

Doctoral degree regulations of the Faculty of Sociology at Bielefeld University of 30 April 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 (V. NRW. p. 547), last amended by Article 2 of the Act of 19 December 2024 (GV. NRW. p. 1222), the Faculty of Sociology 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 – Official Announcements – Vol. 52 No. 7 p. 164) issued the following doctoral degree regulations:

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§ 1 Scope of application

These doctoral degree regulations apply to all doctoral procedures performed at the Faculty of Sociology. They apply based on the general regulation of doctoral studies of Bielefeld University. As far as no provisions have been made in these doctoral degree regulations, the general regulation of doctoral studies of Bielefeld University will apply.

§ 2 Doctoral degree (§ 2 RPO)

(1) The Faculty of Sociology, hereinafter referred to as the Faculty, awards the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Dr. phil. (doctor philosophiae)) based on a doctoral thesis and an oral exam.

(2) The Faculty may also award the above doctoral degree “honoris causa” for exceptional academic achievements in the social sciences or corresponding idealistic merits in supporting social sciences (cf. § 19).

§ 3 Purpose and forms of the doctorate (§ 3 RPO)

(1) The doctoral thesis and the oral exam should demonstrate the candidate's ability to carry out independent academic work beyond the general study objective in accordance with § 58 (1) HG.

(2) The doctorate comprises an academic paper and an oral exam.

(3) The doctorate will take place

- a) in the scope of the doctoral programme of the Faculty of Sociology, or
- b) in the scope of other interdisciplinary doctoral programmes at Bielefeld University in which the Faculty of Sociology is involved based on a corresponding decision by the Faculty Conference, or
- c) as a doctorate independent of a degree programme.

(4) The doctoral programme of the Faculty of Sociology is part of the doctoral education of the Bielefeld Graduate School in History and Sociology (BGHS). The Faculty of Sociology, the Department of History and the Board of the Bielefeld Graduate School in History and Sociology cooperate closely in implementation of the doctoral programme. This does not affect the Faculty's responsibility. The study programme of the doctoral programme in Sociology is regulated through the study regulations of the doctoral programme.

(5) Doctoral degree regulations and study regulations for the doctoral programme are adopted by the Faculty Conference on the recommendation of the doctoral committee.

(6) Persons who have been accepted as doctoral students by the Faculty in accordance with § 5 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 § 15. The provisions on leaves of absence in accordance with § 8 of the Enrolment Rules apply accordingly and remain unaffected.

§ 4 Doctoral committee (§ 4 RPO)

(1) The Faculty Conference elects the doctoral committee.

(2) The doctoral committee comprises three members from the group of university lecturers, one member with a doctorate from the group of lecturers, one member from the group of students, and one member from the group of technical and administrative employees. Only members of the committee with a doctorate are entitled to vote on decisions concerning the examination procedure. The doctoral committee elects a chair and a deputy from the group of university lecturers. The doctoral committee has a quorum if at least three members with voting rights are present in person or by electronic communication, including the chair or their deputy. The doctoral committee decides by a simple majority of the voting members present in an open vote; in the event of a tie, the chair has the casting vote. The term of office of the student member is one year, the term of office of all other members of the doctoral committee is two years.

(3) The doctoral committee ensures that the provisions of the doctoral degree regulations are complied with and ensures that the procedure is performed properly. It accepts applications for access to the doctoral procedure and, if applicable, to the doctoral programme. It determines the fulfilment of the access requirements for the doctoral procedure and, if applicable, for the doctoral programme, and decides on admission and acceptance as a doctoral student in accordance with § 5. It opens the doctoral procedure in accordance with § 8 upon the candidate's request. It appoints the members of the respective examination committee and the chair for each individual examination procedure. It monitors the deadlines stipulated in these rules.

(4) The doctoral committee may delegate all or some of its tasks to the chair by resolution. This does not apply in any cases involving unfavourable decisions relating to legal remedies.

