

**UNIES**

UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE  
FOR INTERNATIONAL AND  
EUROPEAN STUDIES

**Doctoral Studies - PhD**  
Student Handbook

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## 1. Introduction

The University offers the Doctor of Philosophy programme of studies. These academic studies are part of scientific research in the subject area of economic sciences. The doctoral studies explained and regulated in this Handbook are structured to meet the highest level and standards of doctoral Higher Education.

On doctoral level it is essential that students understand the superior challenges of scientific and academic work they are expected to demonstrate and eventually defend in their Viva. Solid and robust levels of criticality, contrast, and depth are essential elements of their work. In addition, these studies require empirical research scrutiny and ethics being fully evidence-based and defensible meeting the doctoral level represented in their Degree Award.

The PhD programme is structured in two individual, but consequential phases:

- Phase 1: The Master of Philosophy

Studies of the Master of Philosophy are part of University's Master's programmes and subject to regulations and processes – academically and administratively – being on Postgraduate level of Higher Education.

- Phase 2: The Doctoral Thesis

The University emphasises that the doctoral level is not comparable with those studies on Master's level. It requests far superior capabilities regarding sophisticated research of scientific value, which these studies develop and further. It needs to be understood that the studies' orientation is not only academic, but also scientific, and requires academic work and the use of theory on superior level. All these elements are compulsory factors for being recommended for the intended doctoral degree.

This Student Handbook introduces doctoral students to essential elements of their studies. It is recommended to read these explanations and guidelines carefully. They have been designed to guide students and offer them advice for successful outcomes facilitating their final achievement in the form of the intended doctoral Degree. Equally these regulations introduced here complement the respective Degree Outline of the PhD in Economic Sciences.

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## 2. Doctoral Studies

### 2.1. Doctorates

Doctoral studies or doctorates of the PhD are academic research qualifications aimed as contribution to and extension of existing knowledge in specific subject areas. Their objective is to provide scientific contributions through superior levels of academic empirical research being relevant in the fields of economic sciences. This may comprise, but is not limited to develop and/or contribute to theory or to understand organisational practice, economics, decision-making, regulations, policies, and so on.

Students' PhD research and studies may adopt a fully theoretical orientation, but outstanding and evidence-based research in the understanding of applied sciences are equally accepted. However, if applied sciences are a major constituent, the scientific orientation still remains in the foreground of the doctoral research and its thesis.

The PhD programme of studies is part of and also embedded in University's Doctoral School, which belongs the University's Research Centre on National Competitiveness and International Trade.

### 2.2. Target Audiences

The University's research programme's mission is to educate its doctoral students in scientific research producing and delivering outcomes of empirically evidence-based improvement for sustainable progress of economics, but also for society. Consequentially they should have a particular focus on relevant issues within dynamic and challenging contemporary contexts. However, they represent a specifically targeted programme of doctoral studies in economic sciences, which is driven by curiosity, and students' depth of critical thinking. It equally respects ethical and moral concerns guiding students' doctoral research within studies' scientific and academic orientation.

The Degree and the research objectives are aimed at candidates, who are having a good and cognate Master's Degree awarded by an acknowledged Higher Education Institution as a compulsory prerequisite for the admittance to these studies. Equally admitted, but subject to specific requirements, are Graduates being awarded with a high level Bachelor Degree of at least 240 ECTS credits or nationally equivalent credits. These applicants will gain their requested Master's Degree through the integrated Degree of the Master of Philosophy. Applicants are invited to contact the University's Registry for further advice.

Applications are equally welcomed from individual candidates or from individuals sponsored by their existing employers. The doctoral programme can be studied full-time, but equally while candidates continue to pursue their professional responsibilities. The need of permanent physical presence is limited to the compulsory two short-term blocks of four taught modules in Research Methods.

### 2.3. Degree Recognition

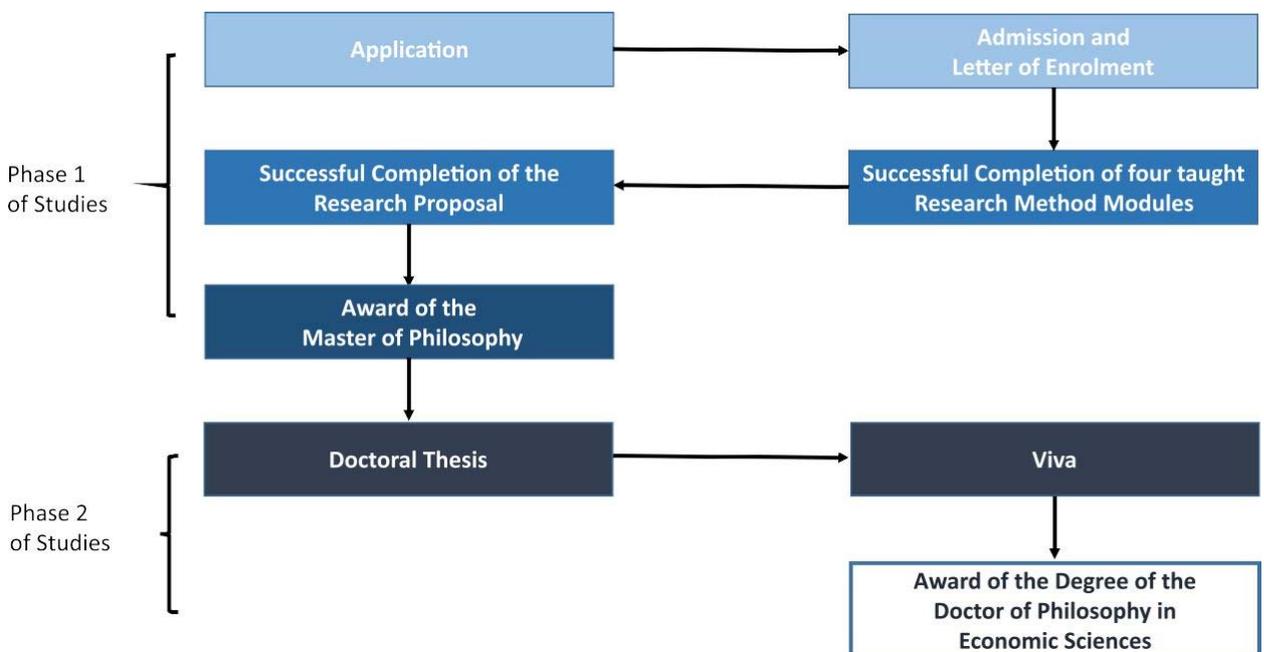
The PhD studies of the University are subject to the approval and applicable regulations of the Ministry of Education of the corresponding University's Country, which has awarded\* respective Research Degree Awarding Powers to the University. In addition, the corresponding Higher Education is fully complying with all standards and part of the Process of Harmonisation of Higher Education in Europe (Bologna Process) recommending to international recognition of the PhD.

