Universität Zürich[UZH] | Faculty of Law

Doctoral Regulations of the Faculty of Law of the University of Zurich

Resolution of the Faculty Assembly dated 21 May 2025

RS 6.1.1.1

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Contents

A. Introduction 1

1. Subject matter and scope 1

2. Supplementary provisions 1

B. Doctoral Studies 1

I. General Doctorate and Doctoral Programs 1

3. General Doctorate 1

4. Doctoral Program of the Faculty of Law 2

5. Biomedical Ethics and Law PhD Program (PhD BmEL) 4

II. Common Provisions 8

6. Reasonable accommodation measures 8

7. Development of a Master's thesis into a dissertation 8

8. Supervision 8

9. Research plan 9

10. Doctoral agreement 9

11. Application for conferral of a doctorate 9

12. Defense committee and defense 9

13. Deposit copies and publication of the dissertation 9

14. Completion documents and use of the title 11

C. Final Provisions 11

A. Introduction

1. Subject matter and scope

These Doctoral Regulations contain the implementing provisions for the Ordinance for obtaining a Doctoral degree of the Faculty of Law of the University of Zurich dated 25 May 2009.

These Doctoral Regulations contain provisions for:

a. the general doctorate,

b. the Doctoral Program of the Faculty of Law,

c. the Biomedical Ethics and Law PhD Program (PhD BmEL).

The standard curricula and the modalities are available on the Faculty website and on the websites of the doctoral programs, respectively.

2. Supplementary provisions

Additional regulations may be issued, in particular, in fact sheets and/or published on the Faculty website.

B. Doctoral Studies

I. General Doctorate and Doctoral Programs

3. General Doctorate

3.1 Organization and responsibilities

The general doctorate is organized and implemented by:

a. the supervisors,

b. the defense committee.

3.2 Admission with degrees in another field of study or foreign degrees

Admission to the general doctorate with a degree in another field of study or a foreign degree is decided by a committee appointed by the Faculty Assembly.

3.3 Recognition and transfer of credit

Recognition and transfer of credit for academic achievement and ECTS credits are governed by the Guidelines on the Recognition and Transfer of Credit for Academic Achievement in the Degree Programs and Study Programs of the Faculty of Law of the University of Zurich (RLA) dated 1 July 2024.

4. Doctoral Program of the Faculty of Law

4.1 Organization and responsibilities

The program is organized and implemented by:

a. the Faculty Council,

b. the Admissions Committee,

c. the Doctoral Committee,

d. the defense committee.

a. Faculty Council

The Doctoral Program of the Faculty of Law is conducted under the direction of the Faculty Council.

In particular, the Faculty Council performs the following tasks:

a. submitting proposals to the Faculty Assembly for approval of the course schedule and for the granting of teaching assignments,

b. appointing the Admissions Committee,

c. supervising the Doctoral Committees.

b. Admissions Committee

The Admissions Committee is responsible for conducting the selection process and appointing the Doctoral Committee.

The Admissions Committee consists of:

a. the Vice Dean of Studies,

b. the primary supervisor and the secondary supervisor,

c. the Faculty members proposed by the primary supervisor and the secondary supervisor whose subject areas are expected to be involved in the dissertation to a substantial extent and as an independent part of it.

c. Doctoral Committee

In particular, the Doctoral Committee is responsible for:

a. ensuring the supervision of the PhD candidates,

b. drawing up and adjusting the Doctoral agreement in consultation with the PhD candidate,

c. deciding on the recognition and transfer of credit for academic achievement and ECTS credits.

At the request of the primary supervisor and the secondary supervisor and after consultation with the applicant, the Admissions Committee appoints a Doctoral Committee. This committee comprises at least both supervisors.

Additional members must meet the requirements of § 21 paragraph 3 PVO. The primary supervisor chairs the committee.