§ 5 Access requirements and acceptance as a doctoral student (§§ 5 and 6 RPO)

(1) Access to the doctoral procedure (doctoral programme or doctorate independent of a degree programme) requires a successful degree in a degree programme in sociology or social or political science or another focus represented at the Faculty:

- a) Degree with generally at least "good" from a corresponding Master course within the meaning of § 61 (2) sentence 2 HG, or
- b) Degree with generally at least "good" from corresponding university studies with a standard period of study of at least eight semesters, for which a degree other than "Bachelor" is awarded, or
- c) Completion of relevant university studies with a standard period of study of at least six semesters and subsequent adequate studies preparing for the doctorate (alignment studies); the prerequisite for admission to the alignment studies is a very good Bachelor's degree (grade: "very good"). The alignment studies, which are determined in detail by the doctoral committee on the recommendation of the intended supervisor, have a scope of 30 CP in the first semester and are to be acquired within the scope of the Master course of the Faculty of Sociology. The examination results to be completed as part of the alignment studies must also be passed with "very good". Alignment studies are completed in the second semester with a written thesis at the scope of a further 30 CP,

which must be evaluated as "very good" in order to be considered adequate preparatory studies for the doctorate. 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 doctoral committee decides on exceptions to the requirements in sentences 1 a) and b) based on a statement by the intended supervisor, who may provide courses relevant to the doctoral thesis topic for the study programme; in this respect, access is subject to successful participation in these courses.

(2) Foreign degrees must be recognised by the relevant doctoral committee in accordance with § 63a HG. The following applies to evaluation of international qualifications apart from the rules of the Higher Education Act:

- the Convention on the Crediting 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 – may be applied for evaluation.

(3) The doctoral committee of the Faculty of Sociology decides on acceptance as a doctoral student for the doctorate within the scope of the doctoral programme of the Faculty of Sociology or within the scope of the doctorate independent of a degree programme (§ 3 (3) a) – c)). The application for acceptance as a doctoral student must be accompanied by

1. a statement of the proposed topic, a synopsis of the planned doctoral thesis and the categorisation of the doctoral thesis project in an area of expertise represented at the Faculty,
2. the type of doctoral thesis envisaged (monographic individual thesis, cumulative individual thesis, or team thesis),
3. a description of the previous study specialisations,
4. evidence of the university degrees obtained (proof of access requirements),
5. a curriculum vitae in tabular form with details of the personal and professional background,
6. naming of two references as well as the declaration of support from a person authorised to supervise in accordance with § 6,
7. a declaration regarding any current or previous doctoral procedures, also indicating the 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.

The doctoral committee may request revision of the exposé, stating the reasons in writing. The exposé must reflect the academic quality and feasibility of the doctoral project and give the impression that the candidate will be able to successfully complete their doctorate. If an exposé has to be revised based on the decision of the doctoral committee, the doctoral student will be accepted with reservations. The exposé must have been revised within three months. It may be revised up to twice in total. If the revision is not submitted on time or if the doctoral committee makes a final decision against acceptance as a doctoral student, this is deemed to be revoked. Exmatriculation will take place in these cases if enrolment has already taken place.

(4) Acceptance as a doctoral student is limited to five years. Justified applications for extensions can be submitted; these must also include a statement from the main supervisor. Acceptance will be communicated electronically and may also include the scope of the pre-doctoral studies. Further details are stipulated by the general regulation of doctoral studies.

§ 6 Supervision (§ 7 RPO)

(1) The doctoral committee assigns at least one supervisor who is responsible for the main supervision upon acceptance as a doctoral student. The second supervisor is usually appointed by the end of the third semester after acceptance as a doctoral student at the latest; the main supervisor and the doctoral committee must be informed of this beforehand without being asked. The main supervisor is responsible for continuous supervision. A supervision agreement in which rights and obligations are regulated is concluded between the supervisor and the doctoral student. The sample supervision agreement as approved by the Faculty Conference of the Faculty of Sociology applies.

