

Guide to doctoral studies at the Georg Agricola University of Applied Sciences

Version from 01.07.2023

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1 Preamble

The Georg Agricola University of Applied Sciences (THGA) provides research training for PhD students from various disciplines, both from Germany and abroad, and also supports PhD projects of its already employed scientific staff. This guideline outlines the framework conditions and supervision standards for the preparation of dissertations at the THGA. With its scientific infrastructure, research competence, and educational quality, the THGA focuses on regional, national and international visibility and competitiveness. The rules of good scientific practice at the THGA, based on the Code of Good Scientific Practice of the DFG, ensure the quality of scientific work. Furthermore, the THGA's implementation guideline provides detailed procedures for dealing with any violation. It also advocates for equal opportunities and promotes the compatibility of family and career, with a particular focus on encouraging women to pursue doctorates.

2 Definition and Characteristics of a Doctorate

The universities of applied sciences (HAW), as well as the Graduate School for Applied Research in North Rhine-Westphalia (PK NRW), have the right for cooperative doctoral procedures under § 67 of the law on the universities of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia (Hochschulgesetz - HG NRW). This involves necessary cooperation with universities and higher education institutions authorized to award doctorates, i.e., Hessian HAWs or the PK NRW. A doctoral procedure carried out in cooperation between an HAW and a faculty authorized to award doctorates (hereinafter referred to as university) is termed a cooperative doctorate.

In this case, the scientific work is usually conducted at the HAW, with the lecturers from the HAW participating equally in the doctoral procedure as supervisors, reviewers, and examiners. In certain cases, scientists with a PhD may assume supervision and examination duties. The Coordination Office for Early Career Researchers (see chapter 5.6) supports the doctoral candidates, promotes the cooperation between HAW and universities or PK NRW, and accompanies the young scientists of HAW throughout the entire doctoral phase.

3 Goals of the Guide for a Doctoral Degree at THGA

The doctoral guide at the THGA has the following goals:

- To inform those interested in pursuing a doctorate, as well as current doctoral candidates, about the up-to-date framework conditions of a doctoral phase at the THGA.
- To inform those interested in undertaking a doctorate and those interested in supervision at the THGA about the most important planning steps, formalities, and obligations of all parties involved.
- To define holistic supervision and support for doctoral students, aiming to enable the completion of a doctorate within an appropriate period of time.

4 Planning a Doctorate

4.1 Advisory Service

The Coordination Office for Early Career Researchers of the THGA is the point of contact for those interested in doctoral studies and current doctoral candidates regarding all organizational aspects of doctoral studies. It can be reached via the functional mailbox phd@thga.de.

4.2 Funding

In consultation with the vice president for budget and administration, the supervisor at THGA must ensure that sufficient funding is available to successfully complete a doctoral degree. A doctoral position cannot be advertised and filled until funding for at least the first three years is secured. If the doctoral candidate is hired through a third-party funded project, sufficient material, personnel resources, and travel resources must also be allocated for both the project-related tasks and the pure doctoral project to be completed successfully. If adequate resources are not available to offer a doctoral position, an application for financial support in the form of a scholarship or third-party funded project is necessary. In this case, the research management can be consulted for application planning via forschungsmanagement@thga.de and should be planned well in advance.

In the case of a personal doctoral scholarship, it must be clarified before employment whether all reported costs will be covered or whether additional costs will be incurred. As scholarship recipients may be permitted additional employment depending on the funding body, a preliminary discussion with the supervisor is strongly recommended. The THGA generally strives to offer full positions or supplement part-time positions with teaching assignments. PhD students are not obligated to teach.

If the funding for a doctoral phase is not sufficient until completion of the doctorate, follow-up funding must be secured at an early stage by the project management in consultation with the Vice President for Budget and Administration. For this purpose, the research management must be informed about the need for follow-up funding via forschungsmanagement@thga.de.

4.3 Infrastructure und Workplace

The necessary use of internal and external infrastructures must be clarified in advance by the supervisor. Especially in the case of externally funded doctoral positions, it is not possible to establish the workstation through refinancing. In this case, consultation with the research management via forschungsmanagement@thga.de is necessary before applying for the corresponding third-party funding.

4.4 Announcement of a Doctoral Position

Once funding and the use of the corresponding infrastructure have been clarified, a doctoral position is advertised internally or externally via the Human Resources Department at THGA. The doctoral institution should be named in the advertisement. Doctoral positions are advertised in both German and English to attract international doctoral candidates.

