



## Policies for PhD Studies

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## 1. About these Policies

### 1.1 Scope of these Policies

Due to its accreditation by the German Research Council (Wissenschaftsrat) and its recognition by the Federal State of Bremen, Constructor University Bremen gGmbH (from here forth Constructor University) has the right to award the doctoral degree "Doctor of Philosophy" (PhD) in different fields of science. The doctoral degree is awarded by Constructor University to a candidate who demonstrates that he or she is able to conduct independent and in-depth academic research, which advances the state of the art in the respective field of science. The award of the doctoral degree is based on a written piece of work (PhD Thesis), a public oral examination (PhD Thesis Defense) and the publication of the successfully defended Thesis. The following policies define the prerequisites, rules and procedures for earning the title of PhD from Constructor University.

In cases in which policies need further interpretation or clarification, the binding decision will be taken by the Academic Senate.

### 1.2 Changing these Policies

Changes and modifications of the Rules and Regulations for PhD Studies including the list of fields in which PhD degrees can be awarded are evaluated by the Academic Senate and recommended to the Executive Board for decision.

## 2. Definitions

### 2.1 Student

For the purpose of this policy a "PhD student" is someone who is enrolled at Constructor University for a PhD degree in a specific field.

### 2.2 Degree

Upon successful completion of the PhD studies Constructor University will award a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). A list of fields in which a PhD degree can be awarded is maintained by Academic Operations and Registrar Services; it can be found on the university's webpage.

## 3. Double and Joint PhD Degrees

Double registration at Constructor University and one other university is possible if formal cooperation contracts are in place. Such contracts can define double or joint degrees. In the case of double degrees each university issues a certificate awarding a degree in the same research field. The certificate is only valid in connection with the certificate of the partner institution and must contain a respective reference. In the case of joint degrees only one joint certificate is issued.

As a rule, the policies for PhD studies at Constructor University apply or, in case of joint degrees, the regulations as specified in the respective contract.

The following rules apply to double degrees only:

In the case of double degrees an agreement with the partner university defines the arrangements between the universities. The agreement is to be fully determined at the beginning of the PhD studies (within the first 6 months) at Constructor University. It is the PhD student's responsibility to fulfill the respective requirements at both universities.

The agreement stipulates:

- who supervises the Thesis at each of the universities
- the mutual study visits of the PhD student, covering of travel expenses
- how the oral PhD Thesis Defense / examination / reviews are administered respectively
- the composition of the Dissertation Committee and that PhD Advisors of each university belong to this committee
- that the language of the Thesis and the summary should be in accordance with the institutions involved
- use of intellectual property
- which policies govern the publication of the PhD Thesis in case both partner universities have such policies, and which university supervises and confirms the publication.

Exceptions to the general PhD policy apply as follows:

The agreement stipulates the composition of the dissertation committee aiming for an equal representation of both degree-awarding universities. The external member of the Dissertation Committee must not be a faculty member of the partner university. The agreement between the partner universities defines the venue(s) at which the PhD Proposal Defense as well as the PhD Thesis Defense take place. The logo and name of the partner institution should be displayed on the title page of the PhD Thesis.

#### 4. Graduation Requirements

##### 4.1 Dissertation Committee

Each PhD student chooses a PhD Advisor, who is a faculty member at Constructor University and, in cooperation with her or him, a Dissertation Committee. As a rule, the PhD Advisor is the Chair of the Dissertation Committee. The Dissertation Committee is responsible for monitoring the academic progress of the PhD student and for the evaluation of both the PhD Proposal and the PhD Thesis / Thesis Defense.

The Dissertation Committee is composed of

- at least two Constructor University faculty members (out of which at least one should be associated by training or research to the designated field of the PhD project and at most one may be an adjunct professor) serving as internal members of the committee,
- at least one external member: External members are professors from other universities or researchers with comparable levels of scientific expertise in the respective field of research holding a PhD degree. Former Constructor University faculty members may serve as external members of the Dissertation Committee only after three years (or two years for adjunct professors) from the termination of the working contract with Constructor University. An institutional or financial connection of the external committee member to Constructor University is to be avoided.
- The above defined internal and external members are considered regular members of the Dissertation Committee.
- If at any point the PhD Advisor is no longer affiliated with Constructor University, he or she may no longer serve as the official PhD Advisor, nor as an internal member of the Dissertation Committee, but may become an extraordinary member of the Dissertation Committee. In these cases, the PhD student must choose a new PhD Advisor and an additional internal member of the Dissertation Committee.
- Faculty members leaving the university due to retirement may complete all pending doctoral examination procedures, i.e., they can still serve as official PhD Advisor.
- In case the PhD Advisor resigns from the supervision, the PhD student must find a new PhD Advisor at Constructor University within three months in order to avoid disenrollment.

