

Doctoral Study Guidelines

for Supervisors



These Guidelines are intended to

- provide helpful suggestions to assist newly appointed professors, long-serving professors, those with a German postdoctoral lecturing qualification, and junior research group leaders who are qualified examiners to successfully supervise doctoral students.
- provide you, as a supervisor of doctoral students, with transparent and **comprehensive information on the procedure for obtaining a doctoral degree** according to the PromO, and thus ensure the whole procedure runs smoothly.
- show how you as a supervisor can provide optimum support to your doctoral students to enable them to **successfully conclude their doctoral project in the shortest time possible**, including the associated administrative procedural process.

These Guidelines are based on

- the Joint Regulations for the degree of Doctor of Natural Sciences (Dr. rer. nat.), in force since 30.10.2018, and
- the regulations in force since 26.03.2013 for the award of a doctorate in horticultural sciences (Dr. rer. hort.) at the Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Universität Hannover, hereinafter referred to as **PromO** for short, and
- the **Guidelines for Good Supervision of Doctoral Students at Leibniz Universität Hannover** adopted by the Senate on 10 July 2013 and by the Presidential Executive Committee on 14 August 2013.



Faculty of Natural Sciences

Dean's Office - Graduate School of Natural Sciences

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www.naturwissenschaften.uni-hannover.de/en/research/doctoral-studies/



Contents

Contents.....	2
A. Guideline for Supervisors of the Faculty of Natural Sciences	3
1. General comments	3
2. Information on the supervision of doctoral studies	4
a) Guidelines	4
b) Qualified examiners.....	4
c) Supervisory relationship and Supervision Agreement	4
3. Procedure for obtaining a doctoral degree in eight steps.....	5
Step 1: Getting accepted by a doctoral supervisor	5
Step 2: Acceptance of a doctoral student and registration	5
Step 3: Submission of the doctoral thesis and applying for admission to the doctoral examination	6
Step 4: Display of the doctoral thesis and the reviews.....	7
Step 5: Setting a date for the examination or thesis defence	7
Step 6: Oral examination / thesis defence and overall assessment of the doctoral work.....	8
Step 7: Publication of the doctoral thesis	8
Step 8: Conferral of doctorate	8
4. List of important links.....	9
5. Contact.....	9
a) Team Promotion (Doctoral Student's Office).....	9
b) GRANAT Graduate School.....	9
B. Questionary for entry into doctoral supervision.....	10

A. Guideline for Supervisors of the Faculty of Natural Sciences

1. General comments

The **procedure for obtaining the doctoral degree (Dr. rer. nat.)** is based on the Joint Regulations for the Degree of Doctor of Natural Sciences (Dr. rer. nat.) of the following faculties of Leibniz University Hannover, as amended in 2018: Faculty of Natural Sciences, Faculty of Mathematics and Physics, Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science and the QUEST-Leibniz Research School.

The **procedure for obtaining the doctoral degree of Dr. rer. hort.** is based on the regulations adopted in 2013 for the doctorate of horticultural science of the Faculty of Natural Sciences of Leibniz University Hannover.

With these doctoral regulations, the Faculty of Natural Sciences meets the growing demands in the area of structured doctoral programmes (research training groups, graduate schools). It furthermore takes into account the quality assurance requirements in the academic qualification of young scientists, which are becoming more and more differentiated, and the continuously increasing internationalisation of the doctorate.

The academic demands made on the quality of the doctorate in our faculty require a substantial increase in **administrative work**. At Leibniz University Hannover, the faculties alone are responsible for the procedures for obtaining a doctoral degree. In addition to the faculties of Leibniz University Hannover mentioned above, the Hannover Medical School (MHH) and the University of Veterinary Medicine Hannover (TiHo) are involved in the administrative process in the scope of the Dr. rer. nat. Added to this are stipulations and the coordination with the Graduate Academy of Leibniz University Hannover. To this end the Faculty of Natural Sciences has established the faculty's own graduate school – GRANAT – at the Dean's Office. In cooperation with the institutes GRANAT is particularly responsible for supporting doctorates in structured programmes for doctoral students and individual doctorates and for establishing tools for the quality assurance of the doctoral studies. GRANAT therefore also has a responsibility to optimise the administrative aspects of the procedures for doctoral study and is the point of contact for all parties involved in respect of proposals for its continual improvement. The share of our faculty alone in terms of administrative work for doctorates is around 550 doctoral procedures ongoing at any one time, and around 100 doctoral examinations per year.

All persons and institutions involved in this procedure strive to provide an administrative procedure which is as effective as possible and offers optimum planning certainty. This is done in the interests of the doctoral students and the other participants in equal measure.

