

Binational doctoral degrees in Cotutelle programmes

1 Background

Binational doctoral degrees in Cotutelle programmes result in a **joint doctoral degree, which is awarded by two universities in separate countries**. This procedure is based on doctoral research that is conducted at both universities. Both universities work together closely in selecting, supervising and assessing the candidate and recognise the work completed at the partner university. This procedure is especially suitable for doctoral candidates wishing to ensure recognition of their academic achievements in the participating countries and to improve their chances of employment.

2 General conditions

For **every** binational doctorate there should be an individual **cooperation agreement** (cf. 4), which has to be negotiated in collaboration with the FAU Graduate Centre and has to be approved by FAU's Legal Department.

The agreement must comply with the **relevant legislation for conducting and awarding binational doctorate degrees** in both countries. At FAU this are the General Doctoral Regulations and the Faculty Doctoral Regulations at the respective Faculty.

The **contractual partner** at FAU is usually the faculty of study. The cooperation has to be in the interest of this faculty. A binational cooperation may be of interest to the faculty, for instance, if it establishes the foundation for future cooperations or partnership. The Dean of the faculty and the Chair of the Doctoral Affairs Committee / Faculty Council must be informed early on in the programme even if the examination is planned to be held abroad. The agreement must be signed by the Dean of the faculty. The signature of FAU's President shall only be required if this is requested by the partner institution (as, for example, in German-French agreements). **The supervisor's signature alone is not legally binding for the University.**

3 Specific conditions

Enrolment/Admission

If the partner institution stipulates **enrolment/admission fees**, the doctoral candidate must only pay enrolment or tuition fees to one institution. In general, tuition fees are paid to the university where the examination procedure is held. At FAU, doctoral students do not have to pay tuition fees, but they cannot be exempt from the payment of the social fee at the matriculation for the Association for Student Affairs (Studentenwerk).

Languages

The **language of all degree components** must be specified in the agreement (thesis, abstract, oral examination, assessment, certificates).

Additional costs

Binational doctoral studies cause **additional costs for the doctoral candidate** (such as travel and accommodation at two universities, etc.). These costs are usually borne by the candidate.

The payment of **additional supervision costs** must be specified in the agreement and borne by the institutions.

Supervision and schedule

According to the HRK (German Rectors' Conference) recommendations, a binational doctorate should include an **equal stay** in each country for a **minimum of one year**.

A **preliminary schedule** must be specified in the contract and may only be changed with the approval of the supervisors at both institutions.

Any additional **requirements or stipulations** such as mandatory tuition or attendance at a colloquium must be documented in the contract.

Submission, examination, certificate and publication

The **examination procedure** including the oral examination shall be held at **one of the two universities**. The partner university must acknowledge the acceptance of the thesis and agree to further proceedings.

It is required to initiate the administrative process (**initiation of the doctorate procedure**) at FAU no matter where the examination procedure takes place. Please contact the Office of Doctoral Affairs of the respective faculty.

The format and location of the **oral examination**, a joint examination report and the **scope and structure of a committee that represents both universities** must be equally specified in the agreement. The supervisor or at least one equivalent representative of FAU must be appointed to the committee.

The final **grade** must be awarded according to the grading system of the examining university and this grade must be converted to an equivalent grade in the grading system of the partner university. The exact procedure for awarding and converting grades must be stipulated in the agreement.

Usually **two separate certificates** are issued, indicating that both certificates are part of the doctoral degree and are only valid in combination.

However, a **single certificate** may be issued by the universities which states that the doctoral degree was awarded by both institutions. The seal and signatures on the certificate are stipulated by legal requirements.

An explicit reference must be made to the relevant legal framework for **publication requirements** at both partner universities (doctoral regulations at FAU). If the doctoral procedure is conducted at the partner university, copies of the dissertation have to be deposited at FAU as well.

4 Procedure

A binational doctoral degree must be initiated **at least one year before the final examination**.

Before an individual Cotutelle agreement is formulated, the supervisor must confirm whether the Doctoral Affairs Committee / Faculty Council agrees that **cooperation** with the inter-national university is **in the interest of FAU and the faculty of study**.

Once the Doctoral Affairs committee has approved the binational doctorate, the **legal framework** and the **specific conditions** of the partner university must be clarified.

The candidate has to apply for admission as a doctoral candidate at FAU and admission has to be granted before the agreement is signed.

Please make sure to inform The Graduate Centre about any **deadlines to be met** and when the defence is planned to take place, even if these events do not lie in the near future.

An agreement must then be reached on the **coverage of costs** for binational supervision. Note: These costs must be covered by the school, department or by third-party funding (DAAD, Deutsch-Französische Hochschule, etc.).

After these points have been clarified, an agreement must be reached on the **academic requirements** and the **preliminary schedule** where due attention must be given to the requirements of the partner university (supervision agreement, etc.).

These terms form the basis of the **individual cooperation agreement**. A **model contract** is available from the Office of Research Career Development and Graduate Centre to help with the formulation of this agreement. **The supervisor** is responsible for the content of the agreement (including grade conversion). The Graduate Centre staff are looking forward to assist you during formulation of the agreement.

The agreement has to be **approved** by FAU **Legal Department**, which is coordinated by the Graduate Centre staff.

After reviewing the agreement, the Graduate Centre is responsible for concluding the contract and obtaining the required signatures.

Please note: It is imperative that the documents are submitted on time. At least two months are required to incorporate international agreements into the FAU model contract.

The 'Check list for binational doctoral degrees in Cotutelle programmes' can help you to keep track of the overall process.

Please contact Dr. Elena Zeißler at the Office of Research Career Development and Graduate Centre with any further questions (elena.zeissler@fau.de; +499131/85-20260).