(2) The supervision relationship established by the supervision agreement can only be terminated by a supervisor with good cause.

(3) Supervisors can generally be: members of the group of university lecturers with voting rights, Privatdozenten [senior lecturers], and other habilitated members of the Faculty with voting rights. Other members of the group of lecturers of the Faculty who have at least a doctorate as well as habilitated persons working outside the Faculty or university or those who have completed habilitation-equivalent academic achievements may also be appointed as supervisors upon application. Determination of the existence of habilitation-equivalent academic achievements is made by resolution of the Faculty Conference; it is valid for five years.

Subject to the following exceptions, the main supervisor must be a member of the group of university lecturers with voting rights or a habilitated member of the Faculty with voting rights. A member of the group of the Faculty's lecturers with at least a doctorate can be appointed as the main supervisor, in deviation from the previous sentence upon application. Approval of a project proposal or a joint project with doctoral student position(s) will entitle the applicant to submit an application.

Retired or emeritus members of the Faculty who have been appointed as senior professors may also be appointed as main supervisors in individual cases upon application. Approval of a project proposal with doctoral student position(s) will entitle the applicant to submit an application.

If a supervisor retires or becomes emeritus during the doctoral period or leaves the Faculty, they may continue the supervision with the consent of the doctoral student and the doctoral committee and may also be appointed as a reviewer, notwithstanding the provisions in § 9. In such a case, they are also deemed to be in the same status for the respective examination procedure as they were at the time of appointment as a supervisor. Both approvals must be documented and are valid for a period of two years, after which they must be reconfirmed.

Co-opted members of the Faculty may be main or second supervisors of a doctorate, provided the other requirements are met. If a co-opted member or a habilitated member with voting rights or a member with a doctorate or a senior professor of the Faculty is appointed as the main supervisor, the second supervisor must be a member of the group of university lecturers of the Faculty of Sociology with voting rights.

All applications in accordance with paragraph 3 must be submitted to the dean, will be decided by the doctoral committee and communicated to the Faculty Conference. If the doctoral committee has any reservations, it can ask the doctoral committee for a new consultation and decision.

§ 7 Obligations of doctoral students in the doctorate independent of a degree programme and as part of a doctoral programme

(1) The obligations of doctoral students within the scope of the doctorate independent of a degree programme include in particular:

- a) a presentation, usually once a year, in the scope of a thematically relevant colloquium or doctoral seminar; a total of at least three presentations should be made; the presentations should also provide information on the progress and progress of the doctorate. Compliance with these obligations must be documented in writing.
- b) doctoral counselling by the main supervisor twice a year, which is based on a report by the doctoral student on the status of the work.

Evidence of compliance with these obligations is a prerequisite for the opening of the doctoral procedure.

(2) The obligations of doctoral students on a doctoral programme include participation in the current study programme. Participation in the study programme is generally planned for the first four semesters. The doctoral committee, in consultation with the doctoral student, determines the study requirements to be completed as part of the doctoral programme, under consideration of the doctoral student's individual educational background and the topic of the doctoral thesis upon admission to the doctoral programme. Proof of such academic achievements is a prerequisite for the opening of the doctoral procedure; the study requirements are regulated in the study regulations of the respective doctoral programme.

§ 8 Commencement 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 submitted electronically to the chair of the doctoral committee.

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

1. notice of acceptance as a doctoral student,
2. if applicable, proof of participation in the doctoral programme of the Faculty of Sociology or proof of participation in the doctoral programme of another Faculty within the meaning of § 3 (3) b; in the case of a doctorate independent of a degree programme, proof in accordance with § 7 (1),
3. if applicable, proof of the pre-doctoral studies,
4. a CV detailing personal and professional development,
5. a list of academic publications and presentations that the doctoral student has published to date,
6. three copies of the doctoral thesis,