University is strictly following internationally requested standards forming and constituting doctoral studies to support the widest international recognition of its doctoral degrees. It is emphasised that the Higher Education is part of the Process of Higher Education in Europe. The University therefore applies highest academic standards in all phases of these doctoral studies with the support of a seasoned body of doctoral supervisors, the Directors of Studies (DoS).

## 2.4. Programme Structure

The doctoral programmes will require the completion of four taught Research Method modules as first stage. These taught modules are then followed by students' Research Proposal in lieu of a Master's Thesis. Only successful completion of all four taught modules entitles students to progress to the Research Proposal. The successful completion of the Research Proposal awards the Master of Philosophy and admits students to their second phase, the doctoral thesis.

Structurally the model of studies is:



All elements and details of this programme of studies are explained in detail in the relevant Programme Outline being part of this Student Handbook.

### 3. Admission to PhD Studies

#### 3.1. General Regulations for Admission

##### 3.1.1. Prerequisite for Admission with a Master's Degree

For direct admission, candidates have to be in possession of a cognate Master's Degree; i.e., it has to be awarded by an officially acknowledged Higher Education Institution.

Equally admitted are Graduates not having a Master's Degree, but another cognate Degree being directly comparable to a Postgraduate Degree on equal level to a Master's Degree. This regulation acknowledges differences, which may internationally exist on national levels.

The additional, but not compulsory requirement is that such Degree should be in the class of Merit or Distinction. Candidates with a higher Pass mark are equally invited to apply, but may be invited to an initial personal interview (before the research interview) for assessing their qualification for doctoral studies in more detail.

##### 3.1.2. Extended Admission

Candidates not having a prior Master's Degree, but a Postgraduate Diploma or national Postgraduate equivalent (Distinction, Merit or equal on national level of issuance) are invited to apply equally. The integral part of the Master of Philosophy of this doctoral programme of studies will constitute the essential prerequisite for admission to doctoral studies.

Accepted for admission further are extended Bachelor Degrees or similar nationally different Undergraduate Degrees being equal to that of a Bachelor Degree. This regulation only applies, if the following requirements are fully met:

- The Bachelor Degree or national equivalent must have a minimum of 240 ECTS credits or comparable national credits (usually four years of Bachelor studies)
- Research methods have been part of these studies
- Compulsory part of such extended Undergraduate Degree had been a dissertation of significant theory-based nature, which has to be submitted together with the application for assessment (translation may be required)
- The candidate's Undergraduate Degree must be at the level of a First or Upper Second Class Degree (or national equivalents). Lower Second Class and Third Class Undergraduate Degrees (or national equivalents) cannot be considered due to the superior level of expectations on this programme of studies.
- These applications will be individually assessed regarding their acceptance, since it is the University's obligation to meet regulatory requirements, but as well to assure best possibly that students can be successful in their doctoral studies.

### **3.1.3. Acknowledgement of Prior Doctoral Studies**

Students, who have started their doctoral studies with another University and wish to change are invited to apply with the University. Depending on the phase and quality of their research project, such previous studies may be acknowledged partly or in full. This acknowledgement is part of an individual assessment for which the following regulations apply:

- The previous Higher Education Institution must be an acknowledged institution on the level of doctoral studies (Research Degree Awarding Powers).
- Due to international regulations and expectations on the level of doctoral studies, the previous Director of Studies (DoS) must fulfil the criteria allowing them such supervision of doctoral studies. In specific circumstances, subject to individual and formal review, the prior DoS may be accepted by the University on a student's request and can continue with the student.
- The chosen research must have adopted a topic being relevant for economic sciences. There may be circumstances in which official regulations may not allow an acknowledgement.
- A letter of recommendation from the previous institution will be welcomed, but is not compulsory. Other recommendations by academics having the right to supervise doctoral studies are welcomed, too.
- Further documentation being in an applicant's interest of successful studies may apply.

Applicants may be asked to attend the Research Method modules, if their prior studies are not equivalent to those of the University.

Applicants should contact Registry for further advice and an in-depth assessment of their prior studies and/or research undertaken.

### **3.1.4. Orientation of the Doctoral Studies**

It is expected that the intended doctoral research is relevant and related to the scientific field of economic sciences. Closely related subject areas are acceptable as well. Especially welcomed is

- cross-disciplinary research
- research addressing economics and society

Students can seek advice and guidance with a faculty member for doctoral studies of The University clarifying and orienting their intended research accordingly with reference to the objectives of this programme of studies. This one-to-one consultation aims to facilitate the outline of the independent research project, in particular to make it feasible, relevant, and having an informed focus on the extension of and contribution to existing knowledge in the subject area. It is highlighted that the superior expectations of studies on doctoral level must be met.

### 3.2. Standard Period of Studies

The standard period of studies is three (3) years. It consists of:

- Year 1 (2 semesters):
  - ❖ Two blocks of four (4) taught Research Method Modules – one semester
  - ❖ The Research Proposal – one semester
- Years 2 and 3 (semesters 2 to 6):
  - ❖ the Doctoral Thesis – four semesters
  - ❖ assessment of the Thesis and Viva

For improving their research, students may apply for an extension of their standard period of studies of up to one year (year 4 of studies). Such application has to be made in writing and accompanied by an explanation on how such extension contributes to improving their research and thesis.

An extension will be granted, too, if a student cannot participate for genuine reasons in one of the presence blocks of the taught modules. The length of such extension will depend on the availability of the next taught presence block missed.