These documents are intended to enable doctoral candidates, doctoral students, supervisors and other persons involved to conduct the procedure for obtaining a doctoral degree as smoothly as possible.

- If you have any **questions or are unsure** please contact our Promotion Team in the Doctoral Student's Office (Building 3403 Room A006) **at an early stage**:
promotion@nat.uni-hannover.de

2. Information on the supervision of doctoral studies

a) Guidelines

Before you agree to take on the supervision of a doctoral degree, please read the PromO and the Guidelines for Good Supervision of Doctoral Students at Leibniz University Hannover regarding your tasks, rights and responsibilities in the procedure for obtaining a doctoral degree. Supervisors now have more scope than they had under previous regulations.

PromO

<https://www.naturwissenschaften.uni-hannover.de/en/research/doctoral-studies/doctoral-procedure/>

Guidelines for Good Supervision of Doctoral Students at Leibniz University Hannover

<https://www.graduiertenakademie.uni-hannover.de/en/guidance/for-supervisors-and-faculties/>

b) Qualified examiners

As a matter of principle, only qualified examiners are allowed to supervise doctoral students (Section 5 PromO). Qualified examiners are in particular

- Full-time university lecturers of the faculty
- Qualified examiners of other faculties of the LUH and the natural science disciplines of the MHH or TiHo (with the agreement of the Faculty Council); in the case of supervision by examiners of MHH or TiHo, the Faculty Council can determine that at least one further supervisor of the Faculty of Natural Sciences must be included in the procedure.
- Junior research group leaders of Leibniz University Hannover, if they have been authorised as qualified examiners (with the agreement of the Faculty Council)

Cooperative supervisions by several qualified examiners (supervisory team) are possible and welcome.

Staff of the LUH, MHH or TiHo who have the German postdoctoral lecturing qualification can also be approved as supervisors after an appropriate decision of the Faculty Council. Section 5 Paras. 3 and 4 PromO contains detailed provisions for other groups (leaders of a junior research group, qualified examiners of other universities).

c) Supervisory relationship and Supervision Agreement

A Supervision Agreement shall make the relationship between doctoral students and supervisors transparent in terms of content and time. It serves to assure both sides about the allocated tasks and expectations.

The supervisory relationship between supervisor and doctoral student starts officially with the following, written, mutual commitment

- by the supervisor or the supervisory team to supervise the doctoral project and to provide the resources required for this and
- by the doctoral student to fulfil the tasks/duties transferred to them.
- This mutual commitment must be documented dating and signing a so-called "Supervision Agreement" by all parties concerned.

The Supervision Agreement contained in the current PromO is much more comprehensive than in the previous one and is governed by Section 5.

The Faculty of Natural Sciences implements the Supervision Agreement stipulations contained in the PromO in such a way that the recommendations of the Science Council ("Wissenschaftsrat") and the German Research Foundation (DFG) are also taken into account. The faculty endeavours to treat individual



doctoral students and doctoral students from structured doctoral student programmes (research training groups or graduate schools) equally as far as the quality of the doctoral supervision is concerned.

The Supervision Agreement is available as a template and also forms part of the application documents to be accepted as a doctoral student.

Application to be Accepted as a Doctoral Student pursuant to Section 4 Para. 2 PromO (PDF file)
https://www.naturwissenschaften.uni-hannover.de/fileadmin/naturwissenschaften/NAT_Forschung/Promotion/PDF/PromO_Antrag-Annahme.pdf

If required, the Supervision Agreement can include supplementary/additional provisions.

3. Procedure for obtaining a doctoral degree in eight steps

Here is an overview of the most important formal steps in the procedure for obtaining a doctoral degree. Please note that these Guidelines are intended only as assistance. Only the text of the Doctoral Degree Regulations is legally binding.

There are usually eleven dates per year for the doctoral process. As a rule, the Faculty Council decides on doctoral projects in four meetings each semester within the lecture period. In addition, outside semester time further doctoral projects are decided on by the Dean.

Step 1: Getting accepted by a doctoral supervisor

Graduates wishing to undertake doctoral studies will contact you directly and ask you for a topic for their doctoral studies/doctoral project and whether you are prepared to supervise their doctoral studies as either the main supervisor or additional supervisor, e.g. as part of a team of supervisors (cooperative supervision).

Good supervision starts even before the official supervisory relationship begins. We recommend that every supervisor approached has a preliminary discussion with the potential doctoral student to systematically clarify important issues concerning the doctoral project, the supervision and the payment.

