

Doctoral degree regulations of Heidelberg University for the Faculty of Theology

of 29 July 2015
in the version of 5 October 2022

based on § 38 of the Baden-Württemberg Higher Education Act (*Landeshochschulgesetz - LHG*) of 01 January 2005 (GBl. p. 1), last amended by Article 7 of the Ordinance of 21 December 2021 (GBl. 2022, p. 1, 2), the Senate of Heidelberg University adopted the following by-laws on 19 July 2022 to supplement the doctoral degree regulations for the Faculty of Theology of 29 July 2015 (Rector's Gazette of 12 October 2015, p. 1399).

The Rector approved them on 05 October 2022. The Evangelical High Church Council granted its approval on 22 August 2022.

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I. General information

§ 1 Doctorate

The Faculty of Theology at Heidelberg University awards the degree of Doctor of Theology based on results in the doctoral degree procedure (Dr. theol.) or honorary doctorate (D. theol.).

§ 2 Results in the doctoral degree procedure

The results in the doctoral degree procedure comprise a scientific paper (doctoral thesis) and an oral examination in individual subjects (viva voce). The oral defence of theses (defence) can take the place of the viva voce. The doctoral thesis is also one of the subjects of the oral examination.

II. Doctoral degree procedure

§ 3 Doctoral committee

- (1) The faculty council shall elect a doctoral committee for each academic year. It has the following members: the dean as chair; the vice dean; five professors as representatives of the individual theological subjects. Deputies for these professors shall be elected.
- (2) The doctoral committee shall decide on all questions relating to the doctoral degree procedure, unless otherwise stipulated in these regulations. The doctoral committee shall make its decisions by a majority of the members present; in the event of a tie, the chair has the casting vote.
- (3) The following persons shall join the doctoral committee with voting rights for the respective procedure when deciding on the acceptance and assessment of a doctoral thesis and the overall grade
 - the evaluators in accordance with § 8 paragraph 3
 - all other full-time university lecturers, university and associate professors working at the university in the subject to which the doctoral thesis is assigned.
- (4) The doctoral committee may decide by a two-thirds majority of all members present at a duly convened meeting to make exceptions to the provisions of these doctoral degree regulations in individual cases - in particular to enable a binational or an interdisciplinary doctoral degree procedure - provided that this does not conflict with Act on Higher Education of the Land of Baden Württemberg.

§ 4 Admission requirements

(1) Prerequisites for admission to the doctorate are the submission of proof of

1.1 the degree of Magister in theology or

the corresponding examination from a faculty of theology or a Protestant regional church from the German-speaking area or

1.2 the scientific examination for the teaching degree for Gymnasium secondary schools (secondary level 2) with Theology as the major subject or the Master's examination in the Master of Education with Theology as the major subject or the Master's examination with Christianity and Culture as the major subject or the Master's examination in the Interreligious Studies degree programme or the Master's examination in the further education degree programme in Protestant Theology. The admission of applicants from the above Master's degree programmes is dependent on having completed a total of at least 6 CP and one additional examination in each of the subjects Old Testament, New Testament, Church History, Systematic Theology, Practical Theology, and Religious Studies in the course of the Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes. If these conditions are not met, the doctoral committee may approve admission on condition that the missing achievements are made up by the time the doctorate is completed.

1.3 Graduates of four-year Bachelor's degree programmes at a university may be admitted to the doctorate if the degree was obtained with the grade "very good" and, in addition, proof has been provided in a colloquium convened by the doctoral committee that the aptitude for scientific work exists in the same way as in the case of university graduates who are eligible for doctoral studies and who have completed an ecclesiastical examination in the German regional churches or a Magister, teaching degree, Diplom (German university degree), or equivalent degree programme. The subject of the colloquium is theological specialised knowledge in accordance with the examination rules and regulations of the Faculty of Theology at Heidelberg University for the Magister Theologiae degree programme. In this way, a proper course of studies in Protestant theology that includes all theological major subjects, must be proven.

