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**UNIVERSITÄT
BERN**

Regulations for the degree program of the Graduate School for Health Sciences, University of Bern (PromR GHS 22)

dated 16 November 2022 / 10 October 2022 / 19 September 2022

The Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Human Sciences and the Vetsuisse Faculty of the University of Bern,

based on Article 44, Paragraph 1, Item c, of the University By-Law (Gesetz) dated 5 September 1996 (UniG)¹, Article 33 of the University Decree (Verordnung) dated 12 September 2012 (UniV)² and Article 43 of the Statute (Statut) of the University of Bern dated 7 June 2011 (University Statute, UniSt)³,

issue the following regulations:

I. General

SCOPE

Art. 1 These Regulations apply to the doctoral degree at the Graduate School for Health Sciences (GHS) at the Faculties of Medicine, Human Sciences, and the Vetsuisse Faculty at the University of Bern (the involved Faculties).

TITLE

Art. 2 ¹ The involved Faculties jointly award the following title:

PhD in Health Sciences [Fachgebiet in Englisch], University of Bern.

² The subject areas are listed in the Study Plan.

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DOCTORAL DEGREE

Art. 3 ¹ The requirements for the doctoral degree consist of:

- a* the dissertation [also referred to as a PhD thesis],
- b* the doctoral examination [also referred to as a thesis defense],
- c* the first-year examination,
- d* the second-year examination and
- e* Compulsory and elective courses according to the Study Plan (Studienplan) and Doctoral Agreement

¹ BSG 436.11

² BSG 436.111.1

³ BSG 436.111.2

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² The scope and content of the requirements are described in the Study Plan (Studienplan) and specified individually in the Doctoral Agreement.

DURATION OF DOCTORAL DEGREE
(DOKTORATSSTUFE)

Art. 4 ¹ The doctoral degree usually lasts three to four years. The Study Plan (Studienplan) can stipulate that the doctorate may require up to six years in certain subject areas.

² An extension of maximally two years is possible in exceptional circumstances. The responsible Expert Committee decides on the extension. This does not automatically imply an extension of a possible employment.

II. Admission and Acceptance

MATRICULATION [OR
ENROLLMENT]

Art. 5 ¹ Doctoral students must be matriculated (Article 6 Paragraph 1 UniV).

² Individuals who are not matriculated may not claim any university services, namely attend courses or undertake performance assessments (Article 6 Paragraph 3 UniV).

³ Enrollment takes place at the Faculty to which the Thesis Advisor is affiliated.

ADMISSION TO DOCTORAL
DEGREE

Art. 6 ¹ The prerequisite for admission is a Master's degree or another degree from a Swiss university recognized as equivalent.

² Foreign Master's degrees are checked for equivalence.

³ The responsible Expert Committee carries out a content check and decides on the equivalence of the Master's degrees.

⁴ The admission of applicants with a Master's degree from a University of Applied Sciences or a University of Teacher Education is based on the relevant regulations of the University Board of Directors.

⁵ A further requirement for admission is the approval of the dissertation project by an authorized person according to Article 9, Paragraph 3 who makes themselves available as the Thesis Advisor. There is no obligation for the Faculties to provide a Thesis Advisor.

⁶ Applicants must be admitted as doctoral students by the University before the start of the doctoral degree at the GHS.

ADMISSION PROCEDURE AT THE
GHS

Art. 7 ¹ Applications are submitted to the GHS Coordination Office. The written application includes:

- a a Curriculum vitae,
- b copies of all university degrees,
- c a letter of recommendation from the Thesis Advisor,

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d an independently written description of the intended research project,

e the completed registration form.

² The Thesis Advisor and the applicant submit a joint application for admission to the GHS.

³ The application for admission must be submitted to the GHS Coordination Office before the start of the research project or, at the latest, within the six months of the start of the research project.

⁴ The Expert Committee conducts a personal interview with each applicant to assess their professional suitability.

⁵ The Expert Committee decides on admission based on the quality of the application and the personal interview.

ADDITIONAL DEMANDS (AUFLAGEN)

Art. 8 ¹ Knowledge and skills, which have not been acquired in the completed Master's degree may be required for completion of the doctoral degree. The Expert Committee will establish any such additional demands on an individual basis and, at their request, these will be mandated by the responsible Dean.

² Applicants with a Master's degree from a University may be required to earn up to 30 ECTS credits.

³ Applicants with a Master's degree from a University of Applied Sciences or a University of Teacher Education must meet requirements of between 30 and 60 ECTS credits.

⁴ Should admission be conditional, non-compliance with the conditions will result in exclusion.