Questionary for entry into doctoral supervision

<https://www.naturwissenschaften.uni-hannover.de/de/forschung/promotion/promotionsverfahren/>

(PDF file in Step 1: "Getting accepted by a doctoral supervisor")

also Part B of these Guidelines

If you have agreed to supervise an applicant for a doctoral project, please clarify, in consultation with the Doctoral Students' Office, where necessary, whether your candidate fulfils the admission requirements for doctoral studies pursuant to Section 3 PromO. Where applicable, work out suggestions for assessment tests pursuant to Section 3 Para. 4 PromO.

Step 2: Acceptance of a doctoral student and enrolment

The faculty will accept a candidate as a doctoral student if they fulfil the admission requirements (Section 3 PromO). The decision on the application to be accepted as a doctoral student and - where necessary - on proposals for assessment tests is taken by the Faculty Council.

By accepting a candidate as a doctoral student, the faculty provides a definite agreement in two respects (Section 4 Para. 1 PromO) and thus legal certainty for the doctoral candidate:

- the doctoral candidate will be academically supervised during the doctoral phase (Section 5 PromO and point A.2.c of this Guide) and



- the dissertation will be scientifically evaluated by an Examination Board.

Your duty as a supervisor is therefore to ensure that the doctoral candidate submits the application to be accepted as a doctoral student to the Dean's Office of the faculty immediately after having received your (verbal) agreement to act as supervisor. The Dean's Office holds a compilation of the documents required for this purpose. Please urge your doctoral candidate to use the current version of these pre-prepared application documents and to complete them in full on the computer.

Application to be Accepted as a Doctoral Student pursuant to Section 4 Para. 2 PromO (PDF file)
https://www.naturwissenschaften.uni-hannover.de/fileadmin/naturwissenschaften/NAT_Forschung/Promotion/PDF/PromO_Antrag-Annahme.pdf

By doing this you ensure the procedure for obtaining a doctorate is a fast and as smooth as possible, because the application for admission to the doctoral examination may be submitted three months after being accepted by the Faculty Council at the earliest (Section 6 Para. 1 PromO).

The decisions of the Faculty Council on applications for acceptance as a doctoral student are communicated to the applicant in writing, including the decision on any possible conditions pursuant to Section 3 Para. 4 PromO.

Doctoral candidates should register at the LUH as doctoral students as soon as they have been accepted by the faculty as a doctoral student; please point this out to your doctoral candidates (Section 9 Para. 2 Higher Education Act of Lower Saxony). Enrolment is a process independent of the doctoral project.

The application for enrolment must be completed online, printed out and submitted to the Admissions Office after it has been signed.

Application for enrolment
<https://www.uni-hannover.de/en/forschung/wiss-nachwuchs/promotion/>

In addition, the acceptance notification from the Faculty Council must be presented to the Admissions Office. The enrolment can be carried out immediately after the application documents to be accepted as a doctoral student have been submitted, before the Faculty Council meets to make its decision. The team of the Doctoral Students' Office will hand over a corresponding confirmation subject to the Faculty Council decision that must be presented to the Admissions Office.

Note 1: The Admissions Office initially limits the doctoral study to a maximum of five years (this means that after this deadline the registration is automatically cancelled; it does not mean that doctoral studies have to be funded for five years).

Step 3: **Submission of the doctoral thesis and applying for admission to the doctoral examination**

The application for admission to the doctoral examination must be submitted as soon as the doctoral thesis has been completed and handed in. The Dean's Office holds a compilation of the documents required for this purpose.

Application for Admission to the Doctoral Examination pursuant to Section 6 Para. 1 PromO (PDF file)
https://www.naturwissenschaften.uni-hannover.de/fileadmin/naturwissenschaften/NAT_Forschung/Promotion/PDF/PromO_Antrag-Promotion.pdf

The appropriate documents must be enclosed with the application (Section 6 Para. 1 PromO).

On application, the faculty starts the procedure for the doctoral examination if all conditions are fulfilled. This involves the Faculty Council appointing the reviewers for the doctoral thesis and an Examination



Board. The Examination Board assesses the doctoral thesis on the basis of the reviews provided, conducts the thesis defence or oral examination and also grades it.

As part of the application for a doctorate you as the doctoral supervisor should make proposals to the Faculty Council regarding the appointment of reviewers and the composition of the Examination Board as well as the place and time/date of the oral examination or the thesis defence (Section 6 Para. 2 PromO). The reviews are compiled by one referee and one or more co-referees. While the referee needs to be a qualified examiner at LUH, MHH or TiHo, co-referees can come from any other university, as long as they are qualified examiners there.