For an extension to year 5, a student has to apply in writing, too, but will need their DoS's supporting reference in addition, in which the DoS explains why it is believed that such extension benefits the outcome.

Professional reasons may justify an extension through serious affectation, as the length of these studies may not allow to foresee unexpected situations. In such cases written documentation has to be submitted, best supported by an employer's statement. In self-employed contexts a thorough explanation will be accepted, too.

However, the maximum period of studies of five years cannot be exceeded.



## 4. General Regulations

In the interest of successful studies and achievements on superior level, but also for good experience of all students, The University introduces general regulations and recommendations for its doctoral studies.

### 4.1. Learning and Teaching

#### 4.1.1. Research Method Modules' Strategic Learning Objectives

The taught Research Method modules strongly encourage and develop student-centred learning. Cooperative Learning and Research-based Learning will be infused into the teaching-learning strategies.

In addition to these research-based and interactive lectures, face to face, research paper analysis, scientific work, and self-directed learning resources will be provided to support delivery and attainment of the intended learning outcomes beyond the presence time of these modules. Doctoral studies depend on individual learning enabling independent scientific research

The modules will therefore progress significantly beyond the delivery of subject knowledge and will incorporate knowledge and learning, discourse and informed dialogue, and self-development. It should be noted that with particular regard to researching independently, the focus will be on facilitating knowledge rather than only teaching and, in this respect, the strategy is designed to facilitate the deep learning experience attributed to a personally more active participation of the learning process by students.

The delivery of these Research Method modules is explained in the relevant module descriptors. Please refer to the relevant Programme Outline. All methods of teaching and learning are subject to the necessary number of contact hours, assessments, and the need for excellent student experience and progress.

#### 4.1.2. Learning Support

A major objective of all efforts is to provide blended learning to students in addition to module tutors' facilitation. This is supported by:

- Induction to studies on doctoral level
- Course text books and research papers for each taught subject
- Online library
- Virtual Learning Environment
- Facilitation of Peer-to-Peer interaction and with faculty for formative and summative assessment and feedback during the whole time of these presence studies (including the time of elaboration of the individual Research Proposal)

In addition, students' attention is drawn to the research activities of our University's Research Centre on National Competitiveness and International Trade as significant mechanism for further support. PhD students are cordially invited to participate in the Centre's research activities and profit from its rich expertise. Researchers of the centre are high profile academics from inside the University, but also external to it within the Research Centre's multinational and cross-university research activities and academic collaborations. These academics are additional sources for improvement and can offer informative assistance for a student's doctoral research.

Further information on each module can be found in the single module's description.

#### **4.1.3. Attendance of Taught Modules**

The University strongly emphasises that consequent attendance is necessary on students' part as an essential element for successful studies. Consequently, the following requirements operate:

- Students are expected to attend all taught lectures.
- If a student cannot attend for any genuine reason (e.g. illness), they are expected to email the module tutor as soon as possible.
- Persistent non-attendance will require an explanation, in person, initially with the module tutor.
- Persistent no-attendance can lead to termination of studies, if no reasoned excuse can be brought forward.

#### **4.1.4. Additional Study Requirements**

In addition to the formal contact hours, students are expected to engage in significant independent studies between the two presence blocks, but also beyond these. This is an essential part of study requirements facilitating learning outcomes and successful results. Wide reading is essential, which on this level of studies is not limited to textbooks alone. Researching research paper repositories and academic conference proceedings are of essential importance.

For each module assessments are requested in form of an assignment. Successful completion of all four modules is compulsory requirement for admittance to the Research Proposal first and after its successful completion to the doctoral thesis.

#### **4.1.5. The Research Proposal**

The Research Proposal is the central completion of the first phase leading to the Degree of the Doctor of Philosophy. It is implemented in lieu of a regular Master's Thesis. While it is a Research Proposal being strongly related to the following doctoral thesis, it is a scientific paper of a student's own and independent research in its own right.

Form and structure of the Research Proposal help students to thoroughly test their capabilities at this specific moment in their studies. A detailed explanation on content, form, and structure is found in the relevant Module Outline. However, the Research Proposal is directly linked to the topic of a student's doctoral thesis. It is not possible writing a different topic than that of the doctoral thesis.

The Research Proposal allows the Academic Board of the University to assess the completion of the integrated Master's Degree, but even more to assess each student's readiness for the doctoral research. Therefore, strong academic criteria define the marking process in which a student's consistent research design and planning for gathering solid and robust data of scientific quality are paramount for successful outcomes and the award of the Master's Degree deciding equally about the admission to Phase 2 of the doctoral thesis.

## **4.2. General Assessment Policies**

Within the taught modules and the Research Proposal a consistent policy of assessment takes place. Grading policies are consistent for all assessments of the taught modules and the Research Proposal.

#### 4.2.1. Taught Modules

The possible range of grades consists of:

▪ >91%	High Distinction
▪ 81 to 90%	Distinction
▪ 71to 80%	Merit
▪ 61 to 70%	Pass with Satisfaction
▪ 50 to 60%	Pass
▪ <50%	Fail = Retake of assessment

Students, who have failed an assessment and/or module, are admitted to one retake only. The maximum mark awarded to retakes is a Pass at 50%.

The numerical average of all four modules' marks and the Research Proposal contributes to the overall result of the Master of Philosophy Degree. It defines the class in which the Master's Degree is awarded.

To achieve consistent marking and as an implemented and proven control of quality all taught modules' examination papers and the Research Proposal are subject to the moderating approval of the University's Examination Board. This process guarantees that students will find an impartial, equal and fair marking process of best practice.

#### 4.2.2. Reassessment Policy within Taught Modules

In the event students are required to take a reassessment, they will receive formal notification of this in writing. Specific dates will be set for each reassessment (taught modules). It is reminded that only one reassessment per module, but also the Research Proposal is possible. Should the reassessment fail, too, then the student will be requested to repeat the respective module or the Research Proposal. This may lead to substantial loss of time.

Failing two of the taught modules results in the termination of studies. Failing the same module twice, results in the same outcome. No continuation of these studies is possible then.