4.2 Admission through a selection process

Admission requirements

Subject to the admission provisions of the PVO, candidates are admitted to the Doctoral Program of the Faculty of Law if they are suitable for the program within the meaning of § 6 paragraphs 1 and 2 PVO.

Application for admission to the Doctoral Program

The documents to be submitted and the modalities of the application are available on the website.

If the documents submitted are incomplete, the Admissions Committee sets a deadline for the missing documents to be submitted or completed. If the documents are still incomplete after expiry of the additional deadline, the Admissions Committee will not consider the application.

Decision on admission

The Admissions Committee decides on admission to the Doctoral Program on the basis of the documents submitted. It may invite the applicant to a personal interview.

The Admissions Committee informs the applicant in writing of the result of the selection process.

Continuation of the registration procedure

Once a positive decision on admission has been made, the matriculation procedure or the procedure for changing degree program may be initiated or continued in accordance with the Ordinance on Admission to Studies at the University of Zurich.

4.3 Structure of the program

The curriculum is divided into:

a. at least two colloquia worth 6 ECTS credits each, which must be completed at the Faculty of Law of the University of Zurich,

b. core elective modules worth at least 18 ECTS credits.

Further information about the curriculum is available on the Faculty website.

At the request of the PhD candidate, the choice of modules may be included in the Doctoral agreement; this may also be done after entry into the doctoral program.

For modules not listed in the annotated course catalogue (Web VVZ) under § 3 paragraph 1 PVO, the Doctoral Committee determines the requirements for the assessments and the number of ECTS credits to be acquired. They must be recorded in the Doctoral agreement.

Recognition and transfer of credit

Academic achievements completed and ECTS credits acquired before entry into the doctoral program may also be recognized and transferred for credit.

5. Biomedical Ethics and Law PhD Program (PhD BmEL)

5.1 Scope of application

The Biomedical Ethics and Law PhD Program (PhD BmEL) is offered in cooperation with the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Zurich.

The following provisions apply to PhD candidates completing the Law Track of PhD BmEL under the Ordinance for obtaining a Doctoral degree of the Faculty of Law.

5.2 Objectives and participants

Opportunity to obtain qualifications in medical and health law

The program is intended to provide a well-founded and structured opportunity to obtain qualifications through integrative and interdisciplinary research and engagement with issues of medical and health law, including ethical questions. The development of philosophical and legal foundations, current normative regulations, and methodological knowledge are of central importance.

The program is generally connected with research projects of the faculties involved.

Target group and number of participants

The program is aimed at particularly qualified lawyers who wish to develop, both theoretically and practically, the expertise required for academic work in national and international medical law, health law, and bioethics in research and teaching.

5.3 Organization and responsibilities

The program is organized and implemented by:

a. the BmEL Steering Committee,

b. the BmEL Faculty of Law Doctoral Program Committee,

c. the Doctoral Committee,

d. the coordination office,

e. the defense committee.

a. BmEL Steering Committee

Composition and chair

The BmEL Steering Committee consists of the members of the Doctoral Program Committees of the two faculties.

The chairs of the Doctoral Program Committees of the two faculties alternate as chair and deputy chair of the BmEL Steering Committee for terms of two semesters.

The chair manages the business of the BmEL Steering Committee.

Responsibilities

In particular, the BmEL Steering Committee performs the following tasks:

a. developing the joint course offering,

b. issuing general directives for PhD BmEL,

c. harmonizing the modules.

b. BmEL Faculty of Law Doctoral Program Committee

Composition

The Biomedical Ethics and Law Doctoral Program Committee of the Faculty of Law (BmEL Faculty of Law Doctoral Program Committee) consists of at least three lecturers from the Faculty of Law. Additional persons may be involved.

The program coordinator participates in the meetings of the BmEL Faculty of Law Doctoral Program Committee in an advisory capacity.

A deputy member may be elected for each member.

Election of members

The Faculty Assembly elects the members of the BmEL Faculty of Law Doctoral Program Committee. The members serve for a term of four years and may be re-elected.

