UNIVERSITÉ DE FRIBOURG
UNIVERSITÄT FREIBURG

Regulation

Of 16 December 2024

for the award of the doctoral degree in science or humanities at the Faculty of Science and Medicine of the University of Fribourg

Note: This English version is published for informational purpose only. Solely the French and German versions have legal value.

The Faculty council of the Faculty of Science and Medicine of the University of Fribourg

In accordance with article 43, subparagraph 3bis and 4 of the legislation concerning the University, approved on 19 November 1997;

In accordance with articles 88 and 100 of the statutes of the University of Fribourg approved on 4 November 2016;

In accordance with article 20 and 21 of the Regulations concerning admission and registration to the University, approved on 26 March 2020;

In accordance with articles 8 and 47, of the Statutes of the Faculty of Science and Medicine, approved on 25 September 2017

Decides:

I: GENERAL PRINCIPLE

Article 1. Object

[1] This regulation governs doctoral studies and the doctorate honoris causa at the Faculty of Science and Medicine ("Faculty") of the University of Fribourg ("University").

Article 2. Academic degrees and title

[1] The Faculty awards the academic degrees of 'Doctor of Science' and 'Doctor of Arts' in its fields of study. A detailed list of titles forms an integral part of these regulations in Appendix 1.

[2] The title of Doctor from the Faculty attests to the capacity to conduct high-quality scientific research on the basis of an original independent work (thesis) and an oral examination (defence).

[3] The Faculty can also award the title of doctor honoris causa (Dr h.c.) in recognition of exceptional merit in the scientific field.

Article 3. Structure of doctoral studies

Doctoral studies consist of:
a) the doctoral thesis;
b) continuing education;
c) the doctoral examination (defence);
d) the public presentation.

Article 4. Duration

[1] The research work must be designed in such a way that the doctoral studies can be successfully completed within four years.

[2] If doctoral studies cannot be completed within five years, the doctoral student must submit a written and reasoned request for an extension to the dean before the end of the fifth year.

[3] The maximum duration of doctoral studies is eight years. It begins with admission to doctoral studies and ends with the award of the title of doctor.

[4] Upon written and substantiated request by the doctoral student before the end of the seventh year, the dean may extend the maximum duration of studies. The doctoral student must prove that, for exceptional reasons, they are unable to respect the maximum duration of studies.

Article 5. Objectives

[1] During doctoral studies, the doctoral student devotes themselves intensively to a scientific problem, carries out independent research, acquires solid technical and methodological knowledge and skills in their field of specialisation and is able to place their research work in a broader context.

[2] They learn to plan and carry out theoretical and practical work independently, to critically assess the obtained results, to strengthen their own communication skills through scientific publications and presentations, and to develop an awareness of scientific integrity.

[3] They also acquire transferable skills, particularly in the areas of decision-making, project management, self-management, innovation and a sense of responsibility.

[4] Doctoral studies also serve to integrate the doctoral student into the scientific community.

Article 6. Place of work

[1] As a general rule, research work for a doctorate must be carried out in the department or institute of the Faculty where the thesis supervisor works.

[2] The dean may give permission for research to be carried out in other higher education institutions, national or international research centres, university hospitals, industrial companies or other appropriate institutions if:

a) the subject of the work requires it, and

b) a qualified person on site supervises the research work and there is an adequate scientific environment. This includes, among other things, other researchers in related fields, participation in scientific conferences and the possibility of regular participation in internal seminars.

Article 7. Scientific misconduct

[1] The doctoral student commits to respecting the rules of good scientific practice throughout their doctoral studies.

[2] Any misconduct in the scientific context which is formally established will result in the student failing the corresponding assessment. Depending on the seriousness of the offence, the Faculty may consider the failure to be definitive. In this case, the thesis may neither be withdrawn nor resubmitted

[3] The right is reserved to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

II. ADMISSION AND REGISTRATION

Article 8. Admission conditions

[1] Admission to doctoral studies is governed by the current regulations concerning the admission and registration of students and auditors at the University of Fribourg

[2] In principle, the following conditions must be met in order to be admitted to doctoral studies at the Faculty:

a. a Bachelor and Master of Science degree or a Bachelor and Master of Medicine degree from the Faculty or another equivalent degree from a university recognised by the Faculty, and
b. the written agreement of a supervisor who agrees to supervise the doctoral thesis, which agreement must be obtained using the form provided by the Dean's Office.