For the Research Proposal a formal reassessment follows the same regulation. Should a student fail their second attempt, too, they will be awarded with a Postgraduate Certificate in Research accompanied by the respective Transcript.

### 4.3. Submission of Work

#### 4.3.1. Submission

All assignments of the modules and the Research Proposal have to be submitted latest on the due day by 18:00 hours (GMT).

#### 4.3.2. Duration of the Marking Processes

##### *Assignments of Taught Modules*

Assignments will be marked within four weeks after submission. Holidays and public or bank holidays do not count to this period and may extend the period of marking. For reasons of quality assurance second marking may be practiced, but is not necessarily compulsory. This may lead to third marking, if there is a

significant discrepancy between the first and the second marker, which cannot be resolved by internal moderation.

#### *Assessment of the Research Proposal*

The Research Proposal will be marked within six (6) weeks after submission.

#### **4.3.3. Mitigating Circumstances**

Should a student find that he/she is unable to meet submission deadlines due to serious and justifiable personal circumstances and affectations, they should consider applying for mitigating circumstances. This application is made with the University's Registry. Students should be aware that evidence for the causes has to be provided.

Among acceptable reasons are especially illness and serious family reasons. Work-related issues during the taught modules can only be brought forward in very specific cases, since students are expected to plan their time for all assessments in the first stage of their studies accordingly. During the stage of the doctoral thesis work-related issues are acceptable, as it is impossible to foresee all events during such long period. However, the reasons must be serious and supported by evidence, too.

Generally counts that only evidence-based requests for mitigating circumstances will be considered.

#### **4.3.4. Extension Request Procedures**

Requests for extensions must be submitted to The University a minimum of 10 days prior to the set submission deadline, unless unforeseeable circumstances apply. Only one extension is allowed for each module.

Supporting evidence has to be in writing and be submitted together with the application.

If the request is accepted, then it is normal for an extension of one week to be granted, unless serious reasons (e.g. illness) apply.

For the Research Proposal an individual extension will be granted depending on the application's reasons and the time of affectation.

#### **4.3.5. Late Submission**

In the case of late submission (taught modules and Research Proposal) the following regulation applies:

- Up to 48 hours late: Maximum mark of Pass at 50%
- More than 48 and up to 96 hours late: Fail, reassessment
- More than 96 hours late: Loss of the module

## 4.4. Marking of Assignments (Taught Modules and Research Proposal)

### 4.4.1. Grading

The possible range of grades consists of:

▪ >91%	High Distinction
▪ 81 to 90%	Distinction
▪ 71to 80%	Merit
▪ 61 to 70%	Pass with Satisfaction
▪ 50 to 60%	Pass
▪ <50%	Fail = Retake of assessment

Students, who have failed an assessment and/or module, are admitted to one retake only. The maximum mark awarded to retakes is a Pass at 50%. This regulation of capped marking also applies for the Research Proposal.

To achieve consistent marking and as an implemented and proven control of quality all taught modules' examination papers are subject to the moderating approval of the Examination Board. This process guarantees that students will find an impartial, equal and fair marking process of best practice.

### 4.4.2. Marking Criteria

#### *High Distinction >90%*

Work of outstanding quality, which incorporates and integrates both original or primary and secondary sources at highest standards of scientific argumentation and demonstrates extensive critical discussion. The work meets the outline/research objective beyond full extent; e.g., by making initial own contributions to the related field of knowledge and/or provides findings meeting the criterion of research impact. In addition, such work is publishable without significant improvement and amendments.

A dense argumentation demonstrates the full understanding, analysis, and judgment of the core problematic involved. There is best practice of controversial and critical discussion balanced with a profound reflected selection and structure of empirical evidence being accompanied by consequential and defensible logic of justification regarding adopted arguments.

Excellent use and causal application of the relevant theoretical body is consistently evident and leads to already defensible conclusions. There is superior evidence and depth of widest reading, which is consistently and precisely referenced following the Harvard Referencing Style. The intellectual argumentation is outstanding, significant, and applies rigorous and controversial discussion, which is critically evaluated, argued, and, where relevant, extended and considered in the wider context of theoretical contexts.

#### *Distinction 80 to 89%*

Work of highest quality, which incorporates and integrates both original or primary and secondary sources at a superior standard of argumentation and critical discussion. The work meets the outline/research objective to full extent.

A dense argumentation demonstrates an in-depth understanding, analysis and judgment of the core problematic involved. There is best practice of critical discussion balanced with in-depth reflected selection and structure of empirical evidence being accompanied by a plausible and consequentially logic justification of the adopted arguments.

Excellent application of the relevant theoretical body is evident and leads to stringent conclusions. There is superior evidence and depth of wide reading, which is precisely referenced following the Harvard Referencing Style. The intellectual argumentation is outstanding, significant and applies rigorous and contrasting discussion, which is critically evaluated, applied and, where relevant, adapted and considered in the wider context of relevant organisational or theoretical environments.

Detailed, realistic and deducted or abducted conclusions and recommendations are thoroughly in line with the paper's analysis.

*Merit 70 to 79%*

A very good response to the assignment outline/research question, which is well structured and presents incorporated relevant information.

The work discusses the brief/research question as set in full detail and at a level of high quality. In-depth understanding of influencing issues and evidence of wide reading, which is accurately referenced following the Harvard Referencing Style, has to be consistent and relevant.

Extensive critical coverage with confident and well-balanced selection and organisation of material exists. A contrasting and critical discussion takes place to a good extent and relevant theory and appropriate frameworks are addressed and outcome-oriented structured.

*Pass with Satisfaction 60 to 69%*

Argumentation and discussion both are logical and academically solid to a satisfactory extent. The submitted work correctly addresses a majority of key issues. However, these may not be fully explored and/or linked with each other to provide a complete demonstration of the issue(s) to be analysed and critically discussed.

The assessment outline/research question has been understood, despite that some sections might not be fully considered for the constitution of a fully comprehensive answer in academic/scientific understanding. The application of academic underpinning and the application of theoretical and/or – if applicable – practice-oriented material may nevertheless be limited or provides only partial consideration of the essential analysis.

