

Frequently asked questions about PhD Study at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

In the first instance, please consult the [PhD Study portal](#) of the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin and the [Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences website](#) where you will find the degree regulations, as well as all relevant forms.

Why do a PhD?

The award of a PhD recognises exceptional academic ability beyond the level of a lower university degree. Following successful completion of the PhD, the academic title of Doctor of Philosophy (Dr. phil.) is obtained. This serves as proof of competency in conducting advanced academic research in a specialist area and qualifies the holder for academic university and non-university career options, as well as independent research.

What does a PhD involve?

A PhD is based on an independent, academic research project which generates new knowledge – the thesis – and an oral examination, consisting of a presentation on the propositions and results of the thesis, followed by an academic discussion (“disputation”). The academic title will, however, only be conferred after the successful publication of the thesis.

Who can enrol?

According to the Doctoral Degree Regulations of the Faculty, graduates with proof of a university degree (a magister, diploma, or master’s degree, or a first state examination in the arts and sciences for teacher training) awarded with an overall mark of at least “good”, may be admitted to PhD Study in a chosen subject area. Admission of candidates who hold a degree awarded less than “good” is contingent on the decision of the Board of Graduate Studies. In this case two references from university lecturers with relevant subject knowledge are required. Graduates from polytechnics may also pursue doctoral studies at a university. You can find details of the admission requirements here: §5 Doctoral Degree Regulations of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (KSBF), published 24 August 2016.

How can I approach a prospective supervisor?

Please send your proposal to a university lecturer in the Department whose area of research corresponds to your own proposal. You should enclose a summary of the topic with research questions, working hypothesis if appropriate, current state of research, materials/sources and method(s). (Length: approx. 2 pages)

In addition, please indicate why the project should be carried out in this Department of Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.

International applicants may also contact the [central helpdesk](#) in order to clarify specific admission requirements.

Is it possible to be admitted for PhD Study with a foreign university degree?

In principle, applicants with a degree that was not obtained at a German university may be admitted, as long as the equivalence of the university degree has been recognised. Please consult §5 para. 4 of the Doctoral Degree Regulations of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, as well as the information on the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin [International Office](#) website. Verification of equivalence is determined by the Faculty's Graduate Office based on the CV of the applicant that is part of the proposal for admission.

What language skills are required for admission?

For the subject of Art and Visual History, proof of proficiency in Latin (level B1 CEFR) must be provided. Proof of proficiency in ancient Greek or an ancient non-European language may be offered in place of proof of proficiency in Latin. Upon request, provided an adequate reason is given, the Graduate Board may grant exemption from the requirement if other language skills, relevant to the research project, are demonstrated (§5 para. 5 of the Doctoral Degree Regulations of KSBF).

Are applicants who completed their studies abroad required to demonstrate knowledge of the German language?

No.

Is it possible to complete a doctoral degree in another language?

The project must be written in either German or English. Upon request, the thesis may be authored in a different language, provided evaluation of all parts of the doctoral degree is guaranteed by the Examination Committee. The Board of Graduate Studies is responsible for making this decision (§9 para. 3 of the Doctoral Degree Regulations of KSBF).

How do I find a second examiner?

The first examiner is, according to the Doctoral Degree Regulations of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, always the supervisor. The second may be suggested by the doctoral candidates themselves. It is sensible to discuss the suggestions with the supervisor. This can take place at any time during the course of the period of PhD study.

Are there deadlines for admission to PhD Study?

Applications for admission to PhD studies are not required to be submitted by any particular deadline. You may apply at any time during the semester.

Where can I find the application form for admission to PhD Study?

The application form can be downloaded [here](#) or picked up in hard copy from the Faculty's Graduate Office.

How long does it take to be awarded a PhD?

In general, candidates should expect to spend three to four years full-time to complete a PhD at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. On this point, see also §7 of the Doctoral Degree Regulations of Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Will I be required to attend courses during my PhD Study?

However, the Board of Graduate Studies may make admission conditional on the attainment of additional qualifications through attendance of specific courses.

How can I finance my PhD?

Admission to PhD Study at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin does not entail any financial support on the part of the University, nor employment by the University. Funding is the responsibility of the doctoral candidates themselves. You will find an overview of grant and scholarship opportunities on the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin [PhD Study portal](#). Your supervisor may also advise you.

PhD Study with a child/children?

The Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin is committed to supporting women and families, and aims to help fathers and mothers to combine their PhD Study and family life. The University offers various means of support. You can find more information on the [Women's Advancement & Family Support](#) website.

Where can I find the applicable Doctoral Degree Regulations?

The currently valid Doctoral Degree Regulations are available [here](#).

Do I need to be enrolled during my PhD studies?

Yes, unless you are employed by the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, in which case you simply need to be registered.

Contact

For specific questions, e.g. regarding the application process or the Faculty's Doctoral Degree Regulations, please contact the Graduate office of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

You can find general information about PhD Study on the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin [PhD Study portal](#).