Particularly qualified graduates of three-year Bachelor's degree programmes at a university may be admitted to the doctorate if the degree was obtained with the grade "very good" and if they prove in an aptitude assessment procedure that they are equally qualified for scientific work in the doctoral subject as university graduates of an ecclesiastical examination in the German regional churches or a Magister, teaching degree, Diplom or equivalent degree programme who are eligible for doctoral studies. The coursework and examination components to be completed in the aptitude assessment procedure that lasts at least two semesters, are determined by the doctoral committee. The doctoral committee will hold a colloquium to determine whether the apti-

tude assessment procedure has been successfully completed upon the applicant's request. The subject of the colloquium is theological specialist knowledge in accordance with the examination rules and regulations of the Faculty of Theology at Heidelberg University for the Master's degree programme. In this way, a proper course of studies in Protestant theology that includes all theological major subjects, must be proven. If the aptitude assessment procedure is not successfully completed, admission to the doctorate is cancelled.

- 1.4 The regulations for 3-year Bachelor's graduates from number 1.3 apply analogously to graduates of universities of applied sciences. In these cases, the aptitude assessment procedure usually takes 4 semesters.
 - 1.5 An academic degree examination in theology at a university or a scientific institution of higher education in Germany or abroad recognised as equivalent, which can be recognised as equivalent to the qualifications listed in 1.1 to 1.4.
 2. Knowledge of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin in accordance with the requirements of the examination rules and regulations for the Magister Theologiae;
 3. Membership of a Protestant church or another church that belongs to the World Council of Churches or the Lutheran World Federation or the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. Exceptions for members of other Christian churches must be approved by the extended faculty council with a majority of two thirds of its members holding a doctorate.
- (2) Applicants for whom German is not a native language must provide proof of German language skills that meet the requirements for enrolment at Heidelberg University. Such applicants may be exempted from providing proof of knowledge of Latin if they can demonstrate corresponding knowledge of a classical non-European language upon justified application.
- (3) Students who have already obtained the degree of Dr. theol. cannot be admitted again.

§ 5 Acceptance as a doctoral candidate

- (1) Anyone who fulfils the admission requirements in accordance with § 4 and intends to write a doctoral thesis can apply to the faculty (doctoral committee) for acceptance as a doctoral candidate, stating their intended topic.

The application must include:

1. the intended subject of the thesis
2. confirmation of supervision by a supervisor in accordance with § 6, which should be documented by a doctoral agreement in accordance with § 6 (4)
3. evidence of a corresponding degree in accordance with § 4 (1) nos. 1.1 to 1.5

- (2) Acceptance may be refused if
 1. The requirements for admission to the doctorate are not met,
 2. the topic chosen for the doctoral thesis is obviously unsuitable or the topic does not fall within the faculty's remit,
 3. the applicant has already made more than one unsuccessful attempt at acquiring a doctorate,
 4. There are any reasons that would justify withdrawal of an academic degree or if an academic degree has been withdrawn.
- (3) If one or several admission requirements in accordance with § 4 are not met, admission may be granted subject to conditions.
- (4) The decision on acceptance as a doctoral candidate is made by the doctoral committee. The applicant will be notified of the decision in writing; a negative decision must be justified and accompanied by information on the legal remedies available.
- (5) The faculty commits to supporting the doctoral candidate in the preparation of the thesis and to assess a doctoral thesis with the specified topic as a scientific work upon acceptance as a doctoral candidate.
- (6) The doctoral candidate must create an online doctoral file by registering in the online portal heiDOCS together with the application for acceptance. The doctoral candidate must keep the information up to date for the entire duration of the doctorate.
- (7) The doctorate should generally be completed after three years.