The Dissertation Committee is approved by the Dean. The Dissertation Committee can be changed and/or enlarged subsequently. All changes need to be approved by the resigning and new members of the committee, and by the Dean.

#### 4.2 PhD Proposal

Every PhD student develops a PhD Proposal in cooperation with the PhD Advisor. This Proposal is a written document, and it is presented at Constructor University to the university public upon invitation by the Dean at most nine months after registration as a PhD student. In case the PhD Proposal is not presented within the given time frame the student may apply once for a three-month extension of the deadline. Failure to present the PhD Proposal within the given time frame (including extension) will result in disenrollment of the student.

As a general rule, PhD Proposals at Constructor University must be written in English. The PhD Proposal must include an abstract, a description of the major questions pursued, a time frame for completing the work, a comprehensive bibliography of relevant primary and secondary research materials and databases, and a review of relevant, current work in the area. Normally the PhD Proposal should not be longer than 30 pages.

Prior to the presentation of the PhD Proposal, the Dissertation Committee must consist of at least the Chair of the Dissertation Committee and one regular member (internal or external). The definite composition of the Dissertation Committee as outlined above must be finalized prior to the final submission of the PhD Thesis for evaluation.

Students must schedule the presentation of their PhD Proposal with Registrar Services. Students have to submit the completed "Defense of the PhD Proposal" form to the Registrar Services along with the PhD Proposal and a digital abstract 10 working days before the presentation.

At least the Chair and one regular Dissertation Committee member must be present at the presentation. A digital defense of the PhD proposal is possible. All participating committee members, including the Chair, must sign the "PhD Proposal Evaluation Form" after the presentation indicating acceptance or rejection (with or without revision) of the proposal for the designated academic field. In case of conflict the decision rests with the Dean. The Chair of the Dissertation Committee must write a detailed review of the written PhD Proposal and the PhD Proposal Defense. The Chair is responsible for submitting the review and the completed form to the Registrar Services within two weeks after the presentation.

In case of revision a revised PhD Proposal must be submitted and presented within three months. The PhD Proposal can be presented in a revised form only once.

#### 4.3 PhD Thesis

The following rules apply to the PhD Thesis:

PhD projects are defined as independent scientific work which advances the state of the art in the respective research field. Usually, the PhD Thesis summarizes this scientific work in writing and puts it into a larger context. As a rule, the PhD Thesis, reviews and the PhD Thesis Defense at Constructor University must be in English. Only for professional or contextual reasons may the Dean grant an exception to this rule.

The Thesis must include:

- a title page with name and logo of Constructor University, the name of the School, the title of the PhD Thesis, the degree aimed for, the author, and a list of all members of the Dissertation Committee with the Chair named first and by mentioning the full name, academic title and affiliation of each member.

Cooperation partners and/or institutions may be named on the title page by adding the corresponding logo,

- an English summary (irrespective of the language of the Thesis),
- a (Statutory) Declaration on Authorship by the PhD student that the Thesis has been written independently and has not been submitted at another university for the conferral of a PhD degree,
- a list of publications and conference contributions of the PhD student.

If co-authored manuscripts are included in the PhD Thesis a “Statement on Contribution” and a “Declaration of Consent” as described below are required for that part of the PhD Thesis

It is possible to receive a PhD degree at Constructor University based on a cumulation of articles under the following conditions:

- The articles need to be framed by an introduction (that develops the larger theoretical context of the Thesis), a discussion and a common thread that is leading through the different papers.
- The number and status (published, accepted, submitted) of articles necessary is decided upon by the Dissertation Committee. At least two thirds of the included manuscripts should be either submitted or published.
- The student must submit, as an integral part of the Thesis, a “Statement on Contribution” defining his/her contribution to each article along with the PhD Thesis. The “Statement on Contribution” must also contain title, co-authors, journal, status, and date of submission/acceptance (if applicable). With his/her signature the student declares that all co-authors and the PhD Advisor agree with the information given in the “Statement on Contribution”. In addition, the PhD student’s own contributions should be appropriately referenced in the thesis, for example, in a footnote.
- Only articles with significant contributions of the candidate may be added to the cumulative PhD Thesis. Exceptions from this rule need acceptance by the Dissertation Committee.
- Upon submission of a cumulative PhD Thesis the student must ensure that the thesis does not contain any infringement of the rights of third parties. With respect to all claims made by third parties against Constructor University for infringement of their rights by the thesis, the student will indemnify Constructor University against such claims at first request, including the necessary costs of legal defense. Prior to the publication of the PhD Thesis the PhD student must submit “Declarations of Consent” of all co-authors.

