



TECHNISCHE  
UNIVERSITÄT  
DRESDEN

# **Binational Doctorates at TU Dresden**

Guidelines for the Initiation and Implementation





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# Binational doctorates at TU Dresden

At TU Dresden, it is possible to carry out binational doctorates. In principle, this is possible at all faculties of TU Dresden and in cooperation with various countries. This guideline is intended to give all those involved in a binational doctorate (doctoral candidate, supervisor, faculty staff, members of the doctoral committee, dean, department spokesperson) an orientation for the required administrative procedure. Please note that the following explanations only represent the recommended or required procedural steps at TU Dresden. The procedural steps presented here are recommendations and do not affect the validity of the respective doctoral regulations or the SächsHSFG.

## What is a binational doctorate?

The supervision of the doctoral thesis and the awarding of the doctoral degree take place jointly at TU Dresden and at a foreign (partner) university.

Doctoral candidates pursuing a binational doctorate conduct research at both institutions, but submit only one dissertation and defend it only once at one of the two participating universities.

Only one title is awarded. A binational doctoral procedure does not involve the award of two doctoral degrees; rather, according to the principles of German doctoral law, a single title is awarded.

## Who is responsible?

The responsibility for binational doctoral procedures at TU Dresden lies with the respective faculty or school at which the doctorate is carried out. The basis is the respective doctoral regulations. In addition, some important aspects of supervision, the doctoral procedure and the awarding of the doctoral degree are regulated in a cooperation agreement between the two universities.

If required, the Graduate Academy offers advice and support with the initiation, examination of the cooperation agreements and the implementation of binational doctoral procedures.

<sup>1</sup> Synonymously, such doctorates are also called *cotutelle de thèse*, *cotutelle procedures* or *joint international doctorates*.

## What speaks in favour of a binational doctorate and what speaks against it?

A binational doctorate is an opportunity to gain international research experience during the doctorate. Compared to a regular doctorate, however, the administrative and financial costs are significantly higher. Therefore, before initiating a binational doctorate, doctoral candidates and supervisors should carefully weigh up the advantages of such a cooperative procedure against the effort required. Even without such formal cooperation, there are numerous opportunities during the doctorate to gain research experience abroad and to establish international cooperation

A binational doctorate is recommended if:

- carrying out the doctorate at two locations is particularly relevant to the topic or research subject (e.g. special expertise is available at the partner university or the research focus is strongly linked to the respective other country).

- the joint supervision at both locations is intended to deepen existing research cooperation or the doctoral topic is in the research interest of both institutions.

Pursuing a binational doctorate, doctoral candidates spend at least one year of the doctoral period at the partner institution. At the same time, the supervisors of a binational doctorate undertake to jointly supervise the dissertation throughout the entire doctoral process and to reach the necessary agreements with each other.

Please note: If only a longer stay abroad during the doctorate or an external second supervision or review by a professor from a foreign university is planned, a formal binational doctoral procedure is not necessary and may not even make sense. Both aspects can be realised with considerably less effort within the framework of a regular doctorate at TU Dresden.

## Initiation of a binational doctorate

To initiate a binational doctorate, the supervisor and/or the doctoral candidate must take the initiative. First of all, a supervisory relationship must be established. In addition, the doctoral candidate and the supervisor must have agreed on the pros and cons as well as the requirements and implementation modalities of a binational doctorate.

In the next step, both faculties/universities must agree in principle that the doctoral project will be carried out within the framework of a binational procedure. Subsequently, essential aspects of the procedure must be coordinated with the respective partner university, including the dissertation topic, the expected duration

of the procedure, various responsibilities and procedures, as well as financial aspects such as travel expenses for examiners, etc., if applicable. All questions that arise during the coordination process should be clarified in consultation with the responsible faculty representatives and committees (e.g. the doctoral committee).

If required, the Graduate Academy of TU Dresden can accompany this process in an advisory capacity and promote the drafting of an individual cooperation agreement in consultation with the foreign partner university.