§ 6 Scientific advisory service for the doctoral candidate

- (1) The professors of the Faculty of Theology are generally obligated to be available as advisors for doctoral theses within the scope of their other duties in research, teaching, and self-administration.
- (2) Each doctoral candidate shall be assigned an advisor by the doctoral committee. The doctoral candidate may nominate a professor or an associate professor as an advisor to the doctoral committee. The doctoral committee only is to appoint the nominated person if they are willing to do so and if they confirm that the doctoral thesis concept submitted by the doctoral candidate indicates that the purpose of the doctorate is likely to be achieved.
- (3) At the request of the doctoral candidate, the doctoral committee shall endeavour to find a professor or an associate professor as an advisor.
- (4) A written doctoral agreement is concluded between the doctoral candidate and the supervisor with the minimum content in accordance with § 38 (5) sentence 3 LHG (see sample doctoral agreement, Annex 1) The faculty may supplement this agreement with additional content.

- (5) The faculty council may lay down guidelines for doctorates.
- (6) In the event of disputes, the University's ombudsperson for doctoral candidates may be called upon to mediate.

§ 7 Admission to the examination procedure

- (1) The applicant must apply for admission to the examination procedure in writing.

The application must be accompanied by

- 1.1 a curriculum vitae with photograph;
 - 1.2 proof of a course of studies of at least two semesters at the Faculty of Theology in Heidelberg;
 - 1.3 the certificates in accordance with § 4 of these regulations and, if applicable, an application in accordance with § 4 (1) number 3 sentence 2, as well as proof of any other academic, ecclesiastical, or state examinations;
 - 1.4 the doctoral thesis in typescript, in at least eight copies; and in electronically stored form in a file format agreed with the Faculty of Theology;
 - 1.5 an affidavit in accordance with Annex 2 of these Doctoral Degree Regulations;
 - 1.6 a copy of the instruction provided by the university on the significance and criminal consequences of the affidavit, signed by the applicant
 - 1.7 a declaration that they have not applied for a doctorate (Dr. theol.) at any other university;
 - 1.8 a declaration of consent that the doctoral thesis may be reviewed for compliance with generally applicable scientific standards using electronic data processing programmes. The doctoral committee shall decide on any exceptions upon written application.
- (2) Exceptions to the requirement in paragraph 1, section 1.2 require the approval of the extended faculty council by a majority of its members holding a doctorate.
 - (3) Applicants who have not submitted an application for acceptance as a doctoral candidate or whose application has been rejected may also apply for admission to the examination procedure. Applicants must be registered electronically prior to admission; § 5 (6) shall apply accordingly.

- (4) The doctoral candidate may withdraw the submitted doctoral thesis until receipt of the first evaluation after admission to the examination. The statement must be addressed to the doctoral committee. In this case, the doctoral degree procedure will end.

§ 8 Doctoral thesis

- (1) The doctoral thesis must be an independent scientific work in the field of theology. It must be suitable for publication, or its publication must not date back more than five years.
- (2) It shall be submitted in German or English. The doctoral committee may permit the submission of a doctoral thesis written in another language, provided that the faculty is able to review it.
- (3) Two university lecturers, university or associate professors of the faculty are appointed as advisors for review of the doctoral thesis. The first advisor shall be appointed upon coordination with the applicant. One of the advisors must be a full-time representative of their subject. In justified cases, the second advisor may come from external faculties of theology or other faculties of the university, as well as external faculties other than faculties of theology. In the case of external second advisors, their position should be comparable to that of a German professor or a university or associate professor; the same applies to independent heads of junior research groups. In justified cases, an additional advisor from an external theological faculty or another faculty, including an external faculty, may be appointed. The doctoral committee decides on the existence of a “justified case” and upon the appointment of the respective external advisor.
- (4) The advisors shall submit their evaluations in writing. They recommend acceptance of the doctoral thesis and propose an assessment or recommend that the doctoral thesis be returned for revision or that it be rejected as a doctoral thesis. An evaluation generally should be prepared within a maximum of six months.
- (5) Before a decision on the rejection of the thesis is made, the applicant must be given the opportunity to inspect the evaluations and to comment. If the thesis is rejected, a new thesis can be submitted after one year at the earliest.
- (6) Prior to the decision on the assessment of an accepted doctoral thesis, all full-time university lecturers, university and associate professors of the faculty working at Heidelberg University shall be given the opportunity to inspect the doctoral thesis and the evaluation and to submit written official reports for a period of at least three and at most twelve weeks.
- (7) The decision on the acceptance or rejection of the doctoral thesis is made before the start of the oral examination or defence. The doctoral thesis shall be assessed at the latest at the time of the oral examination or defence. The doctoral committee

may stipulate conditions for revision prior to publication if the doctoral thesis is rejected.