7. an electronic version of the doctoral thesis and an assurance that the paper version and the electronic version are identical,
8. a summary of the doctoral thesis, usually no longer than 10 pages, which includes the aim, content, and results of the doctoral thesis, in German or English in triplicate. In the case of a cumulative doctoral thesis, the synthesising essay in accordance with § 10 (2) a) replaces the summary,
9. in the case of a cumulative doctoral thesis: a statement written by the doctoral student on their own partial achievements and their weighting as well as a written confirmation of this by the co-authors,
10. in the case of a team thesis in accordance with § 10 (3): a report jointly written by the doctoral students, stating the individual authorship of the respective parts of the doctoral thesis, as well as whether the persons involved have already applied for or completed a doctoral procedure and have used parts of the submitted thesis,
11. a declaration by the doctoral student
 - a) that the doctoral student – in the case of team thesis in accordance with § 10 (3), the doctoral students – has or have prepared the submitted work(s) independently, that only the named persons have contributed to the work, that no texts or sections of texts from third parties or own examination papers or publications have been taken over without marking, and that all tools and sources used by them have been indicated in their work (declaration of independence),
 - b) that they are aware of the applicable doctoral degree regulations,
 - c) that third parties have neither directly nor indirectly received money or monetary benefits from them for mediation activities or for work related to the content of the submitted doctoral thesis,
 - d) that they have not yet submitted the doctoral thesis for examination for a public or other academic examination, and
 - e) whether they have submitted the same paper, a paper similar in essential parts or another paper as a doctoral thesis post-doctoral habilitation publication to another university and, if applicable, with which results,
 - f) that they agree to an electronic review of the doctoral thesis (plagiarism check),
 - g) on the publication status of the doctoral thesis or individual parts, which is to be appended to the summary or the synthesising essay in accordance with § 10 (2) a),
 - h) whether it is a cumulative or monographic doctoral thesis or a team thesis. All declarations are included in the examination file.

(3) The application to open the doctoral procedure may be withdrawn as long as no opinions have been submitted.

(4) The doctoral committee will decide on the opening of the doctoral procedure in accordance with § 4. If the opening is refused, the doctoral student must be informed without undue delay, stating the reasons for the rejection and providing instruction on the legal right to appeal. The opening of the doctoral procedure is to be refused if one of the prerequisites in accordance with paragraph 2 is not met or if any documents are missing; in the latter case, an appropriate deadline for submission of the missing documents will be set beforehand.

(5) Evaluation of examination results will be completed no later than six months after receipt of the request to open the proceedings.

(6) A failed doctoral attempt can only be repeated once and with a new topic. Failed attempts at other universities count towards this.

§ 9 Examination committee (§ 9 RPO)

(1) The doctoral committee appoints an examination committee for each individual doctoral procedure. The members of the Faculty must have a majority on the examination committee.

(2) The doctoral committee appoints a member of the group of university lecturers with voting rights on the examination committee as chair. The chair should not be the supervisor, co-author, or reviewer of the thesis.

(3) The examination committee usually has four members. All members must hold doctorates. At least two members must be members of the group of university lecturers of the Faculty of Sociology with voting rights. A member of the examination committee may be a retired or emeritus professor or a retired habilitated member of the Faculty or a senior professor without voting rights. One member of the examination committee is usually a member of the group of lecturers. The reviewers in accordance with paragraph 4 are members of the examination committee. Another member of another faculty or university or research institution who holds at least a doctorate and is not a member of the Faculty may be appointed to the examination committee with voting rights in exceptional cases, in particular in the case of interdisciplinary theses or if the doctoral subject is not sufficiently represented in the Faculty of Sociology.

(4) The doctoral committee usually appoints two reviewers, one of whom must be a member of the Faculty's group of university lecturers with voting rights. The main supervisor should be appointed as a reviewer. A further supervisor can be appointed as a reviewer as long as they are not from the same working group as the main supervisor. In principle, co-authorship of a cumulative doctoral thesis excludes the function of reviewer. In exceptions, one to two articles co-authored with a reviewer will be accepted upon request for a cumulative doctoral thesis. If a reviewer is a co-author, a third independent opinion must be prepared. The third reviewer becomes an additional voting member of the examination committee.