### What are the requirements?

In principle, a binational doctorate can be agreed upon if the following requirements are met:

- The candidate has read the doctoral regulations of the respective faculty, fulfils the admission requirements for the doctorate at both universities and is accepted or registered as a doctoral candidate.
- There is a main supervisor at both universities who supervises the doctorate in the cooperative form and with whom the other supervisor is in contact.
- The implementation of research stays at both locations is guaranteed (e.g. funding is secured).

- The candidate has sufficient language skills in the languages spoken at both universities (and, if applicable, in another research language).

### Procedural steps for initiating a binational doctorate

If the above requirements are met and a binational doctorate is being considered, the following points must be clarified or the following steps taken:

#### 1. Preparation

- The future doctoral candidate clarifies together with the supervisors and the relevant faculties of both universities whether a binational doctorate is possible and supported from all sides.



- If necessary, advice on the advantages and disadvantages of a binational doctorate can be obtained from the Graduate Academy.
- The future doctoral candidate formally obtains the approval of the doctoral committee of the faculty to initiate a binational doctorate.
- At the same time, the future doctoral candidate submits an application for acceptance as a doctoral candidate to the relevant faculty via the doctoral candidate management system Promovendus provided by TU Dresden.
- Upon acceptance as a doctoral candidate, the faculty will note in the doctoral candidate file that a binational doctorate is planned.
- The doctoral candidate concludes a joint supervision agreement with the supervisors of both universities in accordance with the applicable doctoral regulations.

## 2. Negotiation and signing of a cooperation agreement

- After the above points have been clarified or appropriate arrangements have been made, a cooperation agreement is concluded between TU Dresden and the partner university.
- TU Dresden provides a model contract, which is used if possible and specified and adapted for the respective project. A template from the partner university can also be used if necessary. If a template from the partner university is used or the TU Dresden template is modified, the changes must be checked for compatibility with the doctoral regulations of the respective faculty and other relevant regulations of TU Dresden (e.g. "Statutes

for Ensuring Good Scientific Practice, for Avoiding Scientific Misconduct and for Dealing with Violations").

- The Graduate Academy supports the faculty in drafting the agreement. In case of questions regarding data protection, protection of intellectual property or the like, the Graduate Academy will involve other TU Dresden offices in the drafting and review of the agreement text, if necessary.
- The respective applicable doctoral regulations of the faculty constitute the legal basis for the doctoral project. The cooperation agreement only contains supplementary regulations. It must be ensured that the quality standards for the binational doctorate are at least as high as those for regular doctorates at the faculty.
- The final draft of the cooperation agreement is reviewed by the Graduate Academy, approved by the doctoral committee of the faculty (and of the cooperating university) and signed by the responsible offices of both sides.
- On the part of TU Dresden, the main supervisor, the dean or the departmental spokesperson, if applicable the prorector of research as well as the doctoral student sign for information.
- An original of the signed cooperation agreement is kept in the doctoral candidate's file at the doctoral office of the faculty; the agreement is also deposited in electronic form in Promovendus.
- The cooperation agreement should be completed and signed no later than 12 months after the candidate's acceptance as a doctoral candidate at the faculty.

### 3. Contents of the cooperation agreement

The cooperation agreement must contain the following points:

- Information on the objective, framework conditions, requirements for the binational doctorate as well as on the respective applicable regulations
- Information on the language of the dissertation, possible abstracts and, if applicable, the viva and the defence
- Specifications on questions of submission, assessment, evaluation and defence of the dissertation
- It should be noted that the examination modalities may be regulated differently at the two partner universities. Therefore, the faculty - in consultation with the partner university - should check whether there are relevant differences that need to be regulated. For example, in some countries the assessment is limited to "pass" and "fail". Doctoral regulations of the faculties of TU Dresden, on the other hand, usually provide for a more differentiated evaluation system. In such cases, it is strongly recommended to specify the evaluation modalities in the cooperation agreement.
- Information on the place of the defence/final examination and the language of the defence
- Overview of the planned stays at the two locations as well as a summary of the topic (as attachments)
- Costs: The agreement should specify how the specific additional costs of a binational doctorate are to be covered, in particular travel costs for supervisors and reviewers. Normally, travel costs are covered by the respective home institutions.
- Templates of the doctoral certificates to be awarded, which contain a reference to the joint procedure.
- The agreement names the respective contact persons of the two partner universities for administrative arrangements.
- The doctoral candidate must organise the financing of the research stays and other additional costs him/herself; a concluded cooperation agreement for a binational doctoral procedure does not establish any entitlement to financial support.