- (8) The evaluations of the thesis are to be made available to the author once all examination components have been completed.

§ 9 Oral examination

- (1) 1. A date for the oral examination will be set if the doctoral thesis has been accepted.
2. The viva voce shall cover the following subjects
- Old Testament
 - New Testament
 - Church and dogmatic history
 - Systematic Theology or Religious Studies and Intercultural Theology
 - Practical theology.
3. The oral examination is usually held in German. In exceptional cases, a different language can be agreed between applicants and examiners. The candidate may propose the examiners; the doctoral committee is not bound by the proposal.
- (2) If an applicant has passed a degree examination in accordance with § 4 (1) no. 1.1 or a foreign examination recognised as equivalent with an overall grade of “good” or better, the oral examination in two of the subjects listed in § 9 (1) no. 2 may be waived upon application. The oral examination in the subject to which the doctoral thesis is assigned (major subject) cannot be waived. The doctoral thesis is part of the oral examination in the major subject.
- (3) The applicant shall name the subjects of the oral examination if there is a choice in accordance with paragraph 2.
- (4) The oral examinations are each conducted by an examiner in the presence of an assessor. The examiner must be a professor and a representative of the respective subject. The assessor must be a university lecturer, university or associate professor. External professors must only be examiners, external university and associate professors must only be assessors if the doctoral committee authorises this by a two-thirds majority.
- (5) The oral examination shall be
- about one hour long in the subject to which the doctoral thesis is assigned (major subject),
 - about half an hour long in each of the other subjects (minor subjects).

- (6)
 1. If the candidate fails the oral examinations in the major subject or in half of the minor subjects, the entire oral examination must be repeated.
 2. The candidate may be admitted to retake the oral examination at their request no earlier than three months and no later than 18 months after the examination. Paragraph 2 shall not apply to the repeat examination. A second repetition is not possible.
- (7)
 1. If an oral examination in accordance with paragraph 1 number 2 is not passed in a subject, it must be repeated after three months at the earliest and six months at the latest.
 2. If this repeat examination is not taken or is again failed, the entire oral examination shall be failed. Paragraph 6 number 2 shall apply accordingly in this case.

§ 10 Defence

- (1) Applicants who fulfil the requirements in accordance with § 9 (2) may take the oral examination in the form of a defence in German or an agreed language upon request.
- (2) The subject of the defence shall be
 - theses from the field of theological subjects formulated by the applicant and attached to their application in accordance with § 9 (1) no. 2 and
 - theses formulated by the doctoral committee in the field of the doctoral subject, which are presented to the candidate during the defence.
- (3) The time for each of the two parts of the defence should not exceed one hour.
- (4) All university lecturers, university and associate professors of the faculty may participate in the defence and in the consultation on their assessment.
- (5) If the defence is deemed to failed, the oral examination may be repeated as a viva voce in accordance with § 9 (6) (2).

§ 11 Public access to the oral examination

Enrolled doctoral candidates in the subject of theology may participate in oral examinations as audience subject to the number of places available. Participation does not extend to the advisory service or the announcement of the examination result. The public must be excluded for important reasons or at the request of the candidate.

§ 12 Assessment

(1) The following distinctions are awarded for the individual results in the doctoral degree procedure and for the doctorate as a whole:

- for excellent results: summa cum laude
- for very good results: magna cum laude
- for good results: cum laude
- if no distinction is awarded, the examination is passed as rite

In this context,

summa cum laude is assessed with 1,
magna cum laude with 2,
cum laude with 3, and
rite with 4.

(2) The grade for the oral examination is calculated as follows

- in the case of a viva voce, from the average of the grades for the individual subjects; the grade in the major subject is counted twice,
- in the case of a defence, the average of the grades for both parts.