Article 9. Admission procedure

[1] Applications for admission to doctoral studies must be submitted to the University's Office for Admissions and Registration. If the formal conditions for admission are met, this office forwards the applications to the Dean's Office.

[2] The Dean's Office examines the applications from a scientific point of view and decides on the actual admission.

[3] If an application does not fulfil the conditions of Art. 8 para. 2 let. b or the scientific criteria, the Faculty may grant an exemption on the recommendation of the Students Requests Commission. In such cases, it may require the successful completion of an entrance exam, the completion of additional requirements or the fulfilment of other conditions.

[4] There is no right of admission to doctoral studies.

Article 10. Registration

[1] Doctoral students must be enrolled at the University for the entire duration of their doctoral studies, i.e. until the end of the semester in which they defend their doctoral thesis.

[2] In order to be admitted to the thesis defence, they must have been enrolled for at least four semesters.

[3] After their thesis defence, doctoral students can remain registered for an additional semester if they need it to prepare the final submission of their thesis.

[4] Doctoral students may not be enrolled simultaneously at another university at doctoral level, unless a double doctorate convention has been signed.

III. DIRECTION AND SUPERVISION OF DOCTORAL THESIS

Article 11. Supervisor

[1] The doctoral thesis must be supervised by a thesis supervisor. They are responsible for the scientific supervision and personal guidance of the doctoral student. They may be supported by a co-supervisor.

[2] Individuals supervising doctoral theses must hold a doctorate and have excellent skills with regard to the content and methodology in the relevant field. In addition, they must be actively engaged in research and have a network and recognition within the scientific community.

[3] Are authorised to supervise a doctoral thesis:

a) the professors of the Faculty

b) the privat-docents, titular professors and senior researchers (maîtres et maîtresses d'enseignement et de recherche), provided that they have a permanent position at the Faculty

c) the professors of the departments and interfaculty institutes under the co-responsibility of the Faculty

d) the privat-docents and the titular professors hired for a fixed term by the Faculty, provided that a professor of the Faculty is appointed as deputy supervisor

e) Senior researchers (maîtres-assistants et maîtresses-assistantes, et maîtres et maîtresses d'enseignement et de recherche) employed on a fixed-term contract by the Faculty, provided that a professor of the Faculty is appointed as deputy supervisor

[4] The deputy supervisor mentioned in d and e is designated by the competent department.

[5] Provided they have the necessary infrastructure and financial support, emeritus professors retain the right to supervise a doctoral thesis that they undertook before their retirement for a maximum of one year. After this period, the corresponding department must appoint a deputy supervisor.

[6] Starting three years before their retirement, persons authorised to supervise doctoral theses may only accept new doctoral students under the following conditions:

a) the necessary infrastructure and financial support for the doctoral student are guaranteed until the completion of the doctoral thesis, and

b) a deputy supervisor has been designated by the corresponding department.

Article 12. Co-supervisor

[1] Provided the person in question agrees, the doctoral student and the thesis supervisor may jointly appoint a co-supervisor for the duration of the doctoral studies to provide additional professional guidance and support for the doctoral thesis.

[2] The co-supervisor must hold a doctorate and belong to a university or another research institute in Switzerland or an equivalent institution abroad.

[3] The name of the co-supervisor must be communicated to the Dean's Office.

Article 13. Change of supervisor

[1] The doctoral student, the supervisor or co-supervisor may request a change of thesis supervisor at any time. They must submit a reasoned request to the dean.

[2] If the request comes from the doctoral student, they must in principle find a new supervisor within six months.

[3] If the request comes from the supervisor or co-supervisor, they must, in principle, find a new supervisor within six months.

[4] The Dean's Council, in agreement with the corresponding department, will rule on the request and either order a change of thesis supervisor for the remaining duration of the doctoral studies, or maintain the current supervisor.

[5] The change of supervisor only becomes effective when the new supervisor agrees in writing to supervise the thesis.

Article 14. Change of co-supervisor

[1] The doctoral student, the supervisor or co-supervisor may request a change of thesis co-supervisor at any time.

[2] If the request comes from the doctoral student, they must in principle find a new co-supervisor within six months.

