failed oral exam can be repeated with a new topic once within twelve months, but no earlier than after two months. In case of a repeated failure, the attempt to obtain the doctoral degree is finally considered to have failed. The doctoral student will receive a corresponding notice from the doctoral committee, including a statement of reasons.

§ 12

Overall grade of the doctorate (§ 12 RPO)

(1) Following a successful oral exam, the examination committee determines the overall grade. The overall grade results from the grades of the doctoral thesis and the oral exam result. The doctoral thesis will be weighted more than the oral exam result. If assessments differ, a decision is taken by voting. § 9 (4) applies accordingly; in the event of a tie, the chairperson has the casting vote.

(2) In the case of § 10 (7), sentence 3, the following grading scheme applies to the overall grade, subject to paragraph 3:

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

(3) The overall grade “outstanding (summa cum laude)” will be awarded only in the case of extraordinary academic achievements. In this case, the distinction for the oral exam result must not be lower than “very good (magna cum laude)”.

§ 13

Completion of the doctorate and certificate (§ 13 RPO)

(1) Following the decision of the examination committee, the dean issues a preliminary certificate concerning the passing of the examination to the doctoral student. 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 (e.g., Dr. cand.) until the doctoral degree certificate with doctoral examination certificate has been issued.

(2) In issuing the doctoral degree certificate with doctoral examination certificate, the dean confers the doctorate. 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. Both graduation documents are to be issued in English upon request.

(3) The doctoral degree certificate and doctoral examination certificate are not to be handed over until publication of the doctoral thesis has been ensured in accordance with § 14 or a publication contract has been concluded with a publisher.

§ 14

Publication of the doctoral thesis (§ 14 RPO)

(1) The doctoral student is obligated to make the doctoral thesis accessible to the academic public in an appropriate manner. If a reviewer imposes any requirements to the version for publication, this must be approved by the chairperson of the examination committee before publication after endorsement by the reviewer. The obligation to publish is part of the doctoral procedure. The publication as a doctoral thesis must be indicated on the page following the title page, including the place of the doctorate. This publication represents a unit within the meaning of an academic achievement.

(2) The doctoral thesis is deemed to have been made accessible to the academic public in an appropriate manner if the author ensures its dissemination by either

- a) proof of distribution via the book trade by a commercial publisher via a printing process with a first print run, or
- b) a print-on-demand procedure with guaranteed availability for at least five years, including the additional free delivery to the university library of two copies that are identical to the examination copies, which must be printed on age-resistant wood- and acid-free paper and bound in a durable binding, or
- c) delivery of 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, or
- e) in the case of a cumulative doctoral thesis, submission of an electronic version of the detailed presentation in accordance with § 10 (2) c), the data format and data carrier of which must be agreed with the University Library, and proof of publication of the submitted articles.

In cases a) to c) and e), the obligation to publish is already deemed complied with if a contract with an editor or publisher has been concluded that states that the doctoral thesis or, in case e), the submitted articles will be published.

In cases d) and e), the doctoral student transfers to the university the right to produce and distribute further copies of their doctoral thesis or to make them available in data networks within the scope of the university library's statutory duties.

(3) Proof of publication within the meaning of paragraph 1 must be submitted within one year of taking the oral exam. The delivery deadline may be extended by one year 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.

§ 15

Deception, invalidity of doctoral exam results, and withdrawal of the doctoral degree (§ 15 RPO)

(1) After having heard the doctoral student, the doctoral committee can declare the doctoral exam results void if it is established before the conferral of the doctorate that the doctoral student has committed academic fraud in their doctoral exam results or that any essential requirements of the doctoral procedure have been misrepresented.

(2) The doctoral degree can be withdrawn if

- a) it is found out subsequently that it was obtained through academic fraud in the doctoral exam results or through fraudulent misrepresentation of essential requirements for the doctoral procedure;
- b) the person holding the doctoral degree has been convicted of a deliberate criminal act misusing their doctoral degree when preparing or committing this criminal act.

(3) If any requirements for access to the doctorate were not met without the doctoral student's intention to deceive and if this fact emerges only after issuing the certificate, this impediment is remedied by virtue of having passed the doctoral exam.

(4) The Faculty Conference decides on the withdrawal after the dean has heard the person concerned.

§ 16 Inspection (§ 16 RPO)

The doctoral student is entitled to review the documents relating to the doctoral exam after completion of the doctoral procedure within one month.

§ 17 Legal remedy against decisions made in the doctoral procedure (§ 17 RPO)

(1) The candidate may file legal remedy against any unfavourable notices issued based on these rules in writing with the doctoral committee within one month. The doctoral committee decides on the legal remedy, if necessary after hearing the examination committee.

(2) An objection and objection procedure shall be subject to the provisions stipulated in the Rules of the Administrative Courts (*Verwaltungsgerichtsordnung*).

§ 18 Honorary doctorate (§ 18 RPO)

(1) In recognition of outstanding academic achievements or other special merits, the Faculty of Educational Science may award the degree of an honorary doctorate for its area of expertise in accordance with § 2 (2).

(2) Under consideration of the submitted statements, the Faculty Conference decides on the application for conferral of the honorary doctorate submitted by at least two faculty members with a doctoral degree; the decision requires a majority of three quarters of votes of those members who have a doctoral degree and voting rights.