(5) The examination committee has the following tasks:

1. it decides on the acceptance and evaluation of the doctoral thesis in accordance with §§ 11 and 12,
2. it performs and evaluates the oral exam in accordance with § 13,
3. it determines the overall rating in accordance with § 14.

§ 10 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). 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. The doctoral thesis should not exceed 300 pages. It generally must be written in German or English; the doctoral committee decides on the admission of doctoral theses in other languages. Doctoral theses may be submitted as a monographic individual work, as a cumulative individual work or as a team thesis. A monographic individual work cannot have any co-authors.

(2) The cumulative doctoral thesis must meet the following criteria:

- a) The cumulative doctoral thesis comprises a number of academic papers written on a common academic topic. The connection between these papers arises from a specific academic question and must be adequately justified in a synthesising academic paper. The synthesising essay has the status of an independent academic contribution at a scope of usually 20 pages on the fundamentals, status, and development of a research field and represents the contributions of the doctoral thesis to this.
- b) At least four essays that have the status of a single academic paper together must be submitted in the case of a cumulative doctorate. At least one essay must be written by the sole author; another should be written by the first author. In the case of co-authorships, the doctoral student's share must be clearly identified, and a sworn statement must be made regarding their personal contribution. The doctoral student must also inform all authors about the use of the work as a cumulative doctoral thesis as well as about their statement on their personal contribution and ensure that no copyrights are infringed by use of the work, also with regard to the publication of the doctoral thesis. All declarations are included in the examination file.

(3) The (intra- or interdisciplinary) team thesis must fulfil the following criteria:

- a) the theoretical or method-related content of a team thesis and the academic work actually invested must differ significantly from an individual thesis; the contribution of each doctoral student must correspond to the academic rank of an individual thesis, be clearly distinguishable and capable of being evaluated;
- b) in the case of a team thesis, doctoral students must indicate their individual authorship of certain dimensions or individual sections of the thesis; they must present and prioritise their own contributions to the team thesis in a written statement. The co-authors confirm this in an informal written declaration. All declarations are included in the examination file.
- c) the doctoral students enclose a joint report on the progress of the collaboration, which recognises the individual contribution of the doctoral students to the joint work.

§ 11 Assessment of the doctoral thesis (§ 10 RPO)

(1) Each reviewer in accordance with § 9 (4) receives the doctoral thesis with their appointment. The doctoral thesis must be made available to the other members of the examination committee and for inspection by the doctoral members of the Faculty with voting rights during the display period for the opinions in accordance with paragraph 5.

(2) The reviewers submit their opinions within two months of their appointment; if the month of August is included, the deadline is set at three months. The opinions may be issued in writing or in electronic form.

(3) The opinions must be in favour of the acceptance or rejection of the doctoral thesis or its provisional return for revision. In the latter case, the opinions must propose a revision period that may not exceed six months. If no majority of the opinions is in favour of accepting, rejecting, or returning the thesis, the doctoral committee will appoint a further reviewer in accordance with § 9 (4), who will then become a member of the examination committee and prepare a review within two months. Each reviewer proposes an evaluation of the doctoral thesis if the thesis is accepted. Possible distinctions are:

- 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 extraordinary academic achievement, the distinction “outstanding work (summa cum laude)” may be awarded. If all available opinions recommend the distinction “outstanding (summa cum laude)”, the prerequisite for the award of the distinction “outstanding (summa cum laude)” is met.

(4) The opinions must be made accessible to the doctoral student via the doctoral committee as soon as all reviews are available. They may comment on the opinions within one week. If the doctoral student waives such a statement, the submission procedure for the doctoral thesis can commence immediately.