The evaluation and assessment of the issue is satisfying, but may be more descriptive, instead of being of interpretative or explanatory nature. The work demonstrates limited evidence of wide reading and/or literature, which is academically not solid or outdated. Concepts and argumentation are referenced in an adequate referencing style, although some of the detail might not be fully correct.

In some parts of the argumentation the work may also need further discussion and evaluation of essential factors, which are not fully explored or the work is missing a necessary broader perspective and consideration of constituting elements.

*Pass 50 to 59%*

The answer is acceptable and correctly addresses those issues being part of the assessment, but may not consider all of these. In addition/or, these may not be sufficiently elaborated and/or explored to provide a wider demonstration of knowledge on the issue to be discussed.

The brief/research question has been applied, despite that a number of factors might not be fully considered to constitute a comprehensive answer. The application of academic underpinning and the application of theoretical and or practice-oriented material may be limited or provides only limited

consideration of the issues.

The analysis is generally acceptable, but may be overly descriptive, lacks critical analysis and demonstrates limited evidence of wider reading. Consistency of argumentation, criticality and depth will need further improvement. The bibliographic elements and use of underpinning literature may not be fully correct.

The submitted work identifies and applies theoretical frameworks but utilisation and critique remains restricted. Conclusions and recommendations generally follow the brief, but lack depth and/or detail. The use of theory and/or empirical data is limited and/or conclusive argumentation may not be fully explored.

*Fail <50%*

The work contains errors, omissions or has poorly developed argumentation and/or the discussion remains fundamental. The assessment brief is not met to a sufficient extent, either as a whole or in significant parts.

The submission lacks an adequate theoretical and/or conceptual base thereby failing to identify essential key issues and may demonstrate a misunderstanding of the brief. The structure is not consistent or lacks significant elements.

The student's own lack of understanding may be evident. Arguments are not consistently developed and/or chapters or paragraphs may not be adequately connected and explained. Assumptions may prevail instead of evidence-based argumentation. There is no sufficient evidence of wider reading. Sources used are inappropriate or are poorly referenced.

The paper contains a number of unsupported observations and fails to reach informed conclusions and recommendations. The quality of the form of expression is such that meaning is impaired in places.

#### **4.4.3. Final Remark**

These marking criteria are binding elements for all assessments, which also includes the Research Proposal.

### **4.5. Academic Misconduct**

#### **4.5.1. Referencing**

Students are asked to note the regulations on academic dishonesty. In particular, this addresses the inclusion in their work of any un-attributed or not referenced material adopted from other sources. In addition, external support by, e.g., any external writer (so-called ghost writer) is strictly forbidden. Students are assured that every effort will be taken to deal with them fairly, but should remember that there are strict rules concerning any form of cheating.

Students, who are presenting work in module assessments and/or the Research Proposal, which is not their own work or do not reference all contributions from third parties partly or in full will be informed in writing that doubts exist about the origin of his/her work. These doubts can be accompanied by a report, such as turn-it-in or alike.

#### **4.5.2. Other Third Party Contributions**

It is clearly regulated that any (further) third party contribution of which extent and/or length ever, must be fully declared. It is also stated that an explanation does not necessarily constitute the legality or legitimacy of such contribution. Students must be aware of the extremely limited allowance of using others' contributions.

The use of a ghost-writer, editor or similar is strictly forbidden and will lead to the immediate exclusion of any student. The use of a translator or other party supporting the quality and standards of the language must be explained in writing together with the declaration that such support is restricted to the language (grammar and spelling) of the thesis only and that no other contributions beyond language corrections took place.

#### **4.5.3. Process of Academic Misconduct**

If suspicions are raised on specific parts of any submitted student work or are assumed or detected, the student will be invited to explain the situation and to provide evidence that those doubts raised are unjustified. The process of a student's justification can either be in writing or by a personal hearing.

Should the student not be able to invalidate the suspicions about the originality of their work, a formal Cheating Committee will take place. This committee will consist of three academics, which will carefully evaluate the case presented in full detail.

The decision of the Cheating Committee is binding and may result in the loss of a particular or more modules and in severe or repeated cases in the student's exclusion from the doctoral studies. The process will be fair and respect alleged students' interest, but students should be aware of the seriousness of such allegation and the high risk for their outcome.

### **4.6. Supervision of the Research Proposal**

An individual supervisor will be allocated to each student based on the supervisor's expertise in the chosen subject area of the Research Proposal.

It is the task of the student to request supervision sessions and to arrange these with the allocated supervisor. The supervisor will not unnecessarily delay the request for supervision and will provide guidance for the student as facilitator for his/her independent research. However, students should note that a supervisor's task is to provide guidance only. A supervisor can and will not interfere in the independent nature of the Research Proposal. This also means that a supervisor's support is not unlimited, which counts for supervision time, too.

The supervision process must be reasonable. Students should be aware that supervisors' support is guidance only and no meticulous ongoing correction of their work. That means that the usual process is limited to one review per part of their work through the allocated supervisor. A second, quick review may be possible, but is not part of the standard process. A third review is excluded, except a final review of the completed paper, which is strictly limited to format and structural elements.

Supervision sessions can be personal, by Skype, email, chat forums or other means on which supervisor and student mutually agree.

#### **4.7. Complaints Procedure**

If a student feels unfairly treated, disadvantaged or not supervised according to this regulation, he/she has the right to complain to the Course Leader of the Master of Philosophy. (A comparable procedure applies to individual module assignments).

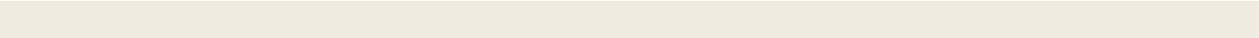
The Course Leader will contact the supervisor and discuss the issues raised. The intention is to achieve a moderation in which the student's concerns are intensively considered and discussed to achieve mutual understanding in the effort of a solution by consent.

Should the reasons of complaint be so serious that it will not be appropriate for the student to continue with the allocated supervisor, the Course Leader can allocate a different supervisor. The loss of time will then be compensated accordingly and the deadline for submission extended.

The decision of the Course Leader will carefully respect a student's rights and not act against these, but their decision is final.

#### **4.8. Conclusion**

Other relevant regulations may additionally apply as set out in the chapters before or explained in the PhD Programme Outline.



