



Information on the Oral Examination (Thesis Defense) (Version August 2023)

Foreword

The doctoral regulations for the Dr.med. / Dr.med.dent. or the Dr.sc.hum. regulate the oral examination as a defence of the dissertation.

Appointment of the examiners

For the oral examination the Dean appoints two examiners with Habilitation.

As a rule, the reviewers of the dissertation are appointed as examiners. The official supervisor of the doctoral candidate is generally appointed as chairman of the Examination Board if he or she is a full-time professor or lecturer of the University of Tübingen.

If the dissertation has been given the grade “summa cum laude” three examiners shall be appointed.

If the candidate is pursuing a Dr. sc. hum, three examiners are appointed, one of which is selected in agreement with that faculty which after the Faculty of Medicine is closest to the subject area of the doctoral work. This examiner shall be a member of that faculty.

The candidate arranges a date and location for the examination in agreement with the examiners and informs the Office of Doctoral Affairs at least three weeks before the examination date so that the invitations and necessary documents can be sent to the examiners.

The institute or hospital in which the doctoral work was carried out announces the oral examination, for example with posters, on the institute website or by email.

The chair of the Examination Board is responsible for returning the protocols which have been completed and signed by all of the examiners.

Organization

The oral examination should take place within six weeks of the acceptance of the dissertation (at the end of the objection period). At the candidate's request it may be held in German or in English.

If a candidate does not appear for the examination on the set date, the examination is graded with “fail” as per § 12 (3) of the Promotionsordnung. If the candidate misses the examination date for reasons beyond his control, a new date can be set.

The organizational details of the examination (including technical equipment such as projectors) are the responsibility of the candidate. We recommend contacting the chairman of the Examination Board before the examination in order to discuss the procedure.

In consultation with the examiners, a web-based examination is possible upon request. In this case, please contact the office of doctoral affairs, which will send you the corresponding application form.

The examination procedure (thesis defense)

During the thesis defense the candidate first presents the essential contents and results of the dissertation (generally in the form of a PowerPoint presentation, candidates are asked to limit themselves strictly to a maximum length of 30 minutes) and then defends them in a discussion with the members of the Doctoral Examination Board (Prüfungskommission).



The doctoral candidate is questioned about the methods and findings of his work, the scholarly context of the dissertation topic and about related questions in the field of the dissertation. He or she is expected to respond in a scientifically sound manner and to be able to counter fundamental objections raised by the reviewers and the members of the Examination Board.

The oral defense and the following round of questions are open to the public subject to the available space, but questions may be posed only by members of the Examination Board.

The Examination Board then retires to determine whether the examination will be graded pass (bestanden), fail (nicht bestanden) or a grade (in the case of dissertations graded "summa cum laude" or the doctoral graduation procedure for Dr. sc. hum.).

Determination of the doctoral graduation grade / Protocol

As a rule, the oral defense is graded "pass" or "fail." The examination is passed if each examiner gives the grade "pass."

If the grade "summa cum laude" has been suggested or in the case of doctoral graduation procedures for Dr. sc. hum., the oral examination is assigned a grade which counts for 1/3 of the overall grade. In this case, each of the examiners gives one of the following grades:

- excellent (summa cum laude) = 0
- very good (magna cum laude) = 1
- good (cum laude) = 2
- fair (rite) = 3

- The grade „excellent“ = 0 can be downgraded by 0,3.
- The grade „very good“ = 1 can be upgraded or downgraded by 0.3.
- The grade „good“ = 2 can be upgraded or downgraded by 0.3
- The grade „fair“ = 3 can be upgraded by 0.3

The individual grades are recorded on the protocol sheet which is provided to the examiners. The chairman calculates the overall grade which results from the double-weighted grade for the dissertation and the single-weighted grade for the oral examination. The overall grade is:

- At an average up to 0.5: summa cum laude (excellent),
- At an average between 0.6 to 1.5: magna cum laude (very good),
- At an average between 1.6 to 2.5: cum laude (good),
- At an average between 2.6 to 3.5: rite (fair).

The overall grade „summa cum laude“ (excellent) is only awarded if

- the arithmetic mean of the individual grades for the written doctoral thesis is less than or equal to 0.5
- the individual grades of the defense result in a grade of at least 0.5, whereby none of the individual oral grades may be worse than "magna cum laude" (1.3).

After the grades have been recorded, the protocol sheet must be signed by both or all three examiners, as the case may be.



Results of the examination / Certificate

When the doctoral grade has been determined, it is communicated orally to the candidate by the chair of the Examination Board.

Once the examination protocol has been completed, the Office of Doctoral Affairs will give permission for the dissertation to be printed. Only after the dissertation has been printed and published and the obligatory copies have been submitted to the University Library, can the Office of doctoral affairs issue the doctoral certificate and hand it over to the candidate (takes approximately 2 weeks). Only when the doctoral certificate has been handed over to the candidate is he or she allowed to bear the title "Doctor."

Repetition of the examination

As a rule, if the oral examination is not passed, it may be repeated once within 12 months of the first examination. If the defense is not passed a second time, the doctoral graduation procedure shall be considered unsuccessfully terminated.