The following number of copies of the Thesis must be submitted for review:

- one hard copy per member of the Dissertation Committee,
- one hard copy for Registrar Services,
- one hard copy for the Dean,
- one hard copy for display in the Information Resource Center (IRC).

Upon request, reviewers may receive an official digital version of the thesis in lieu of a hard copy, which will be provided by Registrar Services. However, hard copies of the thesis will still be issued to the Dean, Registrar Services, and the Information Resource Center (IRC). In addition, the PhD student must upload an electronic version of the Thesis to a plagiarism check platform defined by the university.

The Registrar Services sends the Thesis to the reviewers, as well as to the other members of the Dissertation Committee, the Dean and the IRC. The Thesis must be on display at the IRC for at least two weeks before the Defense and thus made public to the Constructor University community.

The reviewers are expected to submit their reviews of the PhD Thesis within eight weeks unless a shorter review period is agreed upon within the Dissertation Committee. At least three regular members of the Dissertation

Committee, including one external member and the Chair of the Dissertation Committee, each submit a written report. Additional members of the Dissertation Committee have to either submit a written review or attend the Defense. The reviewers submit their reviews to the Office for Doctoral Education. Reviews need to include a summary evaluation of the Thesis as “pass”, “fail” or “pass with distinction”. In case amendments are necessary before a decision about pass or fail can be made, these need to be specified in the review.

Once all reviews have been submitted, the Office for Doctoral Education distributes the reviews to the members of the Dissertation Committee, Registrar Services, and to the respective Dean. The reviews must be on display in the Office for Doctoral Education for a minimum of 5 working days prior to the day of the Defense (not counting the actual day of the Defense). The PhD student and Constructor University faculty are eligible to read the reviews. The PhD student may receive copies of the reviews in case the respective reviewer agrees. The PhD Thesis is accepted once the Dissertation Committee unanimously evaluates it as pass. In order for a PhD Thesis to be evaluated “pass with distinction”, all reviews that have been submitted to the Office of Doctoral Education must suggest an evaluation “pass with distinction”. If at least one member of the Dissertation Committee evaluate the Thesis as “fail”, the evaluation process is stopped, and the Chair of the Dissertation Committee is informed by the Office of Doctoral Education. The Chair of the Dissertation Committee, in cooperation with the Dean, determines whether the PhD student can resubmit the PhD Thesis and under what conditions.

In case of detected plagiarism, the evaluation process is stopped, and the Dissertation Committee meets to review the case. If the suspected plagiarism is substantiated, the Thesis may not be resubmitted.

#### 4.4 PhD Thesis Defense

After the PhD Thesis is approved, it is publicly defended at Constructor University upon invitation by the Dean. At least three regular members of the Dissertation Committee, the Chair, one internal member and one external member have to attend the Defense. Online participation of one committee member except of the Chair is possible. If the Thesis was evaluated “pass with distinction”, the Dean (or a substitute) must attend the oral Defense. Prior to the beginning of the Defense a minute taker has to be defined. The Defense includes a presentation by the candidate on the most important part of the thesis work, a discussion of the research, and questions on the discipline in which the degree is to be granted. Deviations from this rule are possible if the members of the dissertation committee consent.

The PhD student, in cooperation with the Chair of the Dissertation Committee, is responsible for scheduling the Defense. This is done via an online form provided by Registrar Services. The Dean issues the invitation and announces the date of the PhD Thesis Defense to the university public.

After the PhD Thesis Defense, the Dissertation Committee has to decide, whether to evaluate the Defense with “pass”, “fail” or “pass with distinction”. Upon the final decision the Dissertation Committee completes the Evaluation Form of the Defense that needs to be submitted, together with the minutes (signed by the Chair of the Dissertation Committee), to the Office for Doctoral Education. If amendments to the PhD Thesis prior to the publication are required, this must be stated on the Defense Evaluation Form and detailed in a separate document. In order for the PhD student to be awarded a PhD degree “pass with distinction” the PhD Thesis and the PhD Thesis Defense need to be unanimously evaluated as deserving a “distinction” by all members of the Dissertation Committee. If the Defense is not approved, the Chair of the Dissertation Committee informs the Office for Doctoral Education as well as the Dean in writing. The Dissertation Committee decides whether or not the PhD student may repeat the PhD Thesis Defense. A repetition is allowed only once and has to take place within three months.