## 5. The Thesis

The process on requests and scientific expectations of the independent research for the thesis is explained in detail in the thesis descriptor of the PhD Programme Outline. This outline contains essential details of requirements and needs for successful thesis writing. Of central support here is guidance and advice by the allocated Director of Studies (DoS).

Students are reminded again and should be aware that the expectation for a doctoral thesis is on superior level of independent research in which students are demonstrating their scientific knowledge to deal with, organise, and structure complex material in the effort of making sense and to produce meaningful and defensible empirical results. This also means that it is not the task of the DoS to actively look after a supervisee, but that it is the task of the student to seek for their DoS's support.

The allocated DoS will provide guidance and support only. They will not directly interfere into the research. This is an essential element of a student's evidence of his/her worthiness of being awarded with the intended doctoral degree.

For successful progress in students' interest, The University assists students through a number of further tools being published on the intranet for doctoral studies.

Participation in additional research-centred activities is not compulsory, but highly recommended. To these count, e.g.:

- Part-publication of the doctoral research in academic journals and other academic publications
- Attendance of academic conferences, especially those providing sessions for doctoral students for achieving peer-feedback and that of other academics
- Gaining academic teaching experience through guest lectures on their topic of research
- If applicable, attending professional and organisational forums

However, as part of the level of these studies and expression of their independent nature, it is the task of each individual student to personally engage in such additional activities. The University will facilitate such activities on request, but not directly guide students.

### 5.1. Duration of the Thesis

The elaboration of the research until submission is taking place in twenty-four (24) months as standard period of studies. This then is followed by further five (5) months for assessment. Latest five (5) months after submission, the University will invite the PhD candidate to their Viva in which the PHD candidate will defend their thesis through a summarising presentation.

Extensions to this standard period of studies may be granted by evidence-based individual application of a student. In the case of unexpected interruption, illness or other serious affectations, a PhD candidate is invited to apply for mitigating circumstances. Applications for mitigating circumstances have to be accompanied by tangible evidence. The University will carefully consider the student's circumstances

and decide by respecting these carefully. The University's decision is final.

If mitigating circumstances are granted, an extension of a maximum of 12 months is possible. However, the granted period of extension can vary by consideration of the impact of the reasons on a student's thesis, but will not exceed the period in which a student was affected.

An extension beyond the maximum period of studies of five (5) years of overall PHD studies is generally not possible.

## **5.2. Doctoral Supervision Process**

PhD candidates will be supported by an individually allocated doctoral supervisor, the Director of Studies (DoS). DoS are selected by their acknowledged expertise in the relevant subject area of the thesis. The DoS will assist a PhD candidate during the whole duration of their thesis. Each DoS will fulfil acknowledged academic standards and meets criteria for doctoral supervision:

- Own Doctoral Degree, PhD, which was awarded by a University with Research Degree Awarding Powers or a Doctoral Degree being officially acknowledged in its country of origin as equal to a PhD Degree.
- The DoS must be an active or retired academic with strong own research profile.
- The DoS can be external to The University , as long as the prior two conditions are met.

Students may recommend their own Director of Studies to the University. The University will carefully review such suggestion and is generally prepared to consider such external DoS, provided that they are academically and scientifically meeting the formal criteria for doctoral supervision, which must be supported by adequate documentation.

Student and the DoS will work closely together and meet each other by individual and mutually agreed ways and forms of communication in the supervision process. Supervision can take place by personal meetings and/or distance supervision using electronic communication channels supervisee and supervisor mutually agree on. Supervision sessions have to be documented by the DoS through a short Progress Report.

Each student is entitled to a total of 45 (forty-five) hours of supervision during the elaboration of their thesis, which cannot be exceeded. This regulation supports the independent character of their doctoral research.

## **5.3. Submission and Viva**

### **5.3.1. Submission Prerequisites**

Submissions can be made electronically via the University's online-system and/or by three printed and bound hardcopies sent to the University.

The Thesis has to include the Declaration of Honour, in which the PhD candidate declares in lieu of an oath that their submitted work

- Is purely their own
- Has not been submitted completely or in parts to any other Higher Education Institution before
- Is not copied from any third party
- Nor written by a so-called ghost-writer of any kind
- That all use of third party work is fully referenced by acknowledged standards of citation and referencing in Harvard style.

The University will call an academic Viva Board of doctoral academics, of which two will individually assess the thesis before the Viva takes place. Both these reports have to recommend the submitted thesis for the Viva. The allocated DoS will only be a supporting member of the Viva board, but can neither chair the Viva Board, nor assess the thesis before and during the Viva.

### **5.3.2. Formal Submission of the Thesis**

The submission of the thesis is not bound to a specific hour or day, but subject to submission during the standard period of studies or the extension approved by the University. In addition, within this timeframe, the exact date is subject to the personal agreement between a student and their DoS and furthermore their consent to submission.

Students are informed that submission of a thesis is only possible together with the written permission of submission of the DoS, which has to accompany the thesis. The DoS will not refrain a student from submission for other reasons than the quality of their work done and/or written.

Should a DoS not confirm a submission for reasons, which are not fully explained to the student, they should consider the complaints procedure.

### **5.4. Viva**

Latest within five (5) months after submission, the University will invite the PhD candidate to their Viva. In this Viva the PHD candidate will defend their thesis through a summarising presentation. Following then the Viva Board will provide feedback on the PhD candidate's scientific and academic achievements. Clarifying questions may be asked by discretion of any member of the Viva Board at any time during the Viva.

The Viva Jury consists of a minimum of three academics of the University and the student's Director of Studies, who only has a recommending, but not voting voice. The Viva is open to the public.

The class of the awarded Degree will be achieved by majority of the voting jury members. For their vote the members of the Viva Jury will take into consideration

1. The two written assessments before the Viva
2. The student's performance during their Viva

PhD candidates not being successful (fail) or are requested to make improvements or amendments to their first thesis attempt will be granted an extension by the Viva Board of up to six (6) months

maximum for necessary improvements. This period may vary by respecting the amount of improvements to be done. A second Viva will take place then, which will follow the same regulations and process.