Chair

The BmEL Faculty of Law Doctoral Program Committee elects one of its members as chair and program director.

The chair manages the business of the BmEL Faculty of Law Doctoral Program Committee and also serves as chair or deputy chair of the BmEL Steering Committee.

Responsibilities

In particular, the BmEL Faculty of Law Doctoral Program Committee performs the following tasks:

a. submitting proposals to the Faculty Assembly for approval of the course schedule and for the granting of teaching assignments,

b. conducting the selection process and deciding on admission,

c. appointing the Doctoral Committee,

d. appointing the coordination office under section 5.3d,

e. deciding on the recognition and transfer of credit for academic achievement and ECTS credits.

The selection interview forming part of the selection process may be conducted by one member alone; a positive decision on admission requires the consent of the other members.

Supervision by the Dean

The activities of the BmEL Faculty of Law Doctoral Program Committee are subject to the supervision of the Dean.

The Dean also decides if the members of the BmEL Faculty of Law Doctoral Program Committee are unable to agree on a decision.

c. Doctoral Committee

At the request of the primary supervisor and the secondary supervisor and after consultation with the applicant, the BmEL Faculty of Law Doctoral Program Committee appoints a Doctoral Committee. This committee comprises at least both supervisors. Additional members may be admitted if they have the relevant expertise. The primary supervisor chairs the committee.

In particular, the Doctoral Committee is responsible for ensuring supervision and for drawing up and adjusting the Doctoral agreement in consultation with the PhD candidate.

d. Coordination office

The coordination office of the Faculty of Law ensures administrative contact with the Faculty of Medicine. It is appointed by the BmEL Faculty of Law Doctoral Program Committee and, after consultation with the program director, is responsible in particular for:

a. planning, implementing, and coordinating the curriculum,

b. coordinating the application process,

c. exchanging the required information with the partner faculty and the offices involved,

d. providing administrative support to the PhD candidates and teaching staff.

5.4 Admission through a selection process

Admission requirements

Subject to the admission provisions of the PVO, candidates are admitted to PhD BmEL if they are particularly suitable and motivated.

Upon a justified application, the BmEL Faculty of Law Doctoral Program Committee may admit associated participants to attend the modules.

Application

The documents to be submitted and the modalities of the application are available on the Faculty website.

The application for admission to PhD BmEL must be submitted in writing to the BmEL Faculty of Law Doctoral Program Committee. It may be submitted in German or English.

If the documents submitted are incomplete, the BmEL Faculty of Law Doctoral Program Committee sets a deadline for the missing documents to be submitted or completed. If the documents are still incomplete after expiry of the second deadline, the BmEL Faculty of Law Doctoral Program Committee will not consider the application.

If the application is withdrawn, it may not be resubmitted during the following two semesters.

The application deadline is published on the Faculty website.

Selection interview

On the basis of the documents submitted, the BmEL Faculty of Law Doctoral Program Committee decides who is shortlisted and invited to a selection interview.

The interview is intended to provide information about the applicant's particular motivation and suitability for PhD BmEL and the applicant's planned further career path.

As a rule, the selection interview requires the applicant to appear in person.

The selection interview may also be conducted online or by telephone with the applicant.

Decision on admission

Following the selection interview, the BmEL Faculty of Law Doctoral Program Committee decides on the applicant's admission to PhD BmEL.

The BmEL Faculty of Law Doctoral Program Committee informs the applicant in writing of the result of the selection process. In the event of rejection, the applicant may submit one further application.

Continuation of the registration procedure

Once a positive decision on admission has been made, the matriculation procedure or the procedure for changing degree program may be initiated or continued in accordance with the Ordinance on Admission to Studies at the University of Zurich.