(3) The dean confers the honorary doctorate by issuing a certificate signed by the dean, recognising the academic achievements of the honoured person.

§ 19 Joint doctorate with other universities (§ 19 RPO)

(1) The Faculty of Educational Science awards the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Dr. phil.) also in cooperation with a partner university. It also participates in awarding of a corresponding academic degree by the partner university.

(2) Implementation of the doctoral procedure in accordance with paragraph 1 requires a written agreement with the partner institution in which both institutions undertake to facilitate a joint doctorate and to regulate the details of the cooperation.

(3) The provisions of §§ 1 to 17 apply to the doctoral procedure in accordance with § 19, unless otherwise specified below. The provisions of the agreement in accordance with paragraph 2 will apply to the cooperation in accordance with sentence 2 of paragraph 1.

(4) Proof of the academic qualification required for the doctorate must be rendered by the applicant in the form of the doctoral exam results. These comprise an academic paper (doctoral thesis) and an oral exam.

(5) § 5 applies with the proviso that the candidate must provide evidence of a degree from a university in the country in which one of the two partner institutions is located that entitles them to award a doctorate.

(6) § 6 (1) applies with the proviso that the application must also include:

- a declaration from the partner institution that the requirements for access to the doctorate have been met;
- a declaration by an authorised examiner appointed by the partner institution that they are willing to supervise and, if necessary, review the doctoral thesis.

These declarations should be submitted to the doctoral committee at the beginning of the supervision relationship.

(7) The doctoral thesis must be written in German or in a language specified in the partnership agreement. A summary in the respective other language must be added. The supervisors of the doctoral thesis are one member of the faculty and one member of the partner institution authorised to conduct examinations in accordance with § 7.

(8) The doctoral student must spend at least one semester at the partner institution and be enrolled there as a regular student or doctoral student while working on their doctoral thesis. This does not affect the obligation to enrol at Bielefeld University in accordance with § 3 (3).

(9) The doctoral thesis is generally reviewed by one person appointed by the partner institution and one member of the faculty authorised to review the doctoral thesis in accordance with § 9 (3). The doctoral committee can appoint the supervisors as reviewers. The language of the opinion is subject to sentence 1 of paragraph 7 accordingly.

(10) The oral exam takes the form of a colloquium. § 11 applies accordingly to this, unless otherwise stipulated in the partnership agreement. The language of the defence is subject to sentence 1 of paragraph 7 accordingly.

(11) The examination committee usually comprises at least four members who are authorised to examine doctoral students in accordance with the requirements of the faculty or partner institution in accordance with the partnership agreement. Two examiners should be authorised examiners of the faculty in accordance with § 9 (3) and two should be authorised examiners from the partner institution. Both partner institutions must be represented by at least one authorised examiner as a member.

(12) § 13 (2) 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. The dean of the faculty signs and seals the German part. In an accompanying letter, the doctoral student is informed that the title may only be used either in the form awarded by the partner institution or in the form awarded by the Faculty of Educational Science. Certification may take place either

- a) in a joint final document signed and sealed by the dean of the faculty and the responsible representative of the partner institution, or
- b) in separate final documents in the respective national languages. The dean of the faculty will sign and seal the doctoral examination certificate for the Faculty of Educational Science. The partner institution will prepare its final documents in accordance with its own rules and, if necessary, arrange for the state certification of the jointly supervised doctorate.

§ 20

Withdrawal from the oral exam; disadvantage compensation (§ 20 RPO)

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 must be observed accordingly for withdrawal from the oral exam.

§ 21

Scope of application and transitional arrangements (§ 21 RPO)

These doctoral degree regulations (hereinafter referred to as the Doctoral Degree Regulations 2026) apply to all doctoral students who have applied to the Faculty for acceptance as a doctoral student after the time of entering into effect of these regulations in accordance with § 22 sentence 1, as well as to all doctoral students who have already been accepted, unless they have objected to the application of these regulations by 30 June 2026; in the latter case, the previously applicable doctoral degree regulations will continue to apply to them until the completion of their doctoral procedure, but no later than 31 March 2031. Anyone who has not yet applied for the opening of the doctoral procedure by that date will automatically switch to the doctoral degree regulations 2026.

§ 22

Entering into effect and publication (§ 21 RPO)

These doctoral degree regulations are published in the Bielefeld University Gazette – Official Announcements – and enter into effect on 1 April 2026. At the same time, the doctoral degree regulations of the Faculty of Educational Science of 10 January 2017 (Bielefeld University Gazette, Official Announcements – year 46 no. 1 p. 9), the doctoral degree regulations of 1 June 2012 (Bielefeld University Gazette, Official Announcements – year 41 no. 10 p. 226) and the doctoral degree regulations of 1 September 2009 (Bielefeld University Gazette, Official Announcements – year 38 no. 17 p. 304), as amended by the amendment of 16 August 2010 (Bielefeld University Gazette, Official Announcements – year 39 No. 17 p. 156) will lose their effect, notwithstanding the provisions of § 21.

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 Educational Science of
03 December 2025.

Bielefeld, 1 April 2026

The rector
of Bielefeld University
University Professor Dr Angelika Epple

non-official translation