(3) The grade of the doctoral thesis shall be counted double and that of the oral examination single for the overall grade of the doctorate. The doctorate is deemed passed with the overall grade summa cum laude with an average grade of 1-1.49; the doctorate is deemed passed with the overall grade magna cum laude with an average grade of 1.5-2.49. The other average values are rounded up or down accordingly.

§ 13 Publication of the doctoral thesis

(1) After passing the oral examination, permission to print must be obtained from the Faculty of Theology before the doctoral thesis is published. It must be issued by the dean if the doctoral thesis is to be published in the reviewed version; in the case of conditions decided by the doctoral committee, the dean decides in agreement with the respective advisors.

(2) The doctorate is awarded after the candidate has provided proof of publication of the accepted doctoral thesis and has submitted a copy of the published work to the faculty.

(3) Publication is possible by way of

1. publication by a commercial publisher, provided a minimum print run of 150 copies can be proven; three copies must be submitted to the University Library or

2. Submission of a publishing contract, provided that the doctoral candidate also guarantees that the work will be printed within three years of the date of the contract and that three copies will be submitted free of charge to the university library and one copy to the faculty after printing, or
3. by duplication using the reproduction process - in this case, 10 deposit copies must be submitted to the University Library - or
4. by electronic publication in open access on the open access repositories/e-book platforms of Heidelberg University operated by the University Library (usually hei-DOK; in consultation with the University Library also on other e-book platforms of Heidelberg University, cf. <http://www.openaccess.uni-hd.de/>). Three printed deposit copies of the same text also must be submitted to the University Library. Other forms of electronic publication must be agreed with the University Library.

§ 14 Conferral of the Dr. theol.

The doctorate is finalised by the award of the doctoral diploma signed by the dean. The right to use the title of doctor is only acquired upon receipt of the doctoral degree.

(If the doctorate is conferred after submission of a publishing contract, the conferral may be revoked if the deposit copies are not submitted within the deadline specified in § 13 3 (2). The doctoral candidate may apply for an extension of the submission deadline by a maximum of a further two years.

§ 15 Honorary doctorate

- (1) The Faculty of Theology may confer the degree of Doctor of Theology honoris causa (D. theol.) for special scientific achievements or for special services to theological scholarship.
- (2) A proposal for the conferral must be submitted in writing by at least two professors or members of the faculty council who have completed their habilitation.
- (3) The proposal is accepted if at least three quarters of the members of the faculty council holding a doctorate so decide. The resolution must be approved by the senate.
- (4) The doctorate (D. theol.) is conferred by the award of a degree certificate signed by the dean and written in Latin.

III. Final provisions

§ 16 Withdrawal of admission; invalidity of results in the doctoral degree procedure

- (1) If it becomes known before the doctoral certificate is issued that the applicant has misled the doctoral committee about an admission requirement or that essential admission requirements have been incorrectly assumed to have been met, the doctoral committee may withdraw admission to the doctorate. The same shall apply if any facts become known that would justify revocation of the doctorate under state law.
- (2) If it becomes known that the applicant has cheated in achieving one of the results of the doctoral degree procedure before the doctoral certificate is issued, the doctoral committee may declare this doctoral performance or all previous results in the doctoral degree procedure invalid or, in serious cases, withdraw admission to the doctorate.
- (3) The person concerned must be heard before the resolution is passed. The decision must be substantiated and sent to the person concerned with information on legal remedies.

§ 17 Withdrawal of the doctorate

- (1) Withdrawal of the doctorate shall be subject to the provisions of state law. If there is no regulation on responsibility, the university lecturers, university and associate professors who are members of the faculty council are responsible. The resolution requires a majority of the members named.
- (2) The person concerned must be heard before the resolution is passed. The decision must be substantiated and sent to the person concerned with information on legal remedies.

§ 18 Entering into effect; transitional provisions

- (1) The doctoral degree regulations shall enter into force upon publication in the Rector's Gazette. At the same time, the doctoral degree regulations of 22 September 2006 (Rector's Gazette of 25 September 2006, p. 701) shall cease to be in force.
- (2) For doctoral degree procedures that have already been initiated at the time these regulations enter into effect, the previous provisions shall apply upon request, provided that the Act on Higher Education of the Land of Baden Württemberg does not conflict with them.

