

## **Theory Regulations for Doctoral Studies for obtaining the academic degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Dr. phil.) at the Offenbach University of Art and Design HfG, dated July 1, 2021**

### **Preamble:**

The Offenbach University of Art and Design (HfG) supports research related to art, media, and design through two doctoral study models. In addition to the Offenbach model, which consists of a theoretical and a practical research project, the following regulations allow for an exclusively theoretical project. The theoretical postgraduate degree option serves to deepen research questions in the theoretical fields covered at the HfG Offenbach.

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**Section 1 Requirements for admission to the doctoral procedure, application**

(1) The requirement for admission is a completed course of study with the academic qualification of Diplom, Magister Artium, Master of Arts, Master of Fine Arts, or a Staatsexamen in a discipline in the humanities or cultural studies, or an artistic/design course of study documented by a certificate from a German state or state-recognized university or art college or an equivalent certificate. In the case of an exclusively artistic and/or creative degree, competencies in the field of academic research must be demonstrated. Proof of the ability to work academically can be provided through certificates in relevant seminars or submission of any academic publications. The doctoral committee decides on the comparability and equivalence of other degrees. In the case of foreign certificates, the equivalence agreements approved by the German Rectors' Conference must be observed.

(2) Applications for admission to the doctoral process must be submitted in writing to the Doctoral Committee.

The letter of application must include:

- a) a certified copy of proof of the completed university degree (if this proof is not in German or English, an official translation must also be enclosed),
- b) an exposé, max. 10 pages, from which the research status as well as the proposed doctoral project are evident,
- c) a curriculum vitae in German or English,
- d) a written declaration stating whether an application for admission to the doctoral procedure has already been submitted to another university and, if applicable, the outcome of this procedure,
- e) a list of previous academic publications and artistic/design projects/exhibitions.

(3) If the applicant fulfills the requirements in accordance with section 1 (1) and (2) and their previous achievements suggest that they will achieve the specific academic qualification defined in section 24 HHG (State of Hessen Universities Act), the Doctoral Committee will admit them to the doctoral process, provided that a supervisor can be found. Admission is usually granted within one month during the lecture period, and the applicant must be informed of the decision in writing.

(4) Acceptance as a doctoral candidate can only be refused if reasons are given. Candidates shall only be entitled to have their dissertation supervised where there is available capacity within the faculty.

- (5) By accepting the applicant as a doctoral candidate, the Doctoral Committee guarantees the dissertation will be assessed at a later date.

### **Section 2 Authority to supervise, supervision**

- (1) Authorized to supervise are full professors, junior professors, and adjunct professors who represent a theoretical-academic field of teaching at the HfG. Emeritus or retired professors of such teaching areas are also eligible, whereby the initial supervision must begin within three years of the supervisor leaving office.
- (2) If necessary, a second supervisor shall be chosen from the group of persons stipulated in (1). If essential methodological or factual aspects of the dissertation concern a subject area that is not covered at the university, a second supervisor can be appointed in the form of an external specialist who holds a PhD or has qualified as a junior professor. If essential methodological or factual aspects of the dissertation concern a subject area of the Design/Art departments of the HfG, a professor with a doctorate in one of these subjects can also be appointed as a second supervisor. Second supervisors must always be appointed in agreement with the first supervisor.
- (3) The supervisor shall hold regular feedback meetings (at least twice a year) with the doctoral candidate about the progress of the doctoral project. In addition, the supervisor shall ensure that the doctoral candidate presents preliminary research results at least once during the doctoral period at the university (e.g., in the context of the interdisciplinary colloquium for the doctoral candidates of the university).

### **Section 3 Dissertation**

- (1) In order to obtain the academic degree of Doctor of Philosophy, a written dissertation must be produced that demonstrates a significant capacity for in-depth academic work and represents an independent contribution to research. The dissertation must meet international academic standards in the respective subject area.
- (2) The topic of the dissertation should have a clear theoretical bearing on developments in the fields of art, media, or design.



