

Information for (international) students wishing to obtain a doctoral (Ph. D.) degree

- The doctoral degree is an academic degree awarded by a university. The conferral of the degree is governed by the laws of the respective university. The formal conditions and regulations for admission as a doctoral candidate as well for the final thesis and examination are laid down in the [Promotionsordnung](#) (regulations for doctoral degrees) of the respective faculty. At the Goethe University of Frankfurt, the six Natural Sciences faculties have created joint doctorate regulations ([“Promotionsordnung der Mathematisch-Naturwissenschaftlichen Fachbereiche“](#)).
- Application to become a doctoral student at the Goethe University is typically made directly to the Professor, rather than to an Admissions Committee. The Professor makes the primary decision about acceptance of the candidate to the doctoral programme, whereby the academic background of the applicant must be approved by the Faculty’s Doctoral Committee ([“Promotionsausschuss“](#)).
- Applicants from abroad should be aware that the procedure for acquiring a doctoral degree in Germany is different from that of most countries. Doctoral studies in Germany consist mainly of scientific research, although course-work may be required for some doctoral programmes, depending on the funding source. The Professor supervises the research performed by the doctoral candidate and the results of this research are published in the form of a thesis.

Identification of a supervisor

- The usual way to apply for a doctorate is to identify a Professor with relevant research interests and who is willing to supervise the research of the applicant. Applicants should, through their own initiative, contact a professor in their respective area of research interest. Descriptions of the various institutes and information about the specific research areas of the Professors as well as their contact information can be found there. The next step is for the applicant to directly contact the Professor indicating his/her interest and academic background as well as the time-frame in which he/she is available to start doctoral studies. Note that the Professor is under no obligation to accept any given applicant.
- Generally, Professors receive many requests of this kind. To obtain priority, it is of utmost importance that the applicant has carefully considered the field in which he/she would like to pursue doctoral studies, and indicates in the application letter the scientific reasons for specific interest in doctoral studies with the Professor to whom he/she is applying. In conjunction with the letter of interest the applicant should submit a *curriculum vitae* to the prospective Professor.

Registration as a doctoral student

- Having identified a supervisor, the applicant must apply for admission to the Faculty as a doctoral student. The Doctoral Committee (*Promotionsausschuss*) of our Faculty will decide whether the knowledge and qualifications the candidate has already acquired suffice for admission to the doctorate programme.
- The prerequisites set by the Natural Sciences Faculties at the Goethe University are the following:
 - A university degree equivalent to the “Diplom” or a Master’s degree in a study programme related to the field of doctoral research
 - A minimum grade equivalent to the German "befriedigend" (satisfactory)
- The Doctoral Committee decides whether foreign university degrees can meet the equivalent levels to the above prerequisites. If studies have been completed at tertiary education venues other than universities some additional requirements may have to be met.
- There are no fixed deadlines, so applications can be submitted at any time of the year. It is highly recommended that this application be made within three months of identifying a supervisor.

The respective form is available in the Dean’s office or on the homepage (see: [Application for Acceptance to Doctoral studies in the Faculty of Biochemistry, Chemistry and Pharmacy](#) (DOC) and must be filled out and signed in duplicate. The supervisor (Professor) and (if there is one) co-supervisor must also sign this form. Either German or English can be entered as the language of the dissertation under “Sprache der Dissertation”. These documents, together with university degree certificates (as either originals or legally notarized copies) must be submitted to the Dean’s Office (Campus Riedberg / Biocenter / Building N101 / Room 1.11, Mrs. Schemenau). Copies of the certificates will be made and the originals (or notarized copies thereof) will be returned to the applicant.

- The equivalency of the applicant’s university degrees to the German degree requirements will be evaluated and a decision reached with respect to the applicant’s acceptance to doctoral studies in the Faculty.
- If the application is accepted, the applicant will receive one of the two forms back with the signature of the Dean. This will be your proof that you are a doctoral student in the Faculty of Biochemistry, Chemistry and Pharmacy, so keep it in a safe place.
- If the university degrees do not fulfil the prerequisites, the applicant may be offered provisional acceptance as a doctoral student until additional requirements (e.g. attendance of certain courses) have been met. These additional requirements are decided according to the applicant’s performance in tests of their knowledge in the field (“*Kenntnisprüfung*”).
- If the applicant’s university/tertiary degrees are not judged to be sufficient for provisional acceptance, the applicant will be refused admission.