(5) The opinions must be made available to the doctoral members of the Faculty with voting rights and the members of the examination committee for three weeks together with any statement by the doctoral student. The doctoral committee informs the persons authorised to view them accordingly. The display can be done electronically. Every member of the Faculty with voting rights and holding a doctorate has the right to inspect the doctoral thesis during the display period and to lodge a written objection to the proposal to accept, reject, return for revision, or for evaluation of the doctoral thesis. Objections must include a statement of reasons. If an objection is raised, the doctoral committee will request a further opinion from a university lecturer, which must be prepared within two months; the further reviewer will become a voting member of the examination committee.

§ 12 Decision on the doctoral thesis (§ 10 (9) RPO)

(1) Based on the opinions, the examination committee will decide on acceptance, evaluation in accordance with § 11 (3) s. 5 – 8, rejection, or return for revision of the doctoral thesis. The additional opinions within the meaning of § 9 (4) sentence 6, § 11 (3) sentence 3, and § 11 (5) sentence 6 must also be considered in the decision. Every member of the examination committee has one vote. The vote is open, abstention is excluded. The chair has the casting vote in the case of a tie.

(2) The decision on the doctoral thesis must be made no later than two weeks after the end of the display period for the opinions in accordance with § 11 (5); during the period for which no courses have been announced, the decision must be made within six weeks.

(3) The doctoral student must be informed immediately of the acceptance of the doctoral thesis together with the date of the oral exam.

(4) The examination committee will set an adequate deadline, which should not exceed six months, for fulfilment of the conditions it has formulated if the doctoral thesis is returned for revision; a revised version must be submitted within this deadline. If the doctoral student fails to meet this deadline without cause, the doctoral thesis will be treated as rejected. The doctoral procedure will be suspended until this revised version is submitted on time. If the revised version is submitted on time, the doctoral procedure will be revived starting with § 11 (3); it is not possible to return it for revision.

(5) Rejection of the doctoral thesis and the reasons for it must be communicated to the doctoral student in writing without undue delay after a hearing, with instruction on the legal right to appeal. An appeal against the decision of the examination committee may be lodged with the doctoral committee; the Faculty Conference will decide on the appeal.

(6) If the doctoral thesis is rejected, the doctorate is failed; an oral exam will then not take place. The doctoral student may undertake a second doctoral attempt with a new topic in accordance with § 8 (6). A third attempt is not possible.

§ 13 Oral exam (§ 11 RPO)

(1) The oral exam takes the form of a disputation on the doctoral thesis. It is approved by the examination committee. Each doctoral student is examined individually. In the case of doctoral students who have written a team thesis, the oral exams can be combined at the request of all doctoral students. The examination time is extended accordingly.

(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. The examination committee decides on the exception. 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 disputation has the purpose of:

1. demonstrating the doctoral student's ability to discuss an academic problem orally; this refers primarily to the work presented and the theses put forward,
2. examining whether the doctoral student is able to justify, differentiate, and further elaborate on the results they have produced and the theoretical and methodological foundations of the subject touched upon in the doctoral thesis in the face of questions and objections.

(4) For doctoral students in accordance with § 5 (1) c), the oral exam will also cover the areas in which the pre-doctoral studies have taken place.

(5) The oral exam will take place no later than eight weeks after acceptance of the doctoral thesis; the date will be announced in time. A longer deadline can only be permitted with the agreement of the doctoral student. The disputation usually lasts 60 minutes and is held in German or English. The doctoral student may give a presentation of up to 10 minutes in which they deal in particular with the opinions.

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

(7) The disputation is open to the public unless the doctoral student objects to this in writing.

(8) Immediately after the oral exam, the examination committee decides by simple majority whether the oral exam has been passed or failed. If passed, the oral exam is evaluated with

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

In the case of exceptional academic achievements, the distinction "outstanding (*summa cum laude*)" may be awarded for the oral exam. If assessments differ, a decision is taken by voting. In the case of a tie, the chair has the casting vote.

(9) If the doctoral student has failed the oral exam, they may repeat this part of the examination once. The repeat examination can take place after two months at the earliest and within twelve months at the latest.