[3] If the request comes from the supervisor or co-supervisor, they must, in principle, find a new co-supervisor within six months.

[4] If a replacement for the co-supervisor is not wanted or if no new co-supervisor is found within the aforementioned period, the thesis work will continue under the sole supervision of the thesis supervisor.

[5] The change of co-supervisor must be communicated to the Dean's Office.

Article 15. Unavailability of the supervisor

[1] In the event of the resignation or unavailability of the thesis supervisor, the co-supervisor shall ensure the continued progress of the thesis until a new supervisor is appointed.

[2] If the co-supervisor fulfils the requirements of Article 11 and the doctoral student accepts them, they may take on the supervision of the thesis.

[3] If there is no co-supervisor, the doctoral student, supported by their department, must find a new thesis supervisor within six months.

[4] If the doctoral student's efforts remain unsuccessful at the end of this period, the doctoral studies cannot be continued.

Article 16. Accompanying jury

[1] In agreement with the doctoral student and the co-supervisor, the thesis supervisor appoints an accompanying jury, if possible at the beginning of the doctorate and, at the latest, during the first twelve months following admission.

[2] It consists of:

a) the thesis supervisor

b) the thesis co-supervisor (if applicable)

c) one or two other experts with a doctorate, one of whom should ideally be from outside the university

[3] In justified cases, the experts may be replaced by other experts, in agreement with the doctoral student and the thesis supervisor and co-supervisor.

[4] The composition of the accompaniment jury must be communicated to the Dean's Office.

[5] The accompanying jury is responsible for the intermediate evaluation and the progress report of the doctoral student.

[6] It supports the doctoral student and the thesis supervisor in all scientific questions and concerns.

IV. DOCTORAL THESIS AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

Article 17. Subject of the doctoral thesis

The doctoral student determines the subject of their thesis in agreement with the thesis supervisor and co-supervisor.

Article 18. Thesis project

[1] In cooperation with the thesis supervisor and co-supervisor, the doctoral student prepares a thesis project that includes the following points:

a) the scientific question;

b) the state of research;

c) the provisional research plan;

d) the initial results (if applicable);

e) Roadmap and key steps;

f) the references.

[2] The thesis project must be submitted to the accompanying jury in electronic form at least 15 working days before the intermediate evaluation of the doctoral student.

Article 19. Intermediate evaluation

[1] An intermediate evaluation of the doctoral student takes place no later than 18 months after their admission to doctoral studies.

[2] The doctoral student presents their thesis project in the form of an oral scientific presentation to the accompanying jury. An oral assessment conducted by the accompanying jury completes the presentation. Both take place behind closed doors.

[3] As a general rule, the intermediate evaluation takes place in the presence of the doctoral student. In exceptional and justified situations, the dean may authorise the doctoral student to participate online.

[4] If necessary, the members of the accompanying jury may participate online.

[5] Immediately after the oral assessment, the accompanying jury deliberates and attributes the mention ‘passed’ or ‘not passed’ to the intermediate evaluation.

[6] The accompanying jury then informs the doctoral student of the result of the intermediate evaluation and communicates it in writing to the Dean's Office.

[7] They write a brief report for the doctoral student and the Dean's Office containing any recommendations on the thesis

[8] If the intermediate evaluation is failed, it may be repeated only once in the six months following the first attempt.

[9] In the event of a second failure, the doctoral thesis in question cannot be continued. If another supervisor declares that they are willing to supervise the doctoral thesis, the doctoral student may, in accordance with Article 8, submit a new application for admission.

Article 20. Progress report

[1] At the latest during the third year of the doctorate, the thesis supervisor organises a review discussion with the doctoral student. The co-supervisor and the accompanying jury participate in this discussion.

[2] The doctoral student reports on the progress made and the difficulties encountered in their thesis in the form of an oral presentation. This presentation is followed by a discussion on the progress of the thesis, any shortcomings, adjustments to the research plan, any continuing education and other next steps.

[3] As a general rule, the progress report is held in the presence of the doctoral student. In exceptional and justified situations, the dean may authorise the doctoral student to participate online.

[4] If necessary, the members of the accompanying jury may participate online.

[5] The main points of discussion, any recommendations made by the accompanying jury and the agreed-upon next steps are summarised in a brief minutes document signed by all participants and forwarded to the dean's office.