In the case of cooperative supervision by a team of supervisors, there are usually two referees, of whom only one must be eligible for doctoral studies at LUH, MHH or TiHo.

Note 2: If it can be foreseen that a doctoral thesis could possibly be graded as "excellent" you should take this into account in your proposals for appointing reviewers: **in this case ensure from the outset that more than two reviewers are appointed for the doctoral thesis in the application for admission to the doctoral examination. At least three reviews are required in this case.** Please also note that one of these reviews must be compiled by an authorised examiner from a university other than LUH, MHH and TiHo (Section 11 Para. 3 PromO).

Note 3: The concrete planning for the date and place of the oral examination or thesis defence will only be made after all the reviews on the dissertation have arrived at the Doctoral Student's Office and the doctoral candidate has been informed about the display of the reviews and the dissertation (see step 4). Proposals for the location, date and time of the oral examination or thesis defence must then be agreed upon with the Promotion Team of the Doctoral Student's Office, the doctoral candidate and all examiners concerned.

Promotion Team (Doctoral Student's office):

promotion@nat.uni-hannover.de

Step 4: Display of the doctoral thesis and the reviews

The reviews should be available six weeks after the procedure for the doctoral examination is commenced at the latest. The doctoral thesis and the reviews are then displayed for at least two weeks for inspection by the qualified examiners.

The doctoral thesis is deemed to have been accepted when all reviewers have recommended its acceptance and no objection to the acceptance of the doctoral thesis has been raised within the display period.

The acceptance may have conditions attached; in this case, the chairperson of the Examination Board informs the candidate about the conditions and the subsequent procedure.

Step 5: Setting a date for the examination or thesis defence

After the doctoral thesis is accepted, the Dean determines the location and date/time for the examination or thesis defence and announces this information. There must be at least five working days between announcement and examination/thesis defence.

The interval between submission of the doctoral thesis and the earliest possible date for the examination/thesis defence therefore depends mainly on the time until the receipt of the reviews. Doctoral students should therefore always coordinate proposals for dates with the reviewers in advance.



Step 6: **Oral examination / thesis defence and overall assessment of the doctoral work**

The overall grade of the doctoral work is made up of the grades for the doctoral thesis and either the oral examination or the thesis defence. When calculating the overall grade for the doctoral work, the doctoral thesis has a 2/3 weighting and the assessment of the oral examination or thesis defence a weighting of 1/3.

The doctoral work may only be graded with the overall mark "excellent" if both the doctoral thesis and the oral examination or defence of the thesis have each been graded "excellent" (Section 11 Para. 1 and Para. 4 PromO).

The awarding of the grade "excellent" as the overall grade of the doctoral thesis requires (Section 11 Para. 3 PromO) that

- all reviewers propose this grade,
- at least three reviews are available and
- one of these three reviews is from a university other than LUH, MHH and TiHo.

Immediately after the oral examination or thesis defence the chairperson of the Examination Committee will notify the doctoral student of the results and issue a preliminary certificate on the result of the doctoral examination.

Step 7: **Publication of the doctoral thesis**

Within one year of passing the oral examination or thesis defence, the doctoral student must publish the approved final version of the doctoral thesis (Section 12 Para. 1 PromO).

If the doctoral student misses the publication deadline, then all rights obtained in the course of the procedure for the doctoral examination expire (Section 12 Para. 2 PromO).

Details regarding the publication of doctoral theses can be found on the pages of the TIB/UB. After the doctoral thesis has been submitted, the TIB/UB will issue confirmation of publication and send it to the faculty; this is usually done within two weeks.

Step 8: **Conferral of doctorate**

The doctorate shall be conferred by handing over or delivering the doctoral diploma. This can only take place after the doctoral thesis has been published and after fulfilment of the other obligations (Section 13 Para. 2 and Annex pursuant to Section 13 Para. 2 PromO). Only then is the doctoral student entitled to hold the title of doctor.

The date the doctorate was conferred is specified as the date of the oral examination or thesis defence (Section 13 Para. 1 Clause 4 PromO).

At present, the doctoral diploma will be handed over in the Doctoral Students' Office as soon as it has received

- the TIB/UB confirmation that the doctoral thesis has been published and
- the doctoral student has submitted a declaration signed by the supervisor that the resources temporarily made available, including associated documents, have been returned in their entirety and in due form (pursuant to Section 13 Para. 2 in the Annex of the PromO).



4. List of important links

Joint Regulations for the Degree of Doctor of Natural Sciences (Dr. rer. nat.) and Regulations for the Degree of Doctor of Horticultural Sciences (Dr. rer. hort.)