#### 4.5 Publication of the Thesis

The conferral of the PhD degree is dependent on the publication of the PhD Thesis once all formal requirements are met.

There are three possibilities to publish the PhD Thesis:

- publish the digital version online through the Information Resource Center of Constructor University (IRC),
- publish in print through a commercial publisher,
- publish through the partner university in case of a double degree or joint degree.

The deadline for publication of the PhD Thesis is met:

- if the digital version is published online through the IRC, by submitting the final digital version within one year after the defense and all required documents (as specified below) within six months after the submission of the final digital version,
- if the final version of the PhD Thesis is published in print through a commercial publisher, by submitting the publishing contract within one year after the defense and the publisher's copies within two years after the submission of the publishing contract to the IRC,
- if the final version of the PhD Thesis is published through the partner university in case of a double degree or joint degree, by submitting a written confirmation of successful publication by the partner university within one year after the defense to the IRC. If the publication is in print, by submitting the publisher's copies within two years after the submission of the written confirmation by the partner university.

The Dean may extend the publication deadline in justified, exceptional cases.

For the publication possibilities listed above, all changes requested by the Dissertation Committee must be included. The Chair of the Dissertation Committee ensures that this requirement is met and approves by signing the "Signature Sheet for the Conferral of the Degree" before the PhD Thesis can be published.

Additionally, before publishing a cumulative PhD Thesis with the IRC, the student must hand in a copy of the "Statement on Contribution". For each article that is not yet published at the time of submission for publication of the PhD thesis, the PhD student must hand in a copy of the "Declaration of Consent" for each co-author of the article.

The introduction, the discussion and all articles that are not yet published at the time of the submission of the PhD Thesis must be published through the IRC. The PhD student is obliged to hand in proof that the remaining articles have already been published elsewhere.

The Dean may postpone the publication of the digitally submitted PhD Thesis for up to one year in justified, exceptional cases, e.g. pending patent issues (Embargo).

In summary, Constructor University only issues the degree certificate once:

- the PhD Thesis has been published digitally by the IRC and after any embargo has been lifted,
- the required number of publisher's copies have been submitted to the IRC in case of publication via a commercial publisher or a partner university.

Failure to publish the PhD Thesis within the given deadline will result in a termination of the PhD procedure; the submission of the PhD Thesis as well as the oral defense as partial fulfillments for the award of the PhD degree will become invalid.



#### 4.6 Conferral of the Degree

In order to graduate a PhD student must have:

- an approved PhD Proposal
- an approved PhD Thesis
- an approved PhD Thesis Defense
- an approved publication of the PhD Thesis

Once all the above requirements are fulfilled, a PhD degree in the respective research field is conferred. The PhD diploma will be dated according to the date of publication of the Thesis. In addition, the diploma states the name and date of birth of the degree holder. The diploma carries the seal of Constructor University and is signed (hand-signed, stamped, or digital signature) by the President of the university and the Dean responsible for graduate studies.

Students may carry the German “Dr.” (without specification of the field) upon application to the respective authority of the Bremen Senate.

Constructor University reserves the right to revoke the PhD degree in case of:

- Severe and intentional academic or scientific misconduct e.g. the use of data, which was knowingly false or fabricated, the infringement of intellectual property etc. (before or after the award of the PhD degree) by the holder of a PhD from Constructor University.
- In case the degree was granted to a student who had pretended to fulfill the admission or graduation requirements, which were not in fact fulfilled.

When getting notice of a strong suspicion of a non-fulfillment or misconduct which might lead to the deprivation of a PhD degree, the Academic Integrity Committee of Constructor University will install a committee consisting of two members of the original Dissertation Committee (or if not possible two faculty members from the field of the PhD degree), one faculty member from outside the field of the degree, and one representative from the Academic Integrity Committee. This committee will investigate the case and can either decide to terminate the investigations or to take further actions leading to the deprivation of the PhD degree. Before the deprivation the committee will notify the holder of the PhD degree of the investigations and provide him with an opportunity to respond to the accusation.

#### 4.7 Graduation Ceremony

In order to participate in the graduation ceremony, PhD students must have defended their PhD Thesis at least 3 days before the date of the graduation ceremony.