[6] The thesis supervisor must keep the minutes document until the doctoral student is de-registered.

Article 21. Continuing education

[1] The doctoral student has the right and the duty to follow continuing education in and outside the field of the doctoral thesis.

[2] The thesis supervisor determines with the doctoral student the scope and nature of the continuing education as well as the corresponding results certificates.

[3] Any costs of continuing education at the university are covered by the relevant department or institute.

[4] Continuing education can be carried out within the context of a Graduate School. Such schools issue the corresponding implementation provisions.

V. DOCTORAL THESIS AND DEFENCE

Article 22. Doctoral thesis

[1] The results of the research work are presented in the doctoral thesis. This attests that the doctoral student is able to communicate clearly and comprehensibly the connections and results they have obtained, from a technical, linguistic and graphical point of view.

[2] The doctoral student and the thesis supervisor are required to publish the results of their research in recognised scientific publications.

[3] Publications or manuscripts accepted for publication may be included in the thesis if they are accompanied by an outline text including an introduction and a summary. The doctoral candidate's independent scientific contribution to the publication or manuscript must be clearly recognisable.

Article 23. Language

The thesis is written in German, French or English, in agreement with the thesis supervisor. It contains a one- to two-page summary in English and in at least one of the other two languages.

Article 24. Examination jury

[1] Towards the end of the thesis, the supervisor proposes an examination jury in agreement with the co-supervisor and the doctoral student. The composition of the examination jury must cover all the fields of the thesis, in particular for multidisciplinary doctoral theses.

[2] The examination jury consists of:

a) the president. This is generally the president of the relevant department or institute, or a substitute proposed by this department or institute;

b) the thesis supervisor as the first examiner;

c) the thesis co-supervisor as second examiner;

d) at least two co-examiners, at least one of whom must belong to another university or research institute

[3] At least one of the co-examiners must be independent, i.e. there must be no joint publications between them and the thesis supervisor, co-supervisor and doctoral candidate.

[4] The members of the accompanying jury appointed in Art. 16, para. 2, let. c may sit on the examination jury with the status of co-examiner.

[5] The composition of the examination jury must be approved by the Faculty Council.

Article 25. Registration to the defence

[1] In agreement with the thesis supervisor and co-supervisor, doctoral students who have been enrolled for the minimum number of semesters may register with the Dean's Office at any time for the defence of their thesis. To do so, they must submit the following documents no later than 30 days before the scheduled date of the oral defence:

a) the thesis with a title page ready to be printed according to the Dean's office model;

b) the curriculum vitae;

c) a written solemn declaration stating that they have written their thesis on the basis of personal work, without unauthorised assistance;

d) proof of payment of the examination fees.

[2] The Dean's Office will check that the conditions set out in Article 10 have been met.

[3] Given the time required to obtain the reports, the doctoral student, in agreement with the thesis supervisor and co-supervisor and the examination jury, proposes a provisional date for the thesis defence to the Dean's Office.

Article 26. Reports

[1] Each member of the examination jury, with the exception of the president, shall draw up a written report on the thesis for the dean. The examiner's reports must be accompanied by the form provided by the Dean's Office, duly completed and signed. The form contains the following recommendation:

a) Thesis accepted;

b) Thesis accepted on condition of corrections;

c) Thesis rejected.

[2] The thesis co-supervisor may draw up a simplified report confirming that they agree with the supervisor's opinion.

[3] The thesis supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the corresponding reports are sent to the Dean's Office in electronic form no later than 30 days before the scheduled date for the thesis defence.

[4] If all the reports recommend acceptance of the thesis, the Dean's Office will circulate it in the competent department in accordance with art. 27.

[5] If a report recommends that the thesis be rejected, the examination procedure is interrupted. In this case, art. 29 is applicable.

Article 27. Circulation

[1] The Dean's Office submits the thesis, reports and other documents required under Article 25 to the persons in the competent department authorised to supervise a thesis in accordance with art. 11 para. 3 let. a, b and c, for a period of two weeks.

[2] If, within this period, written objections are raised by these persons, particularly with regard to the scientific quality of the thesis, the Dean's Office will forward these objections to the members of the examination jury.

Article 28. Evaluation of the thesis

[1] The examination jury makes its decision on the thesis, taking into account any written objections in accordance with art. 27, as follows:

a) Thesis accepted;

b) Thesis accepted on condition of corrections;

c) Thesis rejected.

