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— Revised version of the guidelines for cumulative dissertations at the School of Sustainability for the doctoral degrees Dr. phil., Dr. rer. nat. and Dr. rer. pol.

Revised version of the guidelines for cumulative dissertations at the School of Sustainability for the doctoral degrees Dr. phil., Dr. rer. nat. and Dr. rer. pol.

Pursuant to Section 9(3), first sentence, of the Lower Saxony Higher Education Act (NHG) in the version of 26 February 2007 (Nds. GVBl. p. 69), last amended by Article 14 of the Act of 13 December 2024 (Nds. GVBl. 2024 No. 118), and Section 8(3) of the Doctoral Regulations of the School of Sustainability dated 14 June 2023 (Leuphana Gazette No. 72/23 of 20 July 2023), the School Council of the School of Sustainability at Leuphana University Lüneburg adopted the guidelines for cumulative dissertations on 3 December 2025. The Presidential Board of Leuphana University Lüneburg approved this revised version on 17 December 2025 in accordance with Section 44(1), third sentence, of the NHG.

SECTION I

These guidelines specify the requirements for a cumulative doctoral thesis for the award of the doctoral degrees Dr. phil., Dr. rer. nat. and Dr. rer. pol. at the School of Sustainability. It elaborates on Section 8(3) of the Doctoral Regulations of the School of Sustainability dated 20 July 2023, as amended on 27 August 2025 (“PromO”)¹ with regard to the cumulative dissertation. In particular, this guideline regulates the minimum formal and substantive requirements for a cumulative dissertation in a manner that is uniform and binding for all doctoral procedures. This is intended to provide doctoral candidates and their supervisors with transparent and reliable information; reviewers are to be provided with a uniform framework for the assessment and evaluation of the dissertation. The aim is to facilitate and promote high-quality dissertations that take the form of contemporary academic publications, namely specialist articles—possibly co-authored—published in international peer-reviewed journals.

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§ 1 Specialist articles and manuscripts: Formal requirements

- (1) ¹The cumulative dissertation is fulfilled by the submission of qualified academic articles (Section 8(3), first sentence, PromO; hereinafter referred to as ‘articles’). ²Articles may be written in either German or English (Section 8(4), second sentence, PromO). ³Exceptions to this rule are possible, but must be applied for in writing to the relevant doctoral committee. ⁴If, with the approval of the doctoral committee, articles are written in a third language, a summary in German or English must be provided.
- (2) ¹The number of articles must not be fewer than three (Section 8(3), second sentence, letter a of the PromO). ²If articles have been produced jointly with co-authors, this number may be increased in accordance with Section 3.
- (3) ¹As a rule, only articles in which the doctoral candidate lists Leuphana as their institutional affiliation may be considered. ²Exceptions to this are possible if articles were published prior to admission to the doctoral programme at Leuphana (§ 8(5) PromO). ³This applies in particular to doctoral candidates who began their doctoral studies at another higher education institution and wish to continue them at Leuphana. ⁴Upon informal request, the relevant doctoral committee shall examine whether articles published prior to admission are accepted for inclusion in the cumulative dissertation. ⁵However, at least one article must be produced with an affiliation to Leuphana.
- (4) If articles have already been published or accepted for publication and are submitted in the cumulative dissertation in a modified form, changes from the published or accepted version must be explicitly indicated.

§ 2 Specialist articles or manuscripts: Requirements regarding quality and content

- (1) The treatise submitted as a cumulative dissertation must, as a whole, constitute “a coherent body of work” that demonstrates the author’s ability to carry out in-depth and independent academic work and represents a contribution to the advancement of science (§ 8(2) sentence 1 PromO).
- (2) ¹For a manuscript to be of significance to a scientific community as an article, it must be published in a medium recognised by the relevant scientific community or be suitable for publication. ²The following therefore applies to articles submitted as a cumulative dissertation:
 1. All articles must demonstrate a quality of content and form such that they can, in principle, be published in a medium recognised by the relevant academic community.

2. At least one article must have been published or accepted for publication. If, in exceptional cases, this is not the case, brief reasons for this, such as protracted field research or longitudinal studies, must be provided to the relevant doctoral committee. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the reviewers to assess and explicitly justify in their reports whether the articles demonstrate or have already demonstrated publication potential. This assessment should be based in particular on external quality indicators, such as the acceptance of the article at international conferences with an open call for papers and peer-review-based selection of contributions, or an initial positive editorial decision in the publication process at a recognised international peer-reviewed journal, supported by external reviews, such as ‘revise and resubmit’, ‘accepted pending revision’, ‘conditional acceptance’, etc.

§ 3 Co-authorship

- (1) ¹A cumulative dissertation may also result from collaborative research work by several persons (Section 8(2) sentence 2 PromO). ²Consequently, articles included in the cumulative dissertation may also have multiple authors. ³ In a cumulative dissertation containing articles co-authored with others, the individual academic contribution must be clearly identified (Section 8(2) sentence 2 PromO).