- (3) As a rule, the dissertation shall be written in German. It shall be accompanied by a list of all sources used and a declaration that the work was compiled independently, with the exception of specified, expressly mentioned and permissible aids. With the consent of the supervising person, the dissertation may also be submitted in a different language.
- (4) Jointly prepared work is not permitted.
- (5) Both supervision and topic may be changed up to the point when the dissertation is submitted. Any such changes must be approved by the doctoral committee.

#### **Section 4 Assessment of the dissertation**

- (1) The dissertation shall be submitted to the Doctoral Committee in the form of four bound copies and also electronically as a PDF document.
- (2) Upon submission of the dissertation, the Doctoral Committee shall appoint two examiners. The first assessment will be made by the supervisor. The second examiner is appointed by the Doctoral Committee in consultation with the doctoral candidate.
- (3) Second examiners may be appointed from the pool of professors in the corresponding specialist fields or experts who have obtained their doctorate and have qualified as junior professors (habilitation) in these fields. If essential methodological or factual aspects of the dissertation concern a subject area not covered at the HfG, an external expert who has qualified to be a junior professor or holds a PhD may also be appointed as a second examiner.
- (4) The Doctoral Committee shall forward the dissertation to the examiners for assessment, which must be completed within three months of receipt.
- (5) The assessments of the dissertation shall each contain a description of the topic of the dissertation, the approach (methodology), a classification of the dissertation within the current framework of the research on this topic, and a summarizing evaluation. In addition, the assessments state a grade (summa cum laude, magna cum laude, cum laude, rite, non rite).

- (6) The examiners may ask the Doctoral Committee to insist certain formal conditions be met before permission to publish the work is granted.
- (7) The dissertation can be withdrawn by the candidate before the first assessment is available; to this end, he or she shall submit the request in writing to the chair of the Doctoral Committee. The procedure shall then be dealt with as if no application was submitted to initiate the procedure.

#### **Section 4 Acceptance of the dissertation by the Doctoral Committee**

- (1) Once all the assessments have been submitted, the Doctoral Committee will decide on the acceptance of the dissertation within a period of six weeks. The lecture-free periods can interrupt this deadline.
- (2) All persons authorized to examine doctoral dissertations at the university and the candidate him/herself have the right to inspect the assessments. For this purpose, the dissertation and the examiners' reports will be made available at the responsible Dean's Office for 14 days during the lecture period or for four weeks during the non-lecture period, which will be announced in a suitable manner by circular letter.
- (3) All members of the Doctoral Committee will receive an invitation to the meeting at which the acceptance of the dissertation is to be decided at least 14 days prior to the meeting date. The dissertation and the assessments will also be made available for inspection during this time in accordance with (2).
- (4) If the grades of the assessments differ by two degrees or if at least two members of the Doctoral Committee object to the statements given in an assessment, the Doctoral Committee may appoint another external examiner.
- (5) Another external assessment must be commissioned if an assessment deems the dissertation a non rite ("fail").
- (6) If all examiners recommend the dissertation be turned down, the chair of the Doctoral Committee will pronounce the doctoral process as terminated unsuccessfully. The stage of the process outlined in (2) will then not take place.

- (7) If over half of the group of three or more examiners recommend rejection, the dissertation will be made available for inspection for the duration of eight weeks at the responsible Dean's Office. During this period, the professors may file an appeal for acceptance of the dissertation. If no appeal is made, the Doctoral Committee will reject the dissertation upon passing of the deadline. If, however, a justified appeal is made, the Doctoral Committee shall decide on appointing new external examiners. If further examiners are appointed, the dissertation can then be presented for inspection according to (2). As a rule, a decision is usually made by the Doctoral Committee following the second assessment after all examiners have been heard and all justified objections taken into consideration.
- (8) In the case of rejection, the candidate has the option to repeat the dissertation once. He/she has a deadline of two years to complete this. The period begins once the rejection of the dissertation is definitive.
- (9) Where a dissertation is rejected, a copy will remain in the examination files together with all the assessments.