### 5. Progress Administration

#### 5.1 Progress Monitoring

The progress of all PhD students is monitored, after the presentation of the PhD Proposal, by the Dissertation Committee. At the end of every academic year, the PhD Advisor informs the Dean and the Registrar Services in writing whether the student has made appropriate progress. In the case of a negative outcome, the Dean and the Dissertation Committee decide whether the PhD student is allowed to continue his or her education at Constructor University, and if so, under which additional conditions. If a PhD student is suspended on the basis of a negative progress report, the Dean must inform the Registrar Services in writing of the suspension and the suspension date.

## 5.2 Responsibility of the Faculty

The academic responsibility for the quality of the Thesis research rests with the Dissertation Committee and especially the PhD Advisor.

## 6. 6. Administrative and Legal Details

### 6.1 Copyright Issues

The PhD student is the sole proprietor of any intellectual property incorporated in his/her academic work. For the avoidance of doubt, any issues concerning intellectual property and copyright questions shall be governed by the German copyright code (Urheberrechtsgesetz).

The PhD student grants Constructor University an unlimited non-exclusive right to utilize the Thesis and portions thereof in any electronic or printed publications issued by Constructor University free of charge but restricted to academic purposes. Constructor University is obliged to inform the PhD student of any such publication.

### 6.2 Students with Special Needs

The rules and provisions of the “General Act on Equal Treatment” (Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz - AGG) apply. Students with special needs should be able to complete their studies and examinations under conditions equivalent to those of any other student. To this end, as far as possible all study- and examination-related offers are designed to be barrier-free. Students with special needs are entitled to special arrangements during their studies, during study organization and design as well as during examinations. In particular, consideration must be given to study- and examination-related effects, e.g., the need for special aid or assistance, and the provision of study and examination conditions in a form other than the intended organization. The academic requirements for study- and examinations achievements will not be affected. Students with special needs may apply for individual arrangements prior to any examination at Registrar Services using the corresponding form. If candidates can document that they are not able to take an examination wholly or partially in the offered form because of continued or permanent illness or disability, special arrangements are provided for. These may include a prolongation of the examination duration, the assignment of an individual room or a different design of the examination. The individual requirements must be registered with Registrar Services in advance. The submission of a medical certificate and/or disabled person card may be required.

### 6.3 Maternity- and Parental Leave

It is possible to make use of the protection periods according to the Maternity Protection Act (MutterSchutzGesetz - MuSchG), as amended, and in accordance with time limits for the parental allowance and parental leave (Bundeselterngeld- und Elternzeitgesetz - BEEG), as amended. When granting a leave of absence as well as calculating leave periods the provisions of § 40 BremischesHochschulgesetz concerning the period of maternity - or parental leave apply. Taking examinations during maternity- or parental leave is possible, despite leave of absence. However, make-ups of examinations are not mandatory during the leave period.

### 6.4 Appeals

Appeals against any decision of the Dissertation Committee and/or the Dean may be directed in writing to the Committee on Examinations and Standing.

## 7. Honorary Doctorate

### 7.1 About the Honorary Doctorate

A Honorary Doctorate (PhD h.c.) can be granted by Constructor University to persons who have rendered outstanding services to research or to Constructor University through:

- exceptional merits in scientific research
- exceptional merits in teaching
- by linking the realm of research with practice

In addition, possible candidates are characterized by an outstanding and beneficial affiliation with Constructor University.

The policy for granting such an Honorary Doctorate is outlined in the following.

### 7.2 Proposal

Any member of the Constructor University community – including students, faculty, academic staff as well as the Deans and Executive Board – can propose a candidate for an Honorary Doctorate. Nominations must include the candidates' CV and a laudation detailing how the candidate qualifies under the above-listed criteria and how the granting of an Honorary Doctorate lies in the interest of Constructor University.

The Dean responsible for the discipline in which the candidate has gained the merits assumes leadership in handling the proposal. If the proposed candidate potentially qualifies for receiving an Honorary Doctorate three external reviews are solicited. In case the external reviewers recommend the award of an honorary PhD degree the Dean submits a proposal to the Executive Board or the Executive Board informs the Dean of its decision.

### 7.3 The Executive Board

The Executive Board informs the university about the decision and informs the candidate about the Honorary Doctorate.

### 7.4 Award

The Honorary Doctorate (PhD h.c.) is granted in form of an official certificate, which honors the candidate's merits. The Registrar Services will issue the certificate, which must be signed by the University Leadership.