

Procedures for Conferral of a Doctorate at the FIN

Begin of process for obtaining a doctorate degree

1. Announcement of a mentor

A mentor (*Doktorvater*) is in charge of the procedures for the conferral of the doctorate and supervises the progress of the dissertation thesis. Only full professors, junior professors and assistant professors (*Privatdozenten*) can be mentors.

2. Choosing a topic

The general topic of the dissertation thesis is negotiated with the mentor. It is not uncommon that the exact topic evolves over time. Therefore, a working title is often initially selected.

3. Funding of the conferral of a doctorate

Typically, the doctorate research is carried out in the position of a research assistant (*wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter*) which entails teaching assignments. Some doctorate candidates of the FIN are externally funded. There are different schemes for such funding, including project grants from the DFG or research-oriented industrial partners, scholarships (e.g. the Sachsen-Anhalt state scholarships), and external employment at a company. Conducting a conferral of a doctorate without any funding is also possible, though uncommon in the field of computer science.

4. Status of a doctorate candidate

The conferral of a doctorate formally commences with the FIN issuing the status of a doctorate candidate (*Doktorandenstatus*) which is carried out in terms of an individual assessment. Diploma and master degrees in computer science issued by German universities are usually accepted without further ado. A Bachelor degree is not sufficient. Applicants holding a degree from a university of applied sciences (*Fachhochschule*), a foreign Master degree, or degrees loosely related to computer science may be also accepted with imposed constraints. A common such constraint is the high-graded pass in some Master courses. The status of a doctorate candidate expires after six years in agreement with the mentor if no considerable progress has been made.

Public documentation of the dissertation project

1. Thesis proposal

The doctorate candidate elaborates the planned dissertation project approximately one year after the start of research. This thesis proposal contains a preliminary title, detailed related works, goals and how they are intended to be achieved. The expected gain in knowledge should also be included. The outlined ideas are presented in a public seminar (*Doktorandenseminar*). In presence of his mentor and another professor (possibly an external one) the proposal is discussed. The exam office (*Prüfungsamt*) is informed in written form by the mentor.

2. Refereed publications

After an orientation period the research results are published as journal articles or conference contributions. The FIN expects that by time of filing the thesis document, some refereed (i.e. reviewed) papers can be presented. The number of such papers varies across the research fields. Presenting the findings on international conferences and discussing results with experts is highly encouraged. Research results are to be discussed promptly with the mentor as he or she often sparks new ideas which lead to co-authored publications. Staying in contact with external professors is equally

important as it helps to put the own work into perspective and simplifies the enlistment as a referee.

3. **Day of doctorate candidates** (*Doktorandentag*)

Every doctorate candidate has to present his or her research findings in a 20 minutes public talk (including discussion) on a biannual seminar, the so-called Doktorandentag which is usually scheduled at the end of each term. The usual time of presentation is one year prior to filing the thesis. The certificate of participation is required for the initiation of the conferral of the doctorate.

4. **Dissertation thesis**

A dissertation thesis is a scientific work containing own and novel research findings documenting the candidate's scientific merits. It should be understood that scientific misconduct (e.g. plagiarism) can result in denial of the doctorate degree even after the degree has been issued. The time expenditure to finish this work is mostly underestimated. It is thus encouraged to document the findings promptly. As the thesis is later reviewed by several referees, it is sensible to discuss the topics with potential referees in advance. The mentor is asked to minimize scientific misconduct by e.g. checking the thesis with a plagiarism detection software. There shall be no "secret" theses. A certain amount of confidentiality is, of course, often inevitable (e.g. if parts of the research were carried out with industrial partners). However, anonymization should make a publication possible.

Finishing the conferral of a doctorate

1. **Preparing the initiation of the conferral of a doctorate**

The mentor and the candidate may propose referees for the thesis, however, it is the faculty board who finally announces three independent referees when initiating the conferral of a doctorate. The mentor is typically the first referee, another FIN professor the second referee, while the third referee is usually an external professor. Together with a FIN professor acting as the head of the conferral board (*Promotionskommission*) and another FIN professor, the conferral board consists of five professors. The mentor usually proposes the referees, the head, and two further members (including one substituted member) of the conferral board. The proposed members are usually accepted by the faculty board and then officially announced. It is recommended to ask the intended referees in advance for their consent. The proposal for the members of the conferral board should be announced early to the deanship (at the latest when applying for initiation of the conferral of the doctorate). It is advisable to issue one copy of the thesis to the head of the conferral board ahead of time (some weeks before applying to initiate the conferral). Often it is extremely hard to find a date for the thesis defense as all members of the conferral board must be present. Busy referees will mostly use all three allowed months for the thesis review. Additionally, the reviews need to be presented for inspection by the FIN professors no later than two weeks before the defense. Negotiating a schedule with all conferral board members is highly advised. The defense usually takes place three months after the initiation of the conferral of the doctorate.

2. **Initiation of the conferral of the doctorate (filing the thesis)**

If the mentor agrees, the thesis is filed formally to the FIN. To successfully initiate a conferral procedure, the following documents need to be presented to the exam office (at least 14 days prior to the next faculty board meeting):

1. Application for initiation of the conferral of the doctorate procedure
2. Seven hardback copies of the dissertation thesis

3. Notarized certificate (the exam office is entitled to do this) that qualifies for the conferral of a doctorate
4. Curriculum vitae/scientific career on paper and as PDF
5. List of publications (including the talk on the Doktorandentag) on paper and as PDF
6. Certificate of attendance at the Doktorandentag
7. Summary in German on paper and as PDF
8. Statement of authorship (according to Annex 1 of *Promotionsordnung*)
9. Statement of acknowledging the *Promotionsordnung*
10. Certificate of conduct
11. Referee proposals (with full postal address and e-mail contacts)
12. If the status of doctorate candidate was issued after January 2009: Proof of thesis proposal
13. Recommended: Proposal for members of the conferral board (head, member, substituted member)
14. In agreement with the mentor and a referee: a schedule for delivering the reviews and the defense.

The deanship informs all FIN professors no later than two weeks prior to the respective faculty board meeting about the application. The professors examine the application. Concerns issued in written form allow the dean to consult additional professors or call the research commission (*Forschungskommission*) for clarification. The procedure of conferral of doctorate is formally initiated by the faculty board.

3. **Defense**

The defense consists of a 30 minutes presentation of the candidate followed by the read of the reviews and a thorough public discussion which starts with questions from the referees. The conferral board then issues a grade. The procedure is formally closed during the next faculty board meeting where the final grade is determined.

4. **Publication of thesis**

The thesis is published online, the seven hardback copies are handed to the library. A publication with a publisher is possible, though connected with additional costs. The candidate now may bear the title Dr.-Ing.