<https://www.naturwissenschaften.uni-hannover.de/en/research/doctoral-studies/doctoral-procedure/>

The Guidelines for Good Supervision of Doctoral Students at Leibniz University Hannover

<https://www.graduiertenakademie.uni-hannover.de/en/guidance/for-supervisors-and-faculties/>

Application to be Accepted as a Doctoral Student

https://www.naturwissenschaften.uni-hannover.de/fileadmin/naturwissenschaften/NAT_Forschung/Promotion/PDF/PromO_Antrag-Annahme.pdf

Application to be Admitted to the Doctoral Examination

https://www.naturwissenschaften.uni-hannover.de/fileadmin/naturwissenschaften/NAT_Forschung/Promotion/PDF/PromO_Antrag-Promotion.pdf

White paper of the Wissenschaftsrat (09.11.2011) "Anforderungen an die Qualitätssicherung der Promotion" (see here: Empfehlungen zur Stärkung der kollegialen Verantwortung, zum Betreuungsverhältnis und zur Betreuungsvereinbarung)

www.wissenschaftsrat.de/download/archiv/1704-11.pdf

Recommendations of the German Research Foundation for the Supervision Agreement (in German)

www.dfg.de/formulare/1_90

Arbitration Board of the Graduate Academy of Leibniz Universität Hannover (can be contacted by both supervisors and doctoral students to provide support in solving cases of conflict in the supervisory relationship for the doctoral study)

<https://www.graduiertenakademie.uni-hannover.de/en/about-us/organisation-and-bodies/arbitration-board/>

Information on how to submit and publish a thesis at TIB/UB

<https://www.tib.eu/en/publishing-archiving/phd-theses-and-habilitations/>

5. Contact

a) Promotion Team (Doctoral Student's Office)

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Building 3403 Room A006

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✉ promotion@nat.uni-hannover.de

Sabine Reinecke

Building 3403 Room A010

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b) GRANAT Graduate School

Dr. Barbara Höft-Lessdorf

Building 4105 Room A001

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✉ granat@nat.uni-hannover.de



B. Questionary for entry into doctoral supervision

In order to reflect on and clarify essential points of doctoral supervision the following questionnaire might be helpful (in preparation) for the preliminary discussion between a doctoral supervisor / team of supervisors and a future doctoral student:

1. **Which possibilities can be realised to fund the doctoral student during their doctoral studies?**
 - Offer from the supervisor/ the team of supervisors
 - Wishes / expectations of the doctoral student
 - Wishes / expectations of the supervisor / supervisory team
2. **Is there suitable agreement on...**
 - how close the supervisor/team of supervisors is to the topic of the doctoral work?
 - the organisational framework for the doctoral project (individual doctoral work or doctoral study in a structured doctoral programme, e.g. graduate college/graduate school)
 - the ideas regarding the time needed for the doctoral work?
 - the ideas regarding the scope of the doctoral project?
 - the Rules of Good Scientific Practice to be adhered to by both sides?
<https://www.naturwissenschaften.uni-hannover.de/en/research/doctoral-studies/doctoral-procedure/>
3. **Do the resources in terms of time, accommodation and equipment and research funds exist for appropriate supervision and are they available?**
4. **Which career objectives are being pursued with the doctoral thesis?**
 - Academic career
 - Career in the non-academic field
5. **How is the communication in the supervisory relationship arranged?**
 - Personal meetings / email exchanges / telephone etc.
 - For teams of supervisors: explain the different responsibilities to the doctoral student, who is the primary contact ("main supervisor")?
6. **How are supervisory situations to be prepared and followed up?**
 - Necessary: time and work schedule with specification of milestones
 - Progress reports
 - Make texts, working documents available
 - Document the results
7. **How often should meetings with the supervisor(s) take place to discuss the status and concept of the research work? (Recommended are at least two meetings per year.)**
8. **Finally, clarify for both parties: Was a supervisory relationship agreed?**
 - **If yes:** As the supervisor you should always point out that the person interested in doctoral study must apply to the faculty to be accepted as a doctoral student before starting their practical work on the doctoral thesis, and they should also register as doctoral students.
 - **Please obtain all application documents of the faculty here:**
<https://www.naturwissenschaften.uni-hannover.de/en/research/doctoral-studies/doctoral-procedure/> (see there step 2 or step 3)
 - **Joint Regulations for the Degree of Doctor of Natural Sciences (Dr. rer. nat.) and Regulations for the Degree of Doctor of Horticultural Sciences (Dr. rer. hort.):**
<https://www.naturwissenschaften.uni-hannover.de/en/research/doctoral-studies/doctoral-procedure/>