- (2) ¹In the case of co-authorship, the doctoral candidate must, in a statement of authorship for each individual article and in agreement with the other co-authors, set out what their own individual academic contribution to the production of the article consisted of (Section 8(3), second sentence, point (b) of the PromO). ²The categories of the Contributor Roles Taxonomy (CRediT) shall be used to document the individual contribution (§ 8(3) sentence 2(c) PromO):

1. Categories applicable to the creation of articles would include, for example:
 - a) Conceptualisation
Formulation and development of ideas, hypotheses and research objectives
 - b) Methodology
Development and design of methodology and models
 - c) Data collection and analysis (Investigation)
Conducting experiments, data collection and literature reviews
 - d) Data analysis and interpretation (Formal Analysis)
Application of formal techniques for the analysis and synthesis of research data or interpretation of interim results
 - e) Writing – original draft
Preparation and drafting of the article, in particular the first draft
 - f) Writing – Review and Editing
Review, commenting on and revising the manuscript by members of the research group

³When applying the Contributor Roles, individual contributors may hold multiple roles (‘multiple roles possible’ CRediT). ⁴For further categories and information on CRediT, see:

<https://credit.niso.org/>

2. The proportion of one’s own contribution in relation to the contribution of the other co-authors to the creation of the article must be stated, taking all types of contributions into account, according to the following classification:

- a) *Sole authorship*, if one's own contribution is 100%.
- b) *Major contribution*, if one's own contribution outweighs that of each individual co-author and amounts to at least 35%.
- c) *Equal contribution*, if
 - aa) your own contribution is equal to that of the other co-authors,
 - ab) no other co-author has a contribution greater than one's own, and
 - ac) one's own share is at least 25%.
- d) *Significant contribution*, if one's own contribution amounts to at least 20%, but does not constitute sole authorship, a predominant contribution or an equal contribution.
- e) *Minor contribution* if one's own contribution is less than 20%.

The doctoral candidate's own contribution to the creation of the article must, in at least one article, be predominantly in accordance with the classification under Section 3(2)(2)(b); in at least one further article, it must be at least equal. No two or more cumulative dissertations may be submitted in which the respective doctoral candidates have authored the same articles with an equal contribution in each case.

3. To determine the number of articles in accordance with Section 1(2), each article is weighted with a weighting factor depending on the proportion of the doctoral candidate's own contribution, in accordance with the classification set out in Section 3(2)(2). The sum of the weighting factors must be at least the number specified in Section 1(2).

Proportion of own contribution	Weighting factor
Sole authorship	1.0
Major contribution	1.0
Equal contribution	1.0
Significant proportion	0.5
Minor contribution	0

§ 4 Framework document

- (1) ¹In accordance with Section 8(3), first sentence, of the PromO, a framework paper must be submitted alongside the articles, setting out the internal coherence of the articles, the specific aspects examined in each article, the methodological approach adopted, and the results achieved. ²This framework paper must have been written by the doctoral candidate independently, i.e. as the sole author, as a coherent text in German or English. ³It should comprise approximately 15 to 20 pages. ⁴The framework paper forms part of the doctoral thesis and is therefore also subject to assessment as part of the thesis (see: § 8(3) sentence 2(g) PromO).
- (2) ¹As an appendix to the framework paper, a table must be provided for each article individually,
 1. the doctoral candidate's authorship status in relation to the article (sole or co-authorship), supplemented in the case of co-authorship by the declaration of authorship pursuant to § 3(2),
 2. the publication status of the article (Section 2(2), second sentence, no. 2), i.e. whether the article has already been published (specifying the 'doi'), has been accepted for publication, accepted for publication subject to conditions, accepted for (major or minor) revision, submitted, or is being prepared for submission;

- including details of the publication medium such as the quality of the medium, e.g. based on the impact factor, its position in relevant rankings, and the peer-review process applied there,
3. at which conferences the content of the article was presented (Section 2(2), second sentence, no. 2), including details of the title, venue and date of the conference and proof of the open call for papers (where applicable, via a web link).

²The appendix must be accompanied by a hand-signed declaration by the doctoral candidate with the following wording: “I declare that all information provided in this appendix is true in every respect, both individually and as a whole.”

§ 5 Assessment of the cumulative dissertation

- (1) In their reports, the examiners shall assess both the individual articles and the overall achievement of the cumulative dissertation (§ 8(3) sentence 2(e) PromO).
- (2) ¹The assessment of the academic quality of an article shall be governed by the standards for assessing academic quality customary within the relevant academic community. ²In principle, the rules of good academic practice (in accordance with the relevant guidelines of Leuphana University Lüneburg) and the generally accepted standards of academia apply across all disciplines, in particular the criteria of originality, scientifically sound and methodologically valid argumentation, and the advancement of science. ³In their assessment of the cumulative dissertation, the reviewers shall base their evaluation on the general and subject-specific standards.
- (3) ¹The quality of the medium in which an article is published, or the quality of the specialist conferences at which it was presented, is normally a good indicator of the article’s quality. ²Reviewers should take appropriate account of this quality of publication media and conferences – which varies from one academic community to another but is consistently recognised within the relevant academic community – when reviewing the cumulative dissertation. ³Subject-specific rankings of journals and book publishers may be consulted for this purpose, without this automatically resulting in a specific assessment of the article or the dissertation.

§ 6 Transitional Provision

Doctoral procedures which had already commenced by 1 October 2023 prior to the entry into force of the Doctoral Regulations of the School of Sustainability of 14 June 2023 (Leuphana Gazette No. 72/23 of 20 July 2023) on 1 October 2023 may, upon application, be completed in accordance with the provisions of the previously valid doctoral regulations, including the relevant guidelines issued by the School of Sustainability.

SECTION II

These guidelines shall enter into force on the day following their publication in the Official Gazette of Leuphana University Lüneburg (Leuphana Gazette).

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