### **Section 6 Examination Board**

- (1) If the dissertation is accepted, the Doctoral Committee shall appoint an Examination Board to be responsible for the subsequent procedure, in particular carrying out the oral defense (viva) and the evaluation of the examination performance. The Examination Board shall determine the overall grade on the basis of the existing assessments and the candidate's performance in the oral defense. The Examination Board shall reach decisions by a simple majority of its members.
- (2) As a rule, the Examination Board shall consist of the two selected examiners and three other full-time professors. External members are permitted.
- (3) The Examination Board shall appoint a professor from among its members to chair the examination board. This may not be an examiner of the dissertation.



### **Section 7 Oral defense**

- (1) In the oral defense, the candidate defends the dissertation before the Examination Board in a public university setting (section 31 subparagraph (3) sentences 4 and 5, HHG). The viva may cover additional questions and related subject areas that are factually or methodologically related to the dissertation.
- (2) The oral defense shall take place within six weeks of acceptance of the dissertation. The oral defense shall be announced to the university public. The thesis shall be on public display in the university library 14 days before the oral defense event.
- (3) At the beginning of the oral defense, the chair of the Examination Board shall introduce the candidate and his/her academic progress and announce that the requirements for admission have been met and the dissertation accepted.
- (4) Following this, the candidate shall explain the principal results of his/her work in 30 minutes.
- (5) After the candidate's presentation, only the examiners and other members of the Examination Board have the right to ask the candidate questions for 30 minutes. Following this, the floor is open for the members of the Doctoral Committee and the other members of the university to ask questions of the doctoral candidate.
- (6) The duration of the oral defense should not exceed one and a half hours.
- (7) Immediately after the oral defense, the Examination Board will hold a closed meeting to decide on:
  - a) the passing or failing of the oral defense,
  - b) the grades for the oral defense.

Every member of the Examination Board evaluates the defense.

The defense has been passed when the majority of members of the examination board who are present evaluate the defense as being at least "rite" (pass). If the oral defense has been passed, the Examination Board will announce the overall grade. The candidate shall be informed of this immediately after the decision has been made.

- (8) A record is made of the oral defense, either by the chair or a member of the Examination Board appointed by the chair, that includes the following information:
- place and time of the oral defense,
  - names of the candidate and the members of the Examination Board,
  - record of the oral defense process and explanations of the evaluation,
  - individual grades given by the examiners or assessors for the dissertation and the oral defense,
  - overall grade of the examination procedure,
  - signature of the chair of the Examination Board.
- (9) If the candidate fails the oral defense, it can be repeated during the course of one year but not earlier than two months later. If the candidate then fails again, the procedure shall be deemed to have ended unsuccessfully.

### **Section 8 Decision on the grade given for the doctoral performance**

- (1) The Examination Board calculates an overall grade for the doctoral performance. This is composed with a weighting of two thirds for the average of the grades given by the examiners of the dissertation, and one third for the grade given by the Examination Board for the oral defense.
- (2) The grade levels are: summa cum laude – excellent (0); magna cum laude – very good (1); cum laude – good (2); rite – pass (3); non rite – insufficient (4). If the grades of all assessments and the grade of the oral defense are “summa cum laude”, the overall grade “summa cum laude” (with distinction) is awarded.
- (3) The numbers are only to be taken as a basis for calculation and do not appear in the certificate. If the calculation of averages produces fractions, these shall be rounded: the higher grade should be given for values up to and including 0.5 and the lower grade for values from 0.6, without prejudice to the regulation for the overall grade “summa cum laude”. For the calculation of the overall grade, only the first decimal place behind the comma should be taken into account; all other places shall be deleted without rounding up or down.
- (4) The doctoral candidate can only be awarded a doctorate if the dissertation and the oral defense have each been assessed with at least the grade “rite” (pass)



- (5) By way of a provisional certificate, the doctoral candidate shall receive a certificate containing the name of the department and the examination result. This certificate, signed and sealed by the Dean's Office, must be signed by the doctoral candidate. The doctoral candidate shall be informed of any requirements for the printing of the deposit copies and shall be granted access to the record of the oral defense on request.