4.5 Application for Acceptance as a Doctoral Candidate

The application for a doctoral position follows the rules of the DMT-LB: All details can be found in the job advertisement. Generally, in addition to the contact person for the content, the Coordination Office for Early Career Researchers is also specified as a contact for formal questions.

4.6 Decision on Acceptance as a Doctoral Candidate

If a person interested in doctoral studies has successfully applied and fulfilled the criteria of the degree-awarding institution, the application for acceptance for doctoral studies must be submitted there. Until acceptance as a doctoral candidate, the employment contract is concluded with reservations. If acceptance is refused by the university or the PK NRW, the employment is terminated. It must be emphasized that the requirements are not within the sovereignty of the THGA and, ideally, a comparison of the requirements with the selected institution for doctoral studies should be possible prior to employment.

If an employee decides to pursue a doctoral degree at or with the THGA or externally, they must contact the Coordination Office for Early Career Researchers before applying to a doctoral-granting institution.

In the case of a doctoral scholarship, the conditions of the funding agency apply.

5 Parties Involved and Their Responsibilities

5.1 Doctoral Students

Doctoral students are enrolled at the THGA and are usually employed by DMT-LB as research assistants. The employment contract states that a doctorate is being pursued.

In cooperative doctoral programs with universities, no semester fee is charged at THGA, as this is paid to the university through the enrollment in the doctoral program there. Semester-by-semester re-registration with a current certificate of enrollment at the THGA is required. For doctoral studies that are conducted through the PK NRW, the semester fee is paid in full to the THGA. After the conclusion of the examination procedure or discontinuation of the doctoral program, the student will be de-registered at the THGA.

5.2 Supervisor

All enrolled doctoral students are supported by a supervisor at the THGA. This supervisor provides scientific oversight and supports them in the preparation of their research work (dissertation). In the case of a cooperative doctorate, doctoral candidates also have a university supervisor (usually the first supervisor). The framework conditions described in the guidelines should also be coordinated with this supervisor and documented in a supervision agreement. For a doctorate through the PK NRW whose initial supervision is conducted at the THGA, the supervision agreement is mandatory upon enrollment in the PK NRW. The supervision obligation ends with the conclusion of the doctoral process, which typically concludes with the publication of the dissertation, depending on the department.

5.3 Supervision Agreement

As a rule, in the context of a cooperative doctorate, a supervision agreement is signed between the doctoral candidate and the initial supervisor using a template from the relevant faculty. This outlines the rights and obligations of both parties throughout the entire doctoral process, such as reporting duties and frequency of meetings. The THGA recommends that this agreement is extended to include the THGA supervisor, as this is where the course of the doctorate and the obligations of all parties are usually recorded. If a supervision agreement is required and no template exists from the university, the Coordination Office for Early Career Researchers can assist with a template from the THGA. Similarly, in the case of international supervision or international doctoral students, a translation can be provided. For a doctorate through the PK NRW, a supervision agreement between all parties involved is mandatory and regulated according to the framework doctoral regulations.

5.4 Doctoral Committee

Depending on the doctoral regulations and the definition of the doctoral procedure therein, a doctoral committee is appointed for a doctorate. The task of this committee is to provide professional, organizational and interdisciplinary support for the doctorate. The committee is typically composed of the person pursuing the doctorate, along with the first and second supervisors.

The following persons are usually part of the committee:

- The first supervisor

- The second supervisor
- One internal person from outside the department
- An external person (optional)
- Coordination Office for Early Career Researchers (recommended, optional)

The THGA recommends annual meetings of such a committee, if necessary annual feedback meetings with the Coordination Office for Early Career Researchers, and quarterly professional consultations of the doctoral student with the first and/or second supervisor. This ensures that the doctorate can be successfully completed within the planned timeframe, both professionally and interdisciplinarily. The communication procedure can be laid down in the supervision agreement mentioned under 5.3 directly at the beginning, including defined communication channels and roles.

5.5 Project Manager

If a doctoral project is a sub-project within a project funded by third parties and the first or second supervisor are not directly related to the project, the agreements made during the doctoral process should be communicated to the project manager. Ideally, the project manager should be involved in the doctoral process. Responsibilities for communication should also be initially documented in the supervision agreement.

5.6 Coordination Office for Early Career Researchers

The Coordination Office for Early Career Researchers at the THGA is located in the research management. This department is in charge of the shared mailbox phd@thga.de and handles inquiries. Those interested in doctoral studies and also those interested in supervision are cordially invited to arrange a non-binding consultation.