§ 14 Overall grade of the doctorate (§ 12 RPO)

The examination committee first determines the evaluation of the oral exam result. The examination committee then determines the overall grade in accordance with § 13 (8) sentences 2 and 3 based on both examination results (doctoral thesis and oral exam). The doctoral thesis is weighted more than the oral exam. If assessments differ, a decision is taken by voting. The vote of the chair will be decisive if there is a tie.

§ 15 Completion of the doctorate (§ 13 RPO)

(1) Following the decision of the examination committee, the dean issues a preliminary certificate concerning the passing of the examination. This 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 doctoral examination certificate has been issued.

(2) The dean will award the doctorate by handing out the doctoral certificate and doctoral examination certificate. The certificate contains the degree "Doktorin der Philosophie" or "Doktor der Philosophie" (Dr. phil.); the doctoral examination certificate contains the title of the doctoral thesis, the evaluations of the doctoral thesis and 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. Both graduation documents are to be issued in English upon request.

(3) The doctoral degree certificate is not to be handed over until publication of the doctoral thesis has been ensured in accordance with § 16 or a publication contract has been concluded with a publisher.

§ 16 Publication of the doctoral thesis (§ 14 RPO)

(1) The doctoral student is obligated to make their doctoral thesis accessible to the academic public in an appropriate manner. The reviewers should advise the doctoral student on the publication version.

(2) The doctoral thesis has been made available to the academic public in an appropriate manner if the doctoral student, in addition to the copy (copies) required for archiving in accordance with § 8 (2) No. 6, delivers a copy to the University Library free of charge, which must be printed on age-resistant wood and acid-free paper and bound in a durable manner, and also ensures its dissemination by:

- a) delivery of a further two copies in book or photo print, or
- b) proof of complete publication in a journal, or
- c) (1) proof of distribution in book trade by a commercial publisher via a print process with a first print run, or (2) by using a print-on-demand process with guaranteed availability for at least five years, or (3) via an electronic version (e-book). The publication as a doctoral thesis must be indicated on the page following the title page, including the place of the doctorate, or
- d) submission of an electronic version, the data format and data carrier of which must be agreed with the University Library.

In cases a) and c), 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 library to the 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.

§ 17 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 will be 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.

§ 18 Inspection (§ 16 RPO)

The doctoral student has the right to inspect the doctoral documents within one month of receiving their doctoral degree certificate.

§ 19 Honorary doctorate (§ 18 RPO)

The Faculty Conference decides on the awarding of the doctoral degree h.c. upon application by at least two members of the Faculty who hold a doctorate. The Faculty Conference decides by a three-quarters majority of its voting members with a doctorate. Apart from this, § 18 RPO applies.

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

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

(2) Proof of the academic qualification required for the doctorate must be provided by the candidates through their doctoral exam results. These comprise an academic paper (doctoral thesis) and an oral exam in the form of a defence (disputation).

§ 20 b) Agreement

Implementation of the doctoral procedure in accordance with § 20 a) (1) requires an agreement with a foreign partner university or partner faculty in which both partners undertake to facilitate a joint doctorate and to regulate the details of the cooperation.

§ 20 c) Corresponding application

The provisions of these doctoral degree regulations apply to the doctoral degree procedure in accordance with § 20 a) (1) sentence 1, unless otherwise specified below. Cooperation in accordance with § 20 a) (1) sentence 2 is subject to the provisions of the agreement in accordance with § 20 b).

§ 20 d) Access to the doctoral procedure

(1) § 5 (1) applies with the proviso that the doctoral student must provide evidence of a degree from a university in the country in which one of the two institutions is located that entitles them to award a doctorate.

(2) § 5 (4) applies with the proviso that the application must also include:

- a) a declaration from the partner university or partner faculty that the requirements for access to the doctorate have been met, and
- b) a declaration by a member of the partner university or partner faculty that they are willing to supervise and, if necessary, review the doctoral thesis.

