

The Promotionshauptverfahren (doctoral examination process) – From submission to oral examination

To all doctoral candidates,

This leaflet contains information about the procedure after submission of the thesis. All important information about preparing and handing in the thesis is provided in our separate information leaflet "Instructions for the submission of a thesis"

Legal basis

The examination procedure is regulated in the Allgemeine Bestimmungen für Promotionen (General Provisions for Doctorate Degrees) at the University of Kassel (hereinafter AB-PromO). The most recent version is available on the website of the Graduiertenakademie (Graduate Academy) (www.uni-kassel.de/go/doktor).

The Promotionskommission (doctoral examination board)

To initiate the Promotionshauptverfahren, that is, the examination process, all referees must first be confirmed by the Doctoral Committee (Promotionskommission). The supervisor is responsible for the composition of the doctoral examination board. The proposal for the composition can be made before the thesis has been submitted. According to Faculty the proposal is to be made to the Dean's Office or the Doctoral Committee. The practice of each Faculty should be known to the supervisor. At least two referees have to be nominated. In addition, two or three other examiners can be provided for the oral examination.

At least one referee must be a professorial member of the Faculty in which the doctoral thesis has been done. If a professor has been retired for less than three years, he/she, as an active member, can be nominated as a referee. In addition to active professors, scholars with a 'habilitation' doctorate or a doctorate, whose main job is teaching or research at a place of higher education or a research institute, retired or honorary professors can be nominated as referees. Other examiners for the oral examination must have similar qualifications.

For the composition of the doctoral examination board before which the oral examination is held, it should be noted that the majority of the commission members must be university professors.

Time management

It is important to be aware in time management that the Promotionshauptverfahren (doctoral examination process) usually takes several months after thesis submission. You are recommended to hand in the thesis as early as possible if the degree has to be conferred by a certain date for external reasons over which you may have no control, e.g. expiry of work contracts, grants or residence permits, Stellensperre (non-renewal of position), start of post-doctoral positions etc.

Initiating the process

After all documents are fully completed (see our information leaflet "Instructions for the submission of a thesis") and the doctoral examination board has been confirmed by the doctoral committee, the examination process can begin.

This contains the following steps:

- Nomination of referees. Each referee is sent one copy of the thesis by the Promotionsgeschäftsstelle (Doctorate Office) or, in the case of Faculty 10 (Mathematics and Natural Sciences) and Faculty 11 (Organic Agricultural Sciences), by the Dean's Office.

- You will receive written notification about the start of the Promotionshauptverfahren and which persons are to referee your thesis.

Evaluation

After the start of the Promotionshauptverfahren the written referee reports about the thesis are expected in the next few weeks or months. In accordance with the General Provisions for Doctorate Degrees (AB-PromO) this normally takes 10 weeks. In individual cases this period may be exceeded. As soon as all referee reports have been received, you will be informed automatically by the Promotionsgeschäftsstelle/Doctorate Office and will receive copies of the referee reports. Individual referee reports or grades cannot be sent ahead of the appointed time.

The referee reports are sent to you for use only within the doctoral examination process. Use outside of this sphere is prohibited. An exception is possible only if the referee provides written permission that describes the type and extent of the use outside the doctoral examination process.

Public consultation

Each thesis must be available for a display (Auslegung). The display period happens when

1. all referee reports recommend acceptance of the thesis, in other words, if all referee agree that the thesis has passed **and**
2. all referee reports award the same grade (e.g. two of them award "sehr gut") or one awards "gut" and the other awards "sehr gut". Details of the grading can be found below.

When this has been done, a copy of the thesis with the referee reports will be available for consultation in the Dean's Office of the Faculty to which the thesis has been submitted. The period foreseen for this is 14 days, and a reduction of this period is not possible. The final day of the display period is to fall on a workday. Only at the end of this period can the oral examination take place.

During the display period, all university teachers of the Faculty have the opportunity to examine the thesis and the referee reports. This applies to university teachers from other faculties of the University of Kassel, who are also involved in the award of the doctoral degree.

At the end of this period, the Doctoral Committee will decide if the thesis is accepted. Candidates will be informed of this in writing.

Oral examination

The oral examination can take place when the display period is over and the thesis has been accepted by the doctoral committee. The date of the oral examination is fixed independently in each Faculty. Details of booking a room, fixing the date, sending invitations etc. are matters to be settled with the supervisor or with the Dean's Office of the relevant Faculty.

The oral examination can be attended by any member of the University of Kassel: university staff, students, doctoral candidates etc. But only members of the doctoral examination board have the right to speak. The right of others to speak is at the discretion of the Chairman/woman.

The candidate as well as the members of the doctoral examination board must be present. In reasonable exceptional cases (e.g. being out of the country, illness) one examiner (max.) can take part in the examination by video conference. This is not an option for the doctoral candidate, whose personal presence is mandatory.

The oral examination is to last between one and a half and two hours max. The candidate defends the thesis before the doctoral examination board. In addition, the examination can include

questions on select problems in the subject as well those of adjacent subjects and the current state of research in these subjects.

Grading

Both the thesis and the oral examination can be graded as follows:

- Mit Auszeichnung (0.7) (with highest honour)
- Sehr gut (1.0) (with great honour)
- Gut (2.0) (with honour)
- Bestanden (3.0) (passed)
- Nicht bestanden (4.0) (fail)

The following interim grades can also be awarded: 1.3 (Sehr gut) (with great honour), 1.7 or 2.3 (Gut) (with honour), 2.7 (Bestanden) (passed). In this way the examiners can award a differentiated grade, e.g. a 1.7 can draw attention to a generally good performance.

The doctoral degree will be awarded only on the basis of success in both the written and the oral performance. The thesis is successful, if the majority of the examiners award a grade between 3.0 and 3.0. This applies also to the oral examination, which is successful, if the majority of the examiners award a grade between 0.7 und 3.0.

The total grade is formed from the arithmetical mean of the thesis grade and the oral examination grade. The grade of the thesis is twice that of the oral examination. The total grade "mit Auszeichnung" can be awarded only if the weighted arithmetical mean of both grades is below 1.0 and the grade "mit Auszeichnung" has been awarded by at least one referee for the thesis.

The next step

After successful conclusion of the oral examination the candidate receives notification from the Dean's Office/Rector's Office that he/she has successfully passed the examination process. This notification can be used in job applications etc., but the title 'Dr' may not be used. This title can be used only after receipt of the degree certificate. All further steps up to the receipt of the degree certificate are explained in our separate information leaflet "Publication of the thesis".

We wish all doctoral candidates every success in their work.

The Promotionsgeschäftsstelle/Doctorate Office of the University of Kassel

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