⁵ Specific courses or existing modules from suitable Master's study programs can be specified as additional demands. Alternatively, the missing skills may be acquired through self-study, which the Expert Committee will check via performance assessments.

⁶ Additional demands which have not been fulfilled, cannot be compensated with alternatives.

⁷ The additional demands must be met during the doctoral degree within the specified period.

⁸ The additional demands are listed separately in the Diploma Supplement.

⁹ The Study Plan (Studienplan) regulates the details of the additional demands.

III. Supervision and Doctoral Agreement

SUPERVISION

Art. 9 ¹ Doctoral students are supervised by a Thesis Committee. The Thesis Committee consists of the Thesis Advisor, a Co-referee and a Mentor.

² The Thesis Committee along with the doctoral student shares responsibility for the progress of the research work. It provides support, advice and the necessary infrastructure.

³ Staff in the involved faculties authorized to become Thesis Advisors include:

- a Full Professors,
- b Extraordinary (ausserordentliche) Professors,
- c Associate Professors,
- d Assistant Professors with Tenure Track,
- e Assistant Professors,
- f University Lecturers (Privatdozentinnen und Privatdozenten),
- g Habilitated Lecturers (habilitierte hauptamtliche Dozentinnen und Dozenten),
- h Habilitated full-time Post-docs (habilitierte hauptamtliche Postdotorandinnen und Postdotoranden),
- i Unhabilitated Post-docs in the category „Advanced Postdoc“ or „Senior Research Assistant“.

⁴ The Thesis Advisor role may be undertaken through co-management. If a Co-thesis Advisor is appointed, they will take on supervisory tasks and any requirements alongside the Thesis Advisor according to these regulations. The Co-thesis Advisor role can be taken on by eligible staff from the University or other higher education institutions as described in Paragraph 3. The Steering Board can, on request, appoint additional staff to co-advise the dissertation.

⁵ A co-referee is proposed by the Thesis Advisor. The co-referee confirms their role in writing. Co-referees are experts working in the research area of the dissertation and discuss the research project with the Doctoral student at least twice a year.

⁶ The co-referee cannot belong to the same institute or clinic as the Thesis Advisor.

⁷ At least two of the supervisors must be habilitated or possess equivalent experience.

⁸ The Mentor is a member of the relevant Expert Committee and represents the GHS in the Thesis Committee. The Mentor is also the contact person in the event of conflict between the Thesis Advisor and the doctoral student.

⁹ In the event of conflict within the Thesis Committee or between the Thesis Committee and the doctoral student, and where the parties involved cannot resolve the dispute themselves, they must contact the responsible Expert Committee or the Steering Board. The individuals concerned may be summoned by the

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Steering Board to a meeting in person at any time.

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DOCTORAL AGREEMENT

Art. 10 Upon admission to the GHS, a doctoral agreement is concluded between the Thesis Committee and the doctoral student. This includes the scope and type of courses to be attended and other requirements.

IV. Performance Assessments

FIRST YEAR EXAMINATION

Art. 11 ¹ The first-year examination takes place at the end of the first year.

² The first-year examination consists of a two-hour written exam on the question and methodology of the research project. It forms the basis for a critical examination of the potential and limitations of the chosen procedure in the dissertation. It forms the basis for a critical analysis of the potential and limitations of the chosen approach in the Dissertation. The Thesis Advisor formulates the task.

³ The first-year examination is conducted by the Thesis Advisor and other examiners. The Study Plan (Studienplan) regulates the composition of the other examiners.

⁴ The examiners of the first-year examination each determine a grade in accordance with Article 15, Paragraphs 1 and 2. The grades are averaged and rounded in accordance with Article 15 Paragraph 4.

⁵ An unsatisfactory first-year examination can be retaken once within six months.

⁶ Details are regulated by the Study Plan (Studienplan).

SECOND YEAR EXAMINATION

Art. 12 ¹ The the end of the second year, there is a second-year examination.

² The second-year examination consists of a 30-40-minute public scientific presentation followed by a discussion about the research conducted in the presence of the Thesis Committee. The presentation and discussion should include a perspective regarding the final phase of work.

³ The second-year examination is conducted by the Thesis Advisor and the other examiners. The Study Plan (Studienplan) regulates the composition of the other examiners.

⁴ The examiners of the second-year examination each determine a grade in accordance with Article 15 Paragraphs 1 and 2. The grades are averaged and rounded in accordance with Article 15, Paragraph 4.

⁵ An unsatisfactory second-year examination can be retaken once within six months.

⁶ Details are regulated by the Study Plan (Studienplan).

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FURTHER PERFORMANCE
ASSESSMENTS

Art. 13 ¹ The course lecturers announce the objectives, content, schedule and types of performance assessment before the course begins.