For only minor amendments the Viva Board will decide, whether a second Viva will have to take place or whether the final acceptance of the thesis can be decided by Chair's action. Such decision mainly depends on the requested extent and level of quality improvements of amendments to be made.

Should a student fail again to achieve the acceptance of their thesis, no further attempt exists and the student will have to finish his studies without the intended PhD Degree.

## **5.5. Grading of the Doctoral Thesis**

### **5.5.1. General Grading Criteria (Acceptance of the Thesis)**

For the doctoral thesis no individual mark in form of a percentage is awarded. Instead the marking process consists of two stages:

1. Two independent assessments in form of a written report recommending a candidate's thesis for the Viva (or not recommending it); both votes by reports have to be positive.
2. The Viva itself, in which the candidate presents and defends the research of their thesis in front of the University's Doctoral Jury

Both assessments (1. and 2.) can result in

- The acceptance of the thesis
- The acceptance of the thesis with minor amendments
- The acceptance of the thesis with amendments
- The rejection of the thesis

In the case of requested amendments assessors of the written report or the Viva jury will grant extra time for making the requested amendments depending on their extent. The maximum period granted will comprise six (6) months. Exceptionally that extra time may go beyond the allowed total duration of studies of five (5) years, which only counts for amendments requested as result of the Viva.

The thesis, hence the Doctoral Degree is awarded in four categories, which are

- Doctor of Philosophy Summa cum laude
- Doctor of Philosophy Magna cum laude
- Doctor of Philosophy
- Fail

The thesis is assessed by majority of votes of the Doctoral Viva Board.

Particular reference is made to further regulations in the Thesis Outline for fails and in addition to the PhD Student Handbook.

### 5.5.2. Specific Acceptance Criteria

#### *Summa cum laude*

Work of outstanding quality, which incorporates and integrates both original or primary and secondary sources at highest standards of scientific argumentation and demonstrates highest standards of empirical research.

Essential criteria of this class are:

- Contribution of research impact to the field of knowledge addressed
- Extension of the existing body of knowledge
- The work is publishable without significant improvement and amendments; acceptance is expected on the level of an indexed academic journal at three- or four-star level.

Excellent use and causal application of the relevant theoretical body is consistently evident and leads to fully defended conclusions. There is superior evidence of empirical research undertaken. The intellectual argumentation is outstanding, significant and applies rigorous and controversial discussion being fully supported by a rich body of consistent and conclusive empirical data.

The adopted body of existing literature is rich, logic, fully relevant, and meticulously referenced. Argumentation is exceptionally critical and logic.

#### *Magna cum laude*

Work of best quality, which incorporates and integrates both original or primary and secondary sources at high standards of scientific argumentation and demonstrates excellent standards of empirical research.

Essential criteria of this class are:

- Significant contribution to the field of knowledge addressed
- Providing additions of importance to the existing body of knowledge
- The work is publishable without remarkable improvement and amendments; acceptance is expected on the level of an indexed academic journal at three-star level.

Superior use and causal application of the relevant theoretical body is consistently evident and leads to strongly defended conclusions. There is high level of evidence of empirical research undertaken. The intellectual argumentation is excellent, important, and applies rigorous and controversial discussion being fully supported by a rich body of consistent and conclusive empirical data.

The adopted body of existing literature is rich, logic, fully relevant, and meticulously referenced. Argumentation is exceptionally critical and logic.

### *Doctor of Philosophy*

Work of high quality incorporating and integrating both original or primary and secondary sources at significant standards of scientific argumentation and demonstrates accepted standards of empirical research.

Essential criteria of this class are:

- Contribution to the field of knowledge addressed
- Providing additions of good quality to the existing body of knowledge
- The work is publishable without major improvement and amendments; acceptance is expected on the level of an indexed academic journal at a minimum of two-star level.

Very good use and causal application of the relevant theoretical body is consistently evident and leads to convincingly defended conclusions. There is essential level of evidence of empirical research undertaken. The intellectual argumentation is of high quality, essential, and applies rich and controversial discussion being fully supported by a significant body of consistent and conclusive empirical data.

The adopted body of existing literature is rich, logic, fully relevant, and excellently referenced. Argumentation is highly critical and logic.

### *Fail*

Theses, which do not meet those criteria above to a full extent and which the Viva Jury rejects. Essential additional criterion is that the Jury is not concluding that extensions and or amendments will lead to the necessary improvements for acceptance within the allowed period of time for such circumstances.

## **5.6. Process of the Viva**

The Viva is public. That means that other students, academics or members of the public are admitted to a student's Viva.

Meaning of the Viva is assessing and testing a student's submitted research by academic standards in a fair process. This test is subject-oriented and respects criteria of moral, ethics, and transparency. Therefore, the Viva has the character of a public hearing.

After the physical Viva the Board will discuss and evaluate the written work and the oral statements of the student made during their Viva. This discussion will exclude both the student and the public. The vote for the final degree will be made by simple majority among the members of the Jury. The DoS has the right to speak and to express a recommendation, but has no voting right.

After the Board has reached an agreement on the Class of the Doctoral Award, the public will be reconvened and the student will be officially informed about their result. The Board's vote is binding, but does not limit the student's rights of appeal as explained in this Handbook and the relevant

Programme Outline.

### **5.7. Complaints Procedure (Doctoral Research)**

If a student feels unfairly treated, disadvantaged or not supervised according to this regulation during the process of their doctoral research, they have the right to complain to the Director of the University's Doctoral School.

The Director will contact the DoS and discuss the issues raised. The intention is to achieve a moderation in which the student's concerns are intensively considered and discussed to achieve mutual understanding in the effort of solution by consent. The process of moderation will lead to the student's personal involvement in the effort to find a solution for the issue(s) raised supporting the continuation of the doctoral research by resolving the issue(s) through mutual agreement between all parties involved.

Should the reasons of complaint be so serious or consent not be possible (in serious cases only) that it will not be appropriate for the student to continue with the allocated DoS, the director of the Doctoral School can allocate a different DoS. The loss of time will then be compensated accordingly. In such serious case, the maximum period of studies can exceed the maximum of five (5) years, if the student's reasons for such complaint were fully justified.

The decision of the University will carefully respect a student's rights and not act against these, but its decision is final.