[2] If the thesis is accepted on condition of corrections, the examination jury specifies whether these corrections must be made before the defence or before the printing of the thesis.

Article 29. Revision of the thesis

[1] If at least one member of the examination jury rejects the thesis, it is considered to have been rejected.

[2] The thesis supervisor informs the doctoral student in writing no later than 15 days after the decision of the examination jury. They send the various reports and any objections to the doctoral student and discuss the corrections to be made with them.

[3] The doctoral student may revise the thesis and submit it a second time within six months.

[4] As a general rule, the revised thesis is submitted to the same examination jury, unless the doctoral student and the thesis supervisor request the dean to change the composition of the examination jury. This must be approved by the Faculty Council.

[5] If the revised thesis is rejected by at least one member of the examination jury, the doctoral student is barred from making any further attempts to obtain the degree of doctor at the Faculty. The dean informs the doctoral student of this in writing.

Article 30. Confirmation of the date and invitation to the defence

[1] If the thesis has been accepted, the Dean's Office will contact the doctoral student and arrange a date for the thesis defence.

[2] The Dean's Office invites the relevant persons to the thesis defence.

Article 31. Defence

[1] The thesis defence takes place behind closed doors in the presence of the president and the thesis supervisor, as well as the members of the examination jury.

[2] It lasts at least 60 minutes and includes a scientific presentation by the doctoral student on the results of their doctoral thesis, as well as an oral assessment in which the doctoral student is questioned on subjects related to the thesis.

[3] As a general rule, the defence takes place in the presence of the doctoral student. In exceptional and justified situations, the dean may authorise the doctoral student to participate online.

[4] If necessary, the members of the examination jury can participate online.

Article 32. Evaluation of the defence

[1] The examination jury deliberates at the end of the oral assessment and awards a pass or fail for the thesis defence. It checks whether the requested corrections have been made to the thesis.

[2] The examination jury then immediately informs the doctoral student of the result of the defence and communicates it to the Dean's Office.

[3] The Dean's Office will inform the doctoral student in writing of the next steps in the procedure.

[4] In the event of a failed defence, the doctoral student may repeat it no earlier than three months and no later than six months after the first defence.

[5] If the second defence is failed, the doctoral candidate is barred from making any further attempts to obtain the degree of doctor from the Faculty. The dean informs the doctoral candidate of this in writing.

Article 33. Public presentation

[1] After successfully defending their thesis, the doctoral student presents the scientific results of their work to a wider audience during a public presentation. This is followed by a discussion.

[2] As a general rule, the public presentation takes place no later than one month after the defence. The doctoral candidate may request an extension of this deadline from the Dean's Office.

Article 34. Final submission

[1] At the latest six months after the defence of their thesis, doctoral students must submit an original copy of their thesis to the Dean's Office, revised according to the recommendations of the examination jury and ready to be printed.

[2] If the document complies with the Dean's Office guidelines, the Dean's Office will authorise its printing.

[3] After obtaining the authorisation to print, the doctoral student must submit four bound copies of their thesis to the Dean's Office.

[4] When the mandatory copies are submitted, the doctoral student receives a certificate from the dean, authorising them to use the title of doctor.

[5] If it is not possible to meet the six-month deadline, the doctoral candidate must submit a reasoned request for an extension to the dean. If they do not do so or if the request for an extension is refused, the doctoral student loses their right to obtain the title of doctor.

Article 35. Graduation

The doctorate diploma is awarded during the graduation ceremony of the Faculty.

VI. HONORARY DOCTORATE

Article 37. Procedure

[1] Upon recommendation of one or several members, the Faculty can confer the title of Doctor *honoris causa* to persons of outstanding scientific merit.

[2] The decision is made by secret ballot at the Faculty Council meeting and requires the approval of two-thirds of the voting faculty members present.

Article 38. Awarding of the title

The Dean awards the title of Doctor *honoris causa* at the *Dies academicus* of the University.

VI. LEGAL REMEDIES

Article 39. Complaints

[1] Decisions on the assessment of exams, theses, defences or other skills assessments may be subject to a complaint.

[2] The procedure is governed by the Regulations of 18 December 2023 on the complaint procedure at the Faculty.