² Performance assessments are in the form of oral and written exams, presentations, confirmation of active participation, evidence of self-study achievements and other evidence to be determined by the lecturers.

³ Oral exams last 15 to 120 minutes

⁴ Written exams last 30 to 120 minutes.

⁵ Unsatisfactory performance assessments can be repeated once. The lecturers determine the time of the repeat assessment.

⁶ If compulsory and elective courses are offered according to the Study Plan (Studienplan) by non-involved Faculties or organizational units, the performance assessments take place according to the provisions of the study or doctoral regulations of the relevant Faculty.

ABSENCE, DISCONTINUATION

Art. 14 ¹ Anyone who fails to attend or withdraws from a performance assessment without good reason will receive a grade of 1.

² Pregnancy, birth, illness, accident, military or civilian service are considered to be good reasons.

³ In the event of a permissible absence or interruption, the repeat of a performance assessment corresponds to the first attempt. The lecturers determine the time of the repeat exam.

⁴ Illness and accidents must be documented by a doctor's note.

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION AND
GRADE SCALE

Art. 15 ¹ Adequate performance is assessed as follows:

6	excellent
5.5	very good,
5	good,
4.5	satisfactory
4	sufficient

² When using the grading scale, the grades 1, 1.5, 2, 2.5, 3 or 3.5 are awarded for insufficient performance.

³ Performance in non-graded assessments is assessed as "pass" for satisfactory performance or "fail" for unsatisfactory performance.

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⁴ If grades are rounded, the following rule applies:

Grade Range to round			Rounded Grade
5.75	...	6	6
5.25	...	< 5.75	5.5
4.75	...	< 5.25	5
4.25	...	< 4.75	4.5
4	...	< 4.25	4
3.25	...	< 4	3.5
2.75	...	< 3.25	3
2.25	...	< 2.75	2.5
1.75	...	< 2.25	2
1.25	...	< 1.75	1.5
1	...	< 1.25	1

PUBLICATION OF
PERFORMANCE RESULTS

Art. 16 ¹ The result of each performance assessment is communicated to the doctoral students via the electronic examination administration system.

² The doctoral students are also informed that they may appeal a decision via a request to the Dean. In addition, doctoral students receive an annual report, which indicates all awaited grades at that point.

V. Dissertation

DISSERTATION/ PHD THESIS

Art. 17 ¹ Within the scope of the doctoral degree, doctoral students work on an independent research project, which is summarized in a written dissertation [or thesis]. A dissertation consists of at least three scientific papers, a detailed introduction and a comprehensive discussion on the topic of the thesis as well as a Curriculum Vitae with a list of publications.

² One paper as first author must be accepted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal, two further papers with first or co-authorship must be submitted and accepted for the peer-review stage. Requests for exceptions must be submitted to the Steering Board.

³ Upon application to the Steering Board, it is possible to submit the PhD thesis as a monograph.

⁴ The PhD thesis is to be written in English.

⁵ Generally, the PhD thesis must be submitted no later than one year after completion of the research work.

⁶ Details are regulated by the Study Plan (Studienplan).

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DECLARATION

Art. 18 The dissertation must be accompanied by the following personally dated and signed statement:

"I hereby declare that I have written this thesis independently and have not used any sources other than those indicated. All passages taken verbatim or in spirit from sources have been marked as such by me. I am aware that otherwise the Senate is, pursuant to Article 36, Paragraph 1, item r of the University By-Law dated 5 September 1996 and Article 69 of the University Statute dated 7 June 2011, entitled to withdraw the doctoral degree.

For the purposes of evaluating the thesis or the regulations concerning plagiarism and checking my declaration that the thesis represents my own independent work, I grant the University of Bern the right to process the personal data required for this purpose and to reproduce the dissertation and to store it permanently in a data bank as well as to use it for the review of the work of third parties or to make it available for this."

VI. Completion of the doctoral degree

1. Assessment and evaluation of the dissertation

EXPERT ASSESSMENT

Art. 19 ¹ The thesis is evaluated within six weeks after submission through two expert assessments.

² The first expert assessment is written by the Thesis Advisor together with the Co-referee. They jointly award a grade according to Article 15 Paragraphs 1 and 2. If a joint grade is not decided, the average of the individual grades rounded according to Article 15 Paragraph 4 applies.

³ A second expert assessment shall be provided by an independent external subject matter expert and a grade specified in accordance with Article 15 (1) and (2).

⁴ Independent subject matter experts are internationally recognized researchers from another university in the research field of the corresponding dissertation who have not published together with the doctoral student or the Thesis Advisor in the last three years.