Enrolment as a doctoral student

- With (provisional) acceptance from the Faculty the candidate can register at the Study Service Center as a student at the university. To complete this procedure an additional form has also to be filled out: [Antrag auf Aufnahme zum Studium](#) and taken to the central student administration office of the Goethe-University of Frankfurt. Although

doctoral students are exempted from tuition, they must pay the same administrative fee as regular students. This fee is approximately €300 per semester and covers the cost of student services and public transport in the Rhine-Main area.

Preparing the Dissertation

Please refer to the [Promotionsordnung der Mathematisch-Naturwissenschaftlichen Fachbereiche](#) for general guidelines about preparing the dissertation. Additional requirements for the Faculty of Biochemistry, Chemistry and Pharmacy are summarized below:

The *curriculum vitae* of the candidate is included in the dissertation, usually at the end.

In accordance with German customs, we require a passport size picture of the candidate in the *curriculum vitae*.

A list of publications resulting from the doctoral studies.

If the dissertation is written in English, a five-page summary of the work in German must also be in the dissertation.

As an alternative to the standard format, it is also permissible to submit a dissertation based on the candidate's publications (so-called "cumulative dissertation"). Please refer to the [Beschlüsse über Promotionsangelegenheiten](#) and the information sheet [„Frequently asked Questions about Cumulative Dissertations in English”](#) for further details.

Review and Examination of the Dissertation

There are Faculty specific rules about who may and who may not be a reviewer (*Gutachter*) of the dissertation and who may participate in the committee for the dissertation defence (*Disputation*). The doctoral supervisor is expected to assist the candidate in identifying suitable reviewers and Dissertation Defence Commission members. Important for the candidate to know is that a minimum of two reviews will be necessary.

The candidate must submit the dissertation (5 copies) along with the names of the reviewers to the Dissertation Office for the Natural Sciences ([Promotionsbüro der Naturwissenschaften und Mathematik](#)). Please refer to the Homepage of the Promotionsbüro der Mathematisch-Naturwissenschaftlichen Fachbereiche for further details: (http://www.uni-frankfurt.de/org/nwe/Promotionsbuero/Downloads/040merkbl_en.pdf).

Once the reviews have been received, the dissertation and the reviews are circulated to all Faculty members, who may then provide comments about the quality and scope of the dissertation, including making suggestions about whether the evaluations from the reviewers are appropriate.

For the dissertation defence it is necessary to submit a list of four further names as potential members of the Dissertation Defence Commission. Two of these will be chosen by the Faculty Doctoral Committee. It is then the candidate's responsibility to find a suitable date for the dissertation defence with the foreseen Commission members. Note that it is necessary to allow at least 10 days between publication of the defence time and place and the dissertation defence: this is because dissertation defences at the Goethe-University are open to all members of the university.

The defence can be held in English, as long as the head of the Faculty Doctoral Committee and the members of the Dissertation Defence Commission agree. Permission should be obtained in advance.

The duration of the dissertation defence must be at least one hour.

Evaluation of the Dissertation and Dissertation Defence

The doctorate regulations of the combined mathematical and scientific faculties of the university ([“Promotionsordnung der Mathematisch-Naturwissenschaftlichen Fachbereiche“](#))

To obtain an evaluation of “excellent”, among other requirements, the candidate needs to establish an excellent record of publications. Furthermore, three reviewers must recommend this grade and the Dissertation Defence Committee must unanimously agree that this grade is appropriate for the oral defence as well as the written form. An evaluation of “excellent” requires compelling justification if the doctoral work has exceeded four years.

To obtain an evaluation of “very good”, the candidate should have been first author of at least one publication. The status of submitted first author publications will be checked at the Dissertation defence. An evaluation of “very good” requires compelling justification if the doctoral work has exceeded five years.