## 6. General Regulations

### 6.1. Testimony of Doctoral Studies

Those students, who may wish to terminate their studies before completion of their full doctoral studies, but after completion of their Master of Philosophy Degree can obtain a written confirmation stating their present level of achievement.

This will also include a Transcript stating ECTS credits and marks achieved on the level of the Master of Philosophy. According to form and nature of students' doctoral research during the time of Phase 2, an allocation of ECTS Credits is not possible. Instead an additional report of a student's DoS will be added explaining level and extent of the doctoral research at the moment of termination.

### 6.2. Examination Board (Master of Philosophy)

One Examination Board takes place after completion of all taught modules and submission of the Research Proposal. This will be at the end of year one (1) of doctoral studies. The Examination Board moderates and approves students' progress to the thesis stage and, if necessary, formulates recommendations for adjustments of marking.

In particular, the Board of Examiners will assess the marking of assignments with specific consideration to

- Appropriateness of marking
- Consistency of marking
- Timely marking
- Fair marking, individually and across the cohort

Further task of the Examination Board is to deal with student complaints and other relevant issues occurring in the lecturing of modules or during supervision. Questions on and about adaptation of the modules and their outline may be discussed, too. The Board of Examiners will also deal with cases in which suspicions of unallocated and/or not referenced work or plagiarism is assumed.

The Examination Board consists of a minimum of three members of academic staff, to which module leaders are invited and will have to present a report.

All proceedings of the Examination Board are noted in written form accordingly and disseminated among all faculty related to the programme and the Board of the University.

### 6.3. Academic Misconduct (General Guidelines and Summary)

#### 6.3.1. Referencing

Students are asked to precisely note the regulations on academic dishonesty. In particular, this addresses the inclusion in their work of any un-attributed or not referenced material adopted from other sources. Students are assured that every effort will be taken to deal with them fairly, but should

remember that there are strict rules concerning cheating.

Students, who are presenting work in submitted paper, which is not their own work or do not reference all contributions from third parties partly or in full will be informed in writing that doubts exist about the origin of his/her work. These doubts can be accompanied by a report, such as turn-it-in or alike.

### **6.3.2. Other Third Party Contributions**

It is clearly regulated that any (further) third party contribution of which extent and/or length ever, must be fully declared. It is also stated that an explanation does not necessarily constitute the legality or legitimacy of such contribution. Students must be generally aware of the extremely limited allowance of using others' contributions.

The use of a ghost-writer, editor or similar is strictly forbidden and will lead to the immediate exclusion of any student. The use of a translator or other party supporting the quality and standards of the language of a thesis must be explained in writing together with the declaration that such support is restricted to the language (grammar and spelling) of the thesis only and that no other contributions beyond language corrections took place.

## **6.4. Students' Appeals**

Students may appeal against any decision, including those of the Board of Examiners or the Board of the Viva by presentation of any new evidence or other essential submission for consideration.

Appeals shall be initially evaluated by the relevant Chair, and the Board shall be reconvened where there is a substantial reason to allow a reconsideration of its decision. All decisions of the Board of Examiners/Viva are subject to the appeals procedure.

A student has a right to appeal against the recommendations of such Board where:

- There has been a mistake or irregularity in the conduct of assessments or the Viva which may have affected the recommendation
- A student's achievement was adversely affected by illness or other factors which they were unable to communicate or for valid reasons unwilling to divulge before the relevant Board made its recommendations
- There has been a substantial administrative error, or where the examination or assessment was not conducted in accordance with the current regulations, or where some other material irregularity has occurred
- The Board of Examiners/Viva has recommended that a student should be penalised for cheating or plagiarism. Here the student may appeal against the Board's conclusion that cheating or plagiarism has occurred and against the penalty recommended.

Disagreement with the academic judgement of a Board of Examiners/Viva in assessing the merits of an individual piece of work or in reaching a decision on a student's progression or on the final level of award, based on marks, grades, and other information relating to the candidate's performance cannot in itself constitute reasons for an appeal.

When a student concludes that there are reasons for an appeal it is their responsibility to request a reconsideration by the relevant Board in writing to the University not later than fourteen days after receiving confirmation of the recommendation. The written request must:

- Specify the reasons on which the student is exercising his or her right of appeal;
- Include all information such as medical certificates or other documentary evidence which the student wishes to be considered in support of his or her appeal;
- Identify any person(s) considered by the student as having information pertinent to the appeal.

In receipt of the student's written request the University reconsiders the recommendation of the Board of Examiners/Viva and shall:

- Determine whether or not the reasons for appeal are permissible under the rights above. When it is determined that there are no reasons for appeal, the University shall write to the student to inform him or her that the appeal has been rejected
- Convene a meeting of the relevant Board's appointed Review Group where an appeal is permissible and provide it with
  - The student's written request together with any supporting information
  - A copy of the Minutes of the relevant Board
  - A written statement from the Chair of the Board
  - Any written statement submitted by a person or persons identified by the student as having information pertinent to the appeal.

The appointed Review Group shall determine, whether or not it can proceed to consider the case solely on the basis of the written submissions or whether or not it wishes to interview any or all of the parties involved. The appointed Review Group will consider all of the evidence pertinent to the case and may recommend to the Board of Examiners that:

- The appeal should be rejected;
- The Board of Examiners/Viva be reconvened to reconsider its decision
- The case is so serious that the Academic Board should annul the decision of the Board by taking any action necessary for it to receive a revised recommendation including, if necessary, the establishment of a new Board or the appointment of new members
- If there is evidence, which raises doubts about the competence of or the standards being applied by the Board and that the Academic Board should authorise a full and proper investigation as a matter of urgency.

If the Revision Group concludes that a student's rights were affected, the unjustified prior decision will be revoked and the University will apply appropriate means and mechanisms within its regulations correcting the false decision appropriately and accordingly in favour of the complaining student.

Should the Revision Group that the decision made was justified, it will inform the complaining student in writing about the reasons for such conclusion.

## 7. Final Remark

This Student Handbook is the valid regulation of and for the University's PhD studies. Alterations and adaptations may be made at any time.

It is assured that students being already on the programme will not be affected negatively.

Information about changes will be published on the website of the University.



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