⁵ Independent experts are proposed by the Thesis Committee and confirmed by the Expert Committee.

ASSESSMENT AND ACCEPTANCE

Art. 20 ¹ If the grade of both the first and second expert assessment is sufficient, the expert committee formulates a recommendation for the acceptance of the dissertation or thesis to the Steering Board.

² If one or both of the grades of the expert assessments are unsatisfactory, the dissertation may be revised within six months.

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³ The Steering Board decides on the acceptance or rejection of the dissertation.

⁴ If the Steering Board rejects a dissertation, it may be revised within six months.

⁵ The Steering Board petitions the responsible Faculty to reject the dissertation. Negative decisions, which may be appealed, are made by the body of the responsible Faculty (Organ der zuständigen Fakultät).

2. Thesis defense

REGISTRATION,
REQUIREMENTS,
DE-REGISTRATION

Art. 21 ¹ Before admission to the thesis defense, the dissertation must be accepted by the Steering Board.

² Registration for the doctoral examination is submitted to the GHS Coordination Office. The following documents must be available for the registration:

- a a fully completed registration form,
- b proof of enrollment,
- c performance assessments judged to meet the requirements of the Study Plan (Studienplan) and doctoral agreement,
- d Proof of fulfilled additional demands,
- e both expert assessments pursuant to Article 19,
- f Confirmation of the acceptance of the thesis by the Steering Board in accordance with Article 20 Paragraph 3,
- g A receipt confirming payment of the fee according to Article. 33.

^{3 3} If these requirements are met, the doctoral student will be called for the thesis defense by the GHS Coordination Office.

⁴ Cancellations with good reason (Article 14) are to be sent to the Thesis Advisor and the GHS Coordination Office.

FORMAT, DURATION

Art. 22 The thesis defense consists of a public lecture of 40 to 45 minutes and a discussion of at least 30 minutes.

EXAMINERS, CHAIR

Art. 23 ¹ Examiners are:

- a the Thesis Advisor
- b the Co-referee, and
- c at least one external subject matter expert in accordance with Article 19 paragraphs 4 and 5.

² The thesis defense is chaired by the mentor.

³ The external subject matter expert for the thesis defense may be the same external subject matter expert examining the thesis.

⁴ The minutes of the examination are written by the chair. The minutes capture the questions, answers and the course of the thesis defense.

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LANGUAGE	Art. 24 The thesis defense is to be conducted in English.
EVALUATION	Art. 25 ¹ Immediately following the thesis defense, the examiners determine a grade in accordance with Article 15 paragraphs 1 and 2. ² The grade of the thesis defense is obtained from the rounded average of the following grades in accordance with Article 15 Paragraph 4: <ul style="list-style-type: none">a Grade awarded by the Thesis Advisor,b Grade awarded by the Co-referee,c Grade awarded by the external examiner or examiners (jointly one grade).
RETAKES	Art. 26 On failure of the thesis defense, it may be retaken once within six months. 3. Completion
PASS CRITERIA	Art. 27 The doctoral degree is passed if: <ul style="list-style-type: none">a the first year examination has been passed with a grade of at least 4.0,b the second year examination has been passed with a grade of at least 4.0,c the thesis has been accepted by the Steering Board,d the thesis defense has been awarded a grade of at least 4.0,e possible additional requirements detailed in the curriculum and doctoral agreement have been passed andf possible further additional demands have been met.
OVERALL GRADE	Art. 28 ¹ The overall grade is derived from the weighted average of the following grades: <ul style="list-style-type: none">a Grade of the first thesis assessment (Weight 2),b Grade of the second thesis assessment (Weight 2),c Grade of the thesis defense (Weight 2) andd the rounded average grade of the first and second year examinations in accordance with Article 15 Paragraph 4 (Weight 1). ² The overall grade is rounded according to Article 15 Paragraph 4.

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³ The doctoral certificate is issued with one of the following grades:

- 6 excellent
- 5.5 very good
- 5 good
- 4.5 satisfactory
- 4 sufficient

CONFERMENT AND DISCLOSURE

Art. 29 ¹ After passing the doctoral degree, the Steering Board submits an application to the responsible Faculty board regarding the conferment of the final grade and title.

² The responsible Dean's office discloses the result of the expert thesis assessment and the doctoral examination in writing with instructions on how to appeal.

INSPECTION OF RECORDS

Art. 30 ¹ The inspection of the thesis assessments and the minutes of the doctoral examination is permitted.

² Faculties are to apply the University guidelines regarding the inspection of reports and the obligation to retain files in connection with assessments.

