



# GENERAL INFORMATION / CHECKLIST ON A BINATIONAL DOCTORAL EXAMINATION PROCEDURE (COTUTELLE)

## Background Information

A binational doctoral examination procedure - also called Cotutelle procedure - allows a doctoral candidate to earn a doctoral degree awarded jointly by two universities in two different countries based on a single research project completed at both universities. The Cotutelle procedure is binational with respect to the supervision of the doctoral thesis, the research project conducted almost equally at two universities, and the involvement of foreign reviewers/examiners in the final doctoral examination. To award a joint doctoral degree, the two cooperating universities must agree upon a legally binding procedure by entering into a cooperation agreement setting out the Cotutelle procedure in detail.

After successful completion of the Cotutelle procedure, either a joint doctoral degree certificate or two single degree certificates will be issued indicating the doctoral title awarded by Leuphana University of Lüneburg and the doctoral title awarded at the foreign university within the scope of a joint doctoral examination procedure. Upon receipt of the doctoral degree certificate(s), the doctoral candidate shall be entitled to bear either the German doctoral title or the doctoral title of the foreign university (indicating the name of the two universities in parentheses at the doctoral candidate's option). To avoid any doubt, it should be noted that the doctoral candidate will not be awarded two doctoral degrees on the basis of one doctoral thesis. Instead, he or she earns one single doctoral degree in accordance with the doctoral regulations of Leuphana University of Lüneburg and the partner institution.

## Target Group

The Cotutelle is of particular interest to candidates who

- wish to establish themselves in a particular academic field in two countries
- conduct research on a topic that is closely related to the foreign country,
- have not yet decided in which country they wish to continue their academic work subsequently,
- wish to pursue their academic career in a binational context.

If a doctoral candidate's only intention is to include a reviewer from a foreign university in the review committee and/or spend a research stay abroad, such arrangements can be made within the scope of the doctoral regulations. In this case, the Cotutelle procedure is neither necessary nor useful.

## Formal Requirements

The basic requirement for a Cotutelle procedure is the candidate's admission to the doctoral programmes at Leuphana University of Lüneburg and at the chosen foreign university. In addition, the legal framework required for a Cotutelle procedure must be established. § 21 of the Doctoral Regulations of Leuphana University of Lüneburg, which sets out the requirements for joint doctorates with foreign universities within the scope of a Cotutelle procedure, serves as a basis for all binational doctorates. However, an individual cooperation agreement must be concluded for each binational doctoral project. For this purpose, the cooperating universities must agree on the Cotutelle procedure to be applied at faculty level and, as may be the case with some universities, at another level. In each individual case, the doctoral advisor must clarify the opportunities for a Cotutelle procedure jointly with the respective doctoral boards at Leuphana University and the partner university.

Although a general cooperation agreement concluded between two faculties or universities may outline the main features of a Cotutelle procedure, i.e. how institutional relations or personal contacts at work help facilitate mutual understanding, it is still necessary to enter into an individual agreement. In drafting such an agreement, you are requested to use the sample cooperation agreement provided by Leuphana University and approved by the Legal Department. If the sample agreement is amended or if a partner university document is used, it must be reviewed and approved again by the Legal Department.

### **What issues should a cooperation agreement cover?**

Taking into account the doctoral regulations of the universities involved, a cooperation agreement should set forth the following issues of the joint doctoral program:

- Academic supervision  
Academic supervision of the doctoral thesis must be provided by one professor each of the two faculties involved. Both faculties undertake to ensure academic supervision of the doctoral thesis and to make the relevant arrangements. Candidates must spend a research period at both universities; according to the Doctoral Regulations of Leuphana University, the research period spent at each of the respective universities must last at least one year.
- Enrolment  
Prospective doctoral candidates must be enrolled at both universities. Enrolment fees, if any, must be paid only at one university, which is usually the home university offering the doctoral program.
- Examination procedure  
The doctoral thesis may be submitted for examination to either the foreign university or to Leuphana University (details of the examination procedure must be given in the cooperation agreement).
- Language  
In accordance with § 21 Paragraph 5 of the Doctoral Regulations, the language of the doctoral thesis, the disputation, and the summary to be submitted must be specified. If the doctoral thesis is submitted to Leuphana University of Lüneburg, it must be written in either German or English and must include a summary written in the foreign university's language. If the doctoral thesis is submitted to the foreign university/faculty, the summary must be written in either German or English.
- Grading  
Due to different assessment cultures, a consistent joint assessment often proves difficult. It is generally recommended to indicate both the German grade and its equivalent in the foreign grading system. At Leuphana, the grading system set forth in § 11 of the Doctoral Regulations shall apply.
- Travel and research stay expenses  
It should be clarified precisely which costs will be borne by the two faculties involved so that third-party funding can be applied for, if required.

## Checklist

Process steps	Person(s) in charge/involved
Initial coordination of the intended binational doctoral project jointly with the Doctoral Board in charge and the International Office.	Doctoral advisor – Chairman of the Doctoral Board– International Office
Clarifying the legal framework and the regulations required at the foreign university.	Doctoral candidate – doctoral advisor
Filing an application for admission to the doctoral programme at Leuphana University <u>and</u> an application for admission to the doctoral programme at the foreign university.	Doctoral candidate
Drafting an individual cooperation agreement based on the sample agreement; submitting the draft agreement to the International Office.	Doctoral advisor – doctoral candidate
Formal review of the agreement by the International Office; in case of any deviation from the sample agreement, the International Office will have the agreement reviewed by the Legal Department. Submission of the agreement to the Doctoral Board via Dean's Office for final decision.	International Office – Legal Department, if required – Dean's Office – Doctoral Board
Upon approval by the Doctoral Board, the agreement will be signed by all parties.	International Office
The International Office sends the agreement in duplicate to the partner university for signature. The partner university returns a signed copy to the International Office.	International Office – Partner University
A copy of the signed agreement will be forwarded to the doctoral student.	International Office

If you have any further questions regarding the Cotutelle procedure and the cooperation agreement, please contact:

International Office

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