5.5 Standard duration and structure of the program

As a rule, the BmEL Law Track lasts three years. Part-time study is possible. Admission to regular participation in the BmEL Law Track is limited to six years (i.e. 12 semesters). The time limit begins at the start of the semester following admission. An extension of a further two years is possible for important reasons (e.g. illness, accident, or parenthood); a corresponding application must be submitted in writing, with reasons, to the BmEL Law Track program office no later than three months before expiry of the time limit. The BmEL Faculty of Law Doctoral Program Committee decides on the extension. By the end of the sixth semester of participation, an interim report on the current status of the dissertation and the curriculum must be submitted to the program office for the attention of the BmEL Faculty of Law Doctoral Program Committee. If the interim report is not submitted despite an additional period of three months, that committee may order exclusion from the program.

The curriculum is divided into:

a. compulsory modules worth 12 ECTS credits,

b. modules from the core elective pool in Ethics worth at least 6 ECTS credits,

c. modules from the core elective pool in Medicine and Law worth at least 6 ECTS credits,

d. elective modules.

Further information about the curriculum is available on the Faculty website.

Depending on the module, courses are conducted in German or English. As a rule, the in-person offering is supplemented by e-learning offerings.

At the beginning of the program, the PhD candidate submits a proposal regarding the choice of modules to the Doctoral Committee. The proposal is discussed and the result recorded in the Doctoral agreement under § 22 PVO.

For modules not listed in the annotated course catalogue (Web VVZ) under § 3 paragraph 1 PVO, the Doctoral Committee determines the requirements for the assessments and the number of ECTS credits to be acquired. They must be recorded in the Doctoral agreement.

II. Common Provisions

The following provisions apply to the general doctorate and the doctoral programs.

6. Reasonable accommodation measures

The requirements and procedure for reasonable accommodation measures are governed by the Framework Ordinance on the Bachelor's and Master's Degree Programs at the Faculty of Law of the University of Zurich (RVO RWF) dated 21 September 2020 and the Program Regulation for the Bachelor's and Master's Degree Programs, the Minor Study Programs, and the Special Programs at the Faculty of Law of the University of Zurich (StudO RWF) dated 10 June 2020.

7. Development of a Master's thesis into a dissertation

A Master's thesis may form the basis for a dissertation if the following requirements are met:

a. use of the Master's thesis as the basis for the dissertation is expressly recorded in the Doctoral agreement,

b. the dissertation constitutes a new and independent achievement, and

c. the contribution made by the dissertation clearly outweighs that made by the Master's thesis.

Fulfillment of these requirements must be set out and explained in the first review of the dissertation.

8. Supervision

Tasks

The primary supervisor is the permanent contact person for the PhD candidate. The primary supervisor bears the main responsibility for the process of obtaining the doctorate and is responsible for all matters for which no other responsibility has been assigned.

The secondary supervisor has a supporting and advisory function in the process of obtaining the doctorate and serves as an additional contact person. The secondary supervisor contributes to quality assurance in the process and also mediates in conflicts between the PhD candidate and the primary supervisor or other persons if this becomes necessary.

Selection of supervisors

Finding the primary supervisor, the secondary supervisor, and any further supervisors is the responsibility of the PhD candidates. Unless otherwise regulated, there is no entitlement to a supervisory relationship.

In the doctoral programs, persons who do not meet the requirements of § 21 paragraph 3 PVO but have the relevant expertise may be appointed as secondary supervisors.

9. Research plan

The research plan contains a schedule for preparing and submitting the papers and the document under § 18a paragraph 3 PVO.

It must be prepared independently by the PhD candidates and must be available when the Doctoral agreement is signed.

It may be adjusted to changes in circumstances with the agreement of the supervisors or the Doctoral Committee. The Doctoral agreement must be updated accordingly.

10. Doctoral agreement

The form for the Doctoral agreement is available on the Faculty website.

For PhD candidates who hold an academic qualification position at the Faculty, the Doctoral agreement must be updated annually. For other PhD candidates, it is updated when major changes or adjustments are made.

11. Application for conferral of a doctorate

The form for the application for conferral of a doctorate is available on the Faculty website. The application must be submitted through the digital infrastructure.