MANDATORY COPIES

Art. 31 ¹ The doctoral certificate will only be issued after submission of the mandatory copies of the thesis. Details regarding the number and form of the mandatory copies are regulated by the Study Plan (Studienplan).

² The Thesis advisor, the Co-referee and the external subject matter expert may require the doctoral student to make editorial changes to the thesis before the delivery of the mandatory copies.

PHD CERTIFICATES

Art. 32 ¹ The doctoral certificate will be issued in English.

² The doctoral certificate states the awarded PhD title with the subject area, the title of the dissertation and the overall grade.

³ The doctoral certificate is signed by the Rectors and the Deans of the involved Faculties.

⁴ The doctoral certificate is issued with a Diploma Supplement.

⁵ The doctoral certificate is accompanied by a translation in German with the title:

- a* Doctor scientiarum medicarum (Dr. sc. med.) without specialization for graduates who were enrolled at the Faculty of Medicine
- b* Doctor scientiarum medicarum veterinariarum (Dr. sc. med. vet.) without specialization for graduates who were enrolled at the Vetsuisse Faculty or
- c* Doctor philosophiae (Dr. phil.) without specialization for graduates who were enrolled at the Faculty of Human Sciences.

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⁶ The use of the doctor title is permitted after receipt of the doctoral certificate. In the meantime, the doctoral student receives confirmation that they have passed the doctoral degree.

FEES

Art. 33 The fee for the doctorate is based on the Executive Order (Direktionsverordnung) dated 31 January 2011 regarding fees for the doctorate and habilitation at the University of Bern (GebDV PHab)⁴.

VII. Exclusion from the doctoral degree and withdrawal of the title

EXCLUSION FROM THE DOCTORAL DEGREE

Art. 34 ¹ If the performance is unsatisfactory in retakes of compulsory course exams or additional demands, the revision of the thesis or thesis defense, the doctoral degree may not be continued. The responsible Dean orders the exclusion.

² The Thesis Advisor and the Co-referee may jointly apply to the Steering Board for exclusion if:

- a* Provisions of the doctoral agreement are not complied with without good reason,
- b* there is no prospect of successful completion of the doctoral degree especially in the case of serious shortcomings in the execution of research work.

³ The Steering Board decides on the application and forwards it to the responsible Dean.

⁴ The responsible Dean rules on the exclusion in accordance with Paragraph 2 after the hearing of the person concerned.

WITHDRAWAL OF THE TITLE

Art. 35 ¹ The withdrawal from the doctoral degree is governed by Article 69 UniSt and Article 36, Paragraph 1, item r (UniG).

² Disciplinary measures in accordance with the University By-Law (UniG) and criminal prosecution are reserved.

⁴ BSG 436.111.3

VIII. Administration of Justice

Art. 36 ¹ Appeals against decisions made by bodies of the Faculties (Organe der Fakultäten) may be lodged with the Appeals Commission within 30 days.

² Grade decisions from performance assessments, in accordance with Article 13, are issued by the bodies of the responsible Faculty (Organe der zuständigen Fakultät).

³ Other decisions are issued by the bodies of the Faculty (Organe derjenigen Fakultät) to which the Thesis Advisor belongs.

⁴ The procedure is governed by the University By-Law dated September 5, 1996 (UniG) and the Administrative Procedural Law dated May 23, 1989 (VRPG).

⁵ In the case of complaints regarding the results of examinations, the objection of inadequacy is inadmissible.

IX. Transitional and final provisions

TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS

Art. 37 ¹ Doctoral students who start the doctoral degree after 1 February 2023 are subject to the current doctoral regulations.

² Doctoral students who started the doctoral degree at the Graduate School for Health Sciences, University of Bern, in accordance with the doctoral regulations dated 31 August 2008 and 11 September 2008, will complete the doctoral degree according to the 2008 doctoral regulations.

³ Doctoral students may apply to transfer to the current doctoral regulations according to Paragraph 2.

REPEAL

Art. 38 The doctoral regulations of the Graduate School for Health Sciences, University of Bern, dated 31 August 2008 and 11 September 2008 are repealed.

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EFFECTIVE DATE

Art. 39 These regulations come into force 1 February 2023.

Bern, 16 November 2022

On behalf of the Faculty of Medicine

The Dean:

Bern, 10 October 2022

Prof. Dr. Claudio Bassetti

On behalf of the Faculty of Human Sciences

The Dean:

Bern, 19 September 2022

Prof. Dr. Stefan Troche

On behalf of the Vetsuisse Faculty

The Dean:

Prof. Dr. David Spreng

Approved by the Department of Education and Culture, Kanton Bern:

Bern,

Education and Culture Director:

Christine Häslar