### **Section 9 Publication**

- (1) After a successful oral defense, the chair of the Doctoral Committee shall inform the candidate whether and, if so, which amendments must be made before publication. If requested, the revised dissertation must be submitted to one of the reviewers before it is reproduced.
- (2) Permission to print must be obtained once the oral defense has been passed but before publication of the dissertation. This is granted by the chair of the Doctoral Committee after consultation with the supervisor. The prerequisite for this is that the version for publication must correspond to the peer-reviewed version in terms of content and that any conditions imposed are fulfilled.
- (3) The doctoral candidate must publish the dissertation, taking into account the requirements of the examination board. Publication should take place within two years.
- (4) The dissertation must be made accessible to the academic public in an appropriate manner. This is the case if, in addition to the copies required in accordance with section 4 paragraph 1, the author delivers free of charge to the university library:  
either
  - a) five copies, if a commercial or academic publisher takes over the distribution via the book trade and a minimum circulation of 150 copies is proven. The work must be marked as a dissertation of the Hochschule für Gestaltung Offenbach am Main, or
  - b) five copies, if the publication is in a magazine, or
  - c) five copies on non-aging, wood-, and acid-free paper and with a durable binding as well as an electronic version, the data format and data carrier of which are to be coordinated with the university library if the doctoral candidate transfers the right to publish the electronic version in data networks to the university.

- (5) The candidate shall grant the university the right to produce and distribute copies of the dissertation or make them available in data networks within the scope of the statutory duties of the university library. Copyright rights remain unaffected in all other respects. The respective copyright must be available for the image material. Otherwise, the image material may only be made accessible in the internal context of the examination.

### **Section 10 Conferral of the doctorate**

- (1) After the dissertation has been published in the manner described in section 9 above or the confirmation of print acceptance with the expected publication date of a publisher has been submitted, the doctoral candidate shall be awarded the doctoral degree and the doctoral certificate shall be issued.
- (2) The right to hold the doctoral degree and bear the title shall commence with conferral of the doctoral degree through the award of the doctoral certificate (Section 10).
- (3) The doctoral certificate includes:
- the name of the university and the department,
  - the title awarded (abbreviated as Dr. phil. or Dr.in phil. or Dr.\_in phil. as desired), the title of the dissertation (in the original language in which it was written),
  - the overall grade,
  - the name, date, and place of birth of the doctoral candidate,
  - the date of the oral defense, which is considered the date of the doctorate,
  - the name and signature of the supervisor,
  - the name and signature of the University President,
  - the seal of the university.
- (4) The certificate shall be issued in triplicate. One copy shall remain with the examination documents.

### **Section 11 Termination of the doctoral procedure and withdrawal of a doctoral degree**

- (1) The Doctoral Committee shall terminate the procedure or revoke the doctoral degree if, prior to the conclusion of the procedure or retrospectively:
- (a) it has been established that the candidate has committed fraud in the examinations or in his/her other academic work, or
  - (b) facts have become known which would have precluded the award of the academic degree.

- (2) Prior to the Doctoral Committee's decision to terminate the doctoral procedure or withdraw the doctoral degree, the person concerned shall be given the opportunity to comment on the allegations. The revocation is governed by the statutory provisions. The Doctoral Committee shall issue the doctoral candidate with the decision, which is subject to appeal.

### **Section 12 Access to files**

The candidate must be granted access to the examination file upon written application to the chair of the Doctoral Committee.

### **Section 13 Appeals**

- (1) All written decisions by the Doctoral Committee and the Examination Board must be accompanied by instructions on how to appeal.
- (2) An appeal against decisions of the Doctoral Committee or Examination Board can be lodged with the President in writing or in a form to be transcribed within one month of notification. This will be presented to the Doctoral Committee for a decision.

### **Section 14 Switching between doctoral models**

Doctoral candidates who began their artistic-scholarly doctorate at the Offenbach University of Art and Design before these doctoral regulations came into force (in accordance with the doctoral regulations of February 10, 2010) can apply to the doctoral committee for a change of doctoral admission model if they can provide evidence of the relevant supervision requirements and have the approval of their supervisor.

### **Section 15 Entry into force**

The doctoral regulations come into force on the day after their publication in the official announcements of the Offenbach University of Art and Design and are effective as of July 1, 2021.

Offenbach am Main, dated June 24, 2021



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Prof. Bernd Kracke  
President