12. Defense committee and defense

The Faculty Council appoints the members of the defense committee at the same meeting at which the reviewers are appointed.

The defense committee begins its work at that time.

As a rule, the defense is held within eight weeks after completion of the reviews.

The defense is public; registration is required to attend.

13. Deposit copies and publication of the dissertation

Publication of the dissertation

The dissertation may be published in a series and/or in electronic form in the database of the Zentralbibliothek Zürich or another freely accessible electronic database (Internet publication).

If the written dissertation work is completed cumulatively, the publications under § 18a paragraph 2 PVO RWF, together with precise bibliographic references, must be delivered in printed form in accordance with the

requirements of the Zentralbibliothek together with the document under § 18a paragraph 3 PVO RWF. The requirements of the Zentralbibliothek also apply to the design of the cover and the other information.

Number of deposit copies

The number of deposit copies to be delivered is determined by the Office of the Vice Dean of Studies and announced on the Faculty website.

Printing

The deposit copies must be printed within two years after acceptance of the dissertation.

The deposit copies must be at least A5 format and no larger than A4 format. The current requirements of the Zentralbibliothek Zürich must be observed for the binding.

The following information is mandatory in the published version:

a. A special statement must identify the dissertation as a reproduction of the dissertation approved by the Faculty of Law of the University of Zurich.

b. The reviewers must be listed on the inner title page; the approval of the Faculty of Law and the year and place of publication must be listed on the reverse of the inner title page.

c. The name of the author and the title of the work (abbreviated if necessary) must appear on the spine.

d. If the dissertation is published on the Internet, the Internet address of the Zentralbibliothek Zürich must also be listed on the inside.

Before printing, a proof of the cover, the inner title page, the reverse of the inner title page, and the spine must be submitted to the Office of the Vice Dean of Studies.

For updates or additions to the text under § 34 paragraph 4 PVO, the primary supervisor's declaration of consent must be submitted to the Office of the Vice Dean of Studies.

In the event of unauthorized deviations, PhD candidates may be required to restore the lawful state at their own expense within a specified period.

Anyone who also publishes the dissertation in a form that differs from the form of the deposit copies is obliged to identify it by a special statement as a reproduction of the dissertation approved by the Faculty of Law.

Internet publication in the database of the Zentralbibliothek Zürich

The requirements of the Zentralbibliothek Zürich apply to Internet publication in its database.

Electronic dissertations are delivered to the Zentralbibliothek Zürich at the same time as the number of printed deposit copies prescribed by the Faculty of Law.

Publication in another electronic database

PhD candidates may also have their dissertation published in another electronic database. Paragraph 2 under "Printing" applies analogously to the formal preparation.

PhD candidates clarify the copyright and licensing situation in connection with publication of their dissertation. They also ensure that no rights of contracting parties or third parties conflict with publication.

Specific information regarding formal preparation and the publication procedure is set out in the corresponding fact sheets of the contracting partners.

Publication in an electronic database may take place no earlier than the time at which "Approved for printing" is confirmed.

14. Completion documents and use of the title

The confirmation of conferral and the diploma (comprising the PhD certificate, Diploma Supplement, and Academic Record) are generated and sent by post only once the deposit copy signed by the primary supervisor has been received by the Office of the Vice Dean of Studies. PhD candidates must be matriculated in the corresponding semester for both documents to be issued. Use of the title of doctor (PhD) is prohibited before the confirmation of conferral is delivered.

C. Final Provisions

Repeal of previous law

The following enactments are repealed with effect from 1 August 2026:

a. Doctoral Regulations dated 8 March 2017,

b. Doctoral regulations for the Doctoral Program of the Faculty of Law dated 8 April 2009,

c. Doctoral regulations for the Biomedical Ethics and Law PhD Program (PhD BmEL/Law Track), resolution of the Faculty of Law dated 5 November 2008.

Entry into force

These Doctoral Regulations enter into force on 1 August 2026.