§ 20 e) Doctoral thesis, supervision, and enrolment

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

(2) Supervisors of the doctoral thesis are one member of the Faculty of Sociology authorised to supervise in accordance with § 6 and one member of the partner university or partner faculty authorised to supervise. The declarations in accordance with § 20 d) (2) a) and b) should be submitted to the doctoral committee at the beginning of the supervision relationship.

(3) While working on the doctoral thesis, the doctoral student must be enrolled as a doctoral student at Bielefeld University; the possibility of taking a leave of absence in accordance with § 8 of the Enrolment Rules remains unaffected.

§ 20 f) Reviewers

(1) The doctoral thesis is generally assessed by one member of the Faculty of Sociology authorised to assess the doctoral thesis in accordance with § 9 and one member of the partner university or partner faculty authorised to assess the doctoral thesis.

(2) The doctoral committee can appoint a supervisor as a reviewer.

(3) § 20 e) (1) sentence 1 applies accordingly to the language of the opinions.

§ 20 g) Oral exam

(1) The oral exam comprises a defence (disputation) of the theses presented in the doctoral thesis, unless otherwise stipulated in the partnership agreement.

(2) § 20 e) (1) sentence 1 applies accordingly to the language of the defence.

(3) The oral exam is usually an individual examination. The duration is based on the rules contained in the agreement in accordance with § 20 b).

§ 20 h) Examination committee

The examination committee comprises at least four members who are authorised examiners in accordance with the requirements of the Faculty or partner university or accordance with the partnership agreement. Two examiners should be authorised examiners from the Faculty of Sociology in accordance with § 9 and two should be authorised examiners from the partner university or partner faculty. Each Faculty must be represented by at least one member. In deviation from § 9, the examination committee does not necessarily have to consist predominantly of members of the Faculty of Sociology (with voting rights) at Bielefeld University and the chair does not necessarily have to be a university lecturer from the Faculty of Sociology at Bielefeld University with voting rights.

§ 20 i) Completion of the doctoral procedure

§ 15 (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. The doctoral student 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 § 20 b). 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 university or partner faculty, 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 Sociology. The partner university or partner faculty will prepare its final documents in accordance with its own rules and, if necessary, arranges for the state certification of the jointly supervised doctorate.

§ 21 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 must be observed accordingly for withdrawal from the oral exam.

§ 22 Scope of application, transitional provisions

(1) These doctoral degree regulations, hereinafter referred to as the Doctoral Degree Regulations 2025, apply to all doctoral students who were accepted as doctoral students by the Faculty of Sociology after their entry into force in accordance with § 23, as well as to all doctoral students who were accepted as doctoral students by the Faculty of Sociology in accordance with the Doctoral Degree Regulations of 28 July 2017 (Bielefeld University Gazette – Official Announcements – Volume 46 No. 13 p. 211), hereinafter referred to as the Doctoral Degree Regulations 2017.

(2) Doctoral students who were accepted as doctoral students by the Faculty of Sociology before the 2017 doctoral degree regulations entered into effect and have not yet completed their doctoral procedure can still submit an application to open the doctoral procedure until 31 March 2026 and complete it in accordance with the doctoral degree regulations applicable to them; after this date, they will automatically switch to the 2025 doctoral degree regulations. Academic achievements already completed as part of the doctoral programme will be recognised. These doctoral students may transition to the Doctoral Degree Regulations 2025 upon application. Such application cannot be withdrawn. It is not possible for these doctoral students to switch from a doctorate within a doctoral programme to a doctorate independent of a degree programme.

§ 23 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. At the same time, the doctoral degree regulations of the Faculty of Sociology of 1 June 2015 (Bielefeld University Gazette – Official Announcements – Vol. 44 No. 8 p. 177) and of July 2017 (Bielefeld University Gazette – Official Announcements – Vol. 46 No. 13 p. 211) lose their effect, notwithstanding the provisions in § 22 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 Sociology of Bielefeld University of 22 January 2025.

Bielefeld, 30 April 2025

The rector
of Bielefeld University,
University Professor Dr Angelika Eppe