[3] Other objections must be lodged with the Internal Appeals Committee of the University of Fribourg (CRI) within 30 days of notification of the contested decision.

VII. TRANSITORY AND FINAL DISPOSITIONS

Article 40. Authority

The Faculty council shall be responsible for any decision concerning circumstances not governed by this regulation.

Article 41. Transitory measures

[1] Doctoral students enrolled in doctoral studies before the entry into force of this regulation and who wish to benefit from it may do so by submitting a written request to the Council of Deans within six months of the date of approval by the Cantonal Department for Education and Cultural affairs. In all other cases, the present regulations of 21 September 2015 shall continue to apply for eight years from the date of approval by the Cantonal Department for Education and Cultural affairs.

[2] Doctoral students whose enrolment for the doctorate has been confirmed after the entry into force of this regulation are automatically subject to it

Article 33. Entry into force

The present regulation shall enter into force after its ratification by the Cantonal Department for Education and Cultural affairs.

Adopted by the Faculty council on 16 December 2024

Approved on 24 February 2025 by the Rectorate of the University.

Ratified on the 2 April 2025 by the Cantonal Department for Education and Cultural affairs.

The present translation into English is for information only. Only the French version «Règlement pour l'obtention du doctorat à la Faculté des sciences de l'Université de Fribourg» or the German version «Reglement über die Erlangung der Doktorwürde an der Mathematisch-Naturwissenschaftlichen Fakultät der Universität Freiburg» are valid.

UNIVERSITÉ DE FRIBOURG
UNIVERSITÄT FREIBURG

Appendix 1: list of the titles of 'Doctor of Science (Dr ès sc.)' and 'Doctor of Arts (Dr ès lettres)' awarded by the Faculty of Science and Medicine

Docteur ès sciences en mathématiques	Doktor der Wissenschaft in Mathematik	Doctor of Philosophy in Mathematics	Scientiarum doctor in mathematicae
Docteur ès sciences en informatique	Doktor der Wissenschaft in Informatik	Doctor of Philosophy in Computer Science	Scientiarum doctor in computatoria
Docteur ès sciences en physique	Doktor der Wissenschaft in Physik	Doctor of Philosophy in Physics	Scientiarum doctor in physica
Docteur ès sciences en chimie	Doktor der Wissenschaft in Chemie	Doctor of Philosophy in Chemistry	Scientiarum doctor in chemica
Docteur ès sciences en science des matériaux	Doktor der Wissenschaft in Materialwissenschaften	Doctor of Philosophy in Materials Science	Scientiarum doctor in scientia materiarum
Docteur ès sciences en sciences de la Terre	Doktor der Wissenschaft in Erdwissenschaften	Doctor of Philosophy in Earth Sciences	Scientiarum doctor in scientiis terrarum
Docteur ès sciences en géographie	Doktor der Wissenschaft in Geographie	Doctor of Philosophy in Geography	Scientiarum doctor in geographia
Docteur ès sciences en biologie	Doktor der Wissenschaft in Biologie	Doctor of Philosophy in Biology	Scientiarum doctor in biologia
Docteur ès sciences en géosciences	Doktor der Philosophie in Geowissenschaften	Doctor of Philosophy in Geosciences	Scientiarum doctor in geoscientia
Docteur ès sciences en biochimie	Doktor der Wissenschaft in Biochemie	Doctor of Philosophy in Biochemistry	Scientiarum doctor in biochemia
Docteur ès sciences en bioinformatique	Doktor der Wissenschaft in Bioinformatik	Doctor of Philosophy in Bioinformatics	Scientiarum doctor in bioinformatica
Docteur ès sciences en sciences médicales	Doktor der Wissenschaft in medizinischen Wissenschaften	Doctor of Philosophy in Medical Sciences	Scientiarum doctor in scientiis medicinae
Docteur ès lettres humaines et sociales en médecine	Doktor der Philosophie in Sozial- und Geisteswissenschaften in der Medizin	Doctor of Philosophy in Medical Humanities	Philosophiae doctor in scientiis humanis et socialibus medicinae
Docteur ès lettres en humanités environnementales	Doktor der Philosophie in Umweltgeisteswissenschaften	Doctor of Philosophy in Environmental Humanities	Philosophiae doctor in scientiis humanis oeculogiae