Heidelberg, 05 October 2022
Prof. Dr. Dr. h. c. Bernhard Eitel
Rector

Annex 1

Doctoral agreement

Preliminary remark

This agreement (in accordance with § 38 (5) LHG) serves to support and advise the doctoral candidate in their doctoral project. No enforceable legal positions arise from the doctoral agreement. The agreement is based on the currently possible planning horizon and can be amended by mutual agreement. The agreement is subject to acceptance by the faculty and supplements the respective doctoral degree regulations and, if applicable, on the regulations of the structured doctoral programme.

(1) Participating persons

Doctoral candidate (last name, first name)

.....

Supervisor (last name, title, first name)

.....

(2) Topic and department of the doctoral thesis

a) Planned topic of the doctoral thesis (working title):

.....
.....

b) Faculty

.....

c) Department / structured doctoral programme if applicable:

.....

d) Start of the doctoral project (month/year)

e) Planned end of the doctoral project (month/year)

(3) Time and work plan to be updated

A schedule and work plan must be agreed between the supervisor and doctoral candidate that is adapted to the research topic and the personal life situation of the doctoral candidate. The doctoral candidate regularly reports to the supervisor on the progress of the doctoral thesis project based on this. The supervisor is available at regular intervals to supervise and advise the doctoral candidate. Individual agreements between the doctoral candidate and the supervisor can be added to the work plan, e.g., the language in which the doctoral thesis is to be written. A change to the schedule shall require mutual agreement and must not run counter to the provisions of the doctoral degree regulations on the extension of deadlines.

(4) Details of an individual study programme

The work plan should also include information on an individual, accompanying programme (e.g., subject-specific courses, courses to acquire key qualifications, stays abroad, participation in conferences, lectures, and publications). The supervisor shall advise the doctoral candidate on the selection of appropriate courses.

(5) Assessment times

The doctoral candidate and supervisor shall agree on the duration of the assessment procedure in accordance with the applicable doctoral degree regulations when submitting the doctoral thesis.

(6) Compliance with the rules of good academic practice

The doctoral candidate and the supervisor commit to complying with the rules of good academic practice as set out in the recommendations of the German Research Foundation and the by-laws on safeguarding good academic practice and dealing with academic misconduct of Heidelberg University (<http://www.uni-heidelberg.de/universitaet/profil/regelkodex/>).

(7) Rules for the resolution of disputes

Doctoral candidates or supervisors may turn to the independent ombudsperson for doctoral candidates, who shall act as an advisory service and mediation office of the faculty at Heidelberg University, if there are any conflicts.

(8) Miscellaneous

The doctoral agreement is signed in three copies. One copy each shall remain with the supervisor, the doctoral candidate, and in the faculty's doctoral file. The application for acceptance at the faculty must be submitted to the faculty within 6 weeks of concluding the doctoral agreement. The online doctoral file must be created by the doctoral candidate by registering in the online portal heiDOCS at the latest with the application for acceptance at the faculty.

.....
Date, signature (doctoral candidate)

.....
Date, signature (supervisor)

Annex 2

The affidavit generally must be submitted in writing. The possibility of recording the affidavit in writing remains unaffected. The written declaration has the following wording:

Affidavit

1. The doctoral thesis submitted on the topic of

.....
.....

independently.

2. I have only used the sources and aids indicated and have not made use of any unauthorised help from third parties. In particular, I have labelled content taken literally or accordingly from other works as such.

3. I have not yet submitted the thesis or parts of it to another university in Germany or abroad as part of an examination or qualification.

Title of the work:
.....

University and year:

Type of examination or qualification achievement:

4. I confirm that the above declarations are correct.

5. I am aware of the significance of the affidavit and the consequences under criminal law of an incorrect or incomplete affidavit.

I declare on oath that I have stated the absolute truth to the best of my knowledge and have not concealed anything.

.....
Place, date

.....
Signature

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