6 The Doctorate

6.1 Duration and Start

The doctorate involves independent research work and is carried out on the rules of good scientific practice within a project. The duration of the doctorate should generally be three to a maximum of four years. Doctoral periods may be longer or shorter in individual cases and in agreement with the supervisor.

The doctoral phase begins with the enrollment as a doctoral student at the university that opens the doctoral procedure and subsequent enrollment at the THGA, which documents the enrollment date at the university or the PK NRW accordingly.

6.2 Professional and Personal Qualification

In the case of cooperative doctorates, a certain number and type of specialized as well as interdisciplinary continuing education courses may be required, or structured programs may be mandatory. The individual mandatory courses are discussed and planned at the beginning of the doctorate with the Coordination Office for Early Career Researchers and the supervisor. This planning is presented to the doctoral committee for information. The supervisors should facilitate the doctoral candidate's participation in continuing education and networking measures within the framework of a structured doctorate, both in terms of time and financially. If the cooperating university is not in the immediate vicinity, the junior researcher coordination should check whether existing offers at the THGA or in the surrounding area are recognized. Alternatively, supervisors should consider the potential business travel involved in financial

planning. If an employment relationship exists, the applicable personnel processes must also be observed accordingly.

The professional qualification usually includes the participation in:

- national and international meetings, congresses, and conferences
- literature seminars
- seminars on good scientific practice
- the publication of research results
- transfer activities, for example, in science communication
- seminars on professional research data management

Personal qualification usually covers the areas of:

- didactics
- mobility
- scientific writing
- patents and other intellectual property rights
- project, time, and stress management
- presentations and pitches
- strategic networking
- intercultural communication
- successful acquisition of third-party funding
- leadership skills
- career orientation

Depending on the doctoral regulations, various formats and focal points become mandatory courses prior to the submission of the dissertation. In addition, the attendance of supplementary, individual further training measures can be coordinated with the supervisor (e.g. specific specialist seminars), provided that financial resources are available. In this case, the personnel development department is available for advice.

6.3 Reporting

The reporting of the employees within a third-party funded doctoral project is carried out according to the specifications and guidelines of the funding body. In addition, research-related activities are to be documented for the university's reporting system over the period of employment. In this regard, the THGA is guided not only by the classic metrics, but also by the San Francisco Declaration of Research Assessment (DORA) and the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA), which call for more qualitative as well as diverse criteria for scientific achievements, also with regard to the discipline.

Examples for such criteria at the THGA are:

- peer-reviewed publications
- Open Access publications and their form up to a white paper or publication in a non-specialized medium
- publication of research data, algorithms, and software
- conference presentations/posters/participations
- national and international mobility
- start-ups

- activities in lay or scientific communication, e.g., blog posts, podcast invitations, talks, etc.
- acquisition of third-party funding projects
- supervision of various theses
- memberships in committees and societies
- teaching activities

6.4 Research Data Management

The doctoral candidate receives a personal drive, which is to be used sustainably by making storage names logically traceable. It is advisable to create a metafile to explain the storage logic for subsequent use. Appropriate workshops are offered for this purpose. In case of leaving the project as a collaborator or doctoral student, the content of the drive is transferred to the supervisor to ensure good scientific practice as well as reportability during and after a project.

6.5 Submission of the Dissertation

The dissertation, its form, submission, and publication are subject to the regulation of the respective doctoral regulations of the faculty of the first supervision entitled to award the doctorate. Generally, a doctorate can be awarded by means of a monograph or a cumulative dissertation. If individual parts of a dissertation are pre-published, this must be recognizable in the dissertation. It is strongly recommended that illustrations are reprinted only with permission or a license agreement in hand. These are usually free of charge on the part of the authors within the purpose of the doctorate. Publication usually takes place after the oral examination and possible post-processing via the university library. In all cases, a final print copy and a digital version will be provided for documentation at the THGA. Submissions are made through the Admissions and Examinations Office. Since each course can be individual, the Coordination Office for Early Career Researchers can help with the time planning at the beginning of the doctoral phase.

6.6 Behavior in Conflict Situations

In the case of professional violations within the research work and/or other types of discord between the doctoral candidate and the supervisor, the Coordination Office for Early Career Researchers or the ombudsperson can be called upon by both supervising parties for consultation and, if necessary, mediation.