## Implementation of the binational doctorate and examination modalities

During the implementation of a binational doctoral procedure, the following applies:

- The doctoral candidate completes the planned research stays at the cooperating universities and coordinates changes in the organisation of the doctoral project with both supervisors.
- Regular supervision meetings are held with both main supervisors (jointly or individually).
- Significant changes to the cooperation agreement must be coordinated between the two universities and recorded in writing in an amendment agreement and signed by all parties.





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## Completion and defence in the binational doctoral procedure

The joint doctoral procedure is a central component of a binational doctorate. In this joint procedure, the doctoral regulations and rules of both universities must be observed. If there are different regulations at both universities (e.g. regarding the evaluation, composition of the doctoral committee, the conduct of a viva voce or the appointment of the reviewers), this should already have been negotiated in the cooperation agreement (see above). The doctoral procedure at the TU Dresden for a binational doctorate is usually as follows:

- In consultation with the supervisor, the doctoral candidate submits the dissertation and other required documents to the relevant faculty. The relevant provisions of the doctoral regulations and, if applicable, supplementary statements of the cooperation agreement are taken into account. After the application and the documents have been examined by the respective doctoral office, the **doctoral procedure is opened** and the contact person at the partner university named in the agreement is informed of this by the doctoral office.
- Prior to the opening of the doctoral procedure, the responsible committees of the two cooperating universities agree on the composition of the doctoral committee and the appointment of the reviewers, taking into account the provisions in the doctoral regulations or in the cooperation agreement.
- On TUD side, the **members of the doctoral committee** and the **reviewers** are elected by the doctoral committee of the faculty.
- If a **viva voce examination** is required, arrangements will be made with the partner university in accordance with the provisions of the

applicable doctoral regulations and the cooperation agreement.

- The **reviews on the dissertation** (incl. an evaluation proposal according to the evaluation system of the respective doctoral regulations) are submitted to the doctoral committee. If the acceptance of the dissertation is approved, the dissertation is usually displayed at the faculty within the deadline. If no reservations regarding the dissertation are expressed within this period by those entitled to do so according to the doctoral regulations, the preparation of the defence can take place.
- Possible variants for the **conduct of the defence**:

Option A: The partner university organises the defence.

Option B: The doctoral office of the faculty concerned at TU Dresden organises the defence.

- With regard to the **evaluation**, there are two options:

Option A: The partner university does not award grades on doctoral projects. In this case, the partner university, the doctoral committee and the appointed reviewers must be informed about the assessment scheme of TU Dresden and submit their own grade proposal, which must be confirmed by the respective doctoral committee at TU Dresden.

Option B: The grading system of the partner university differs from that of the respective faculty of TU Dresden. Grades are awarded for the assessments according to the grading system of the respective university. The defence and, if applicable, the viva are graded

according to the grading system of the university at which they take place. A conversion table is then used to determine the overall grade for the doctorate.

- After completion of the defence and the evaluation, all relevant information is forwarded to the responsible doctoral committee, which decides on the **award of the doctoral degree**.
- The dissertation is **published** by the doctoral candidate in accordance with the provisions of the applicable doctoral regulations.

## Advice and support

Do you have questions and/or need support on the topic of bi-national doctorates? The Graduate Academy will be happy to advise you.

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Further information and recommendations on the topic of binational doctorates can be found on the HRK website at: <https://www.hrk.de/themen/internationales/internationale-studierende-und-forschende/mobilitaet-und-erkennung/cotutelle-de-these/>

- A **doctoral certificate** is issued on the basis of the model available at TU Dresden. The certificate contains a reference to the binational form of the doctorate and the partner university. At the same time, the doctoral candidate receives a doctoral certificate from the partner university with a reference to the cooperation with TU Dresden. The creation of a joint doctoral certificate is not recommended.



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## Imprint

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