

Prof. Dr. Matthias Rarey

Chair of the
Departmental Doctoral Committee of
the Department of Informatics

Tel. +49 40 42838-7351
Fax +49 40 42838-7352
rarey@zbh.uni-hamburg.de

FAQ – The Doctorate Procedure in the Department of Informatics

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Questions (please click on the question you want to read)

1. When do I need to apply for the admission to the Ph.D. program?2
2. What is the draft of my research project supposed to look like?.....2
3. When and how do I apply for an extension of the Ph.D. program?.....2
4. What do I need to be aware of when I hand in my dissertation?2
5. Which formal requirements does my dissertation need to adhere to?3
6. Can I write my dissertation in a cumulative manner?3
7. What rules apply to the choice of reviewers?5
8. What does the disputation process look like?5
9. Where can I find all the relevant documents and further information?5
10. Who can I contact with my questions about the Ph.D.?6

1. When do I need to apply for the admission to the Ph.D. program?

You need to apply timely for the admission to the Ph.D. program. According to §3(1) of the Promotionsordnung you need to apply for admission before you start the work on your Ph.D. project. The Departmental Doctoral Committee of the Department of Informatics recommends applying within the first six months but not later than nine months after you have started working as a research assistant at the University of Hamburg. Please note that you need to be enrolled at the University when you submit your dissertation!

2. What is the draft of my research project supposed to look like?

Together with your application for admission you need to hand in a draft of your research project. This draft should be no longer than two pages including title and references.

The following structure of the document is recommended:

- State your topic and put it into context
- Describe the state-of-the-art of the science/technology of your topic and name the most important publications in the field
- Put down a project plan explaining how you plan to proceed and name the necessary preliminary work that needs to be carried out
- Specify the research questions that you want to address during your work

3. When and how do I apply for an extension of the Ph.D. program?

The admission to the Ph.D. program is initially limited to four years (see §4(5) of the Promotionsordnung). The informal application for the extension should be filed three months before this deadline. This application should not exceed 1-2 pages. It needs to be filed by the Ph.D. student and *signed by the Ph.D. student and all supervisors*. The application should contain the following information:

- The duration of the extension that is applied for (max. 1 year). In case of adequate reasons, the duration can subsequently be extended for another year.
- Reasons why the extension is needed
- A short report of the current development status of the Ph.D. project and a project plan on the remaining work

4. What do I need to be aware of when I hand in my dissertation?

Please keep in mind that you need to be enrolled at the university when you hand in your dissertation! The examination process cannot be started when you are not enrolled. Five typewritten and bound copies and one electronic version of the dissertation are to be handed in. The electronic version needs to be on a data carrier that cannot be re-recorded (CD/DVD/Blu-ray) stating the name of the Ph.D. student, the short title of the dissertation and the date of submission; it also needs to be signed (see also §7 of the Promotionsordnung).

5. Which formal requirements does my dissertation need to adhere to?

The dissertation absolutely needs to have included a cover page, an empty second page, an affidavit and several attachments. The different aspects will now be explained in more detail:

- **Cover page:** The cover page needs to contain the following information:
 - Name of the author
 - Faculty and department/institution of the author
 - The specification „an der Universität Hamburg eingereichte Dissertation“
 - Year of submission
- **A second page** that will later be filled with the names of the reviewers. Please note that the names of the reviewers may not yet be named in the dissertation as they will only be appointed by the Departmental Doctoral Committee of the Department of Informatics after the examination process was started.
- **Attachment:** The attachment must contain:
 - Summary of the results in English and in German
 - List of publications that resulted from the dissertation project. In case of publications with several authors, the Departmental Doctoral Committee recommends that the contribution of the doctoral student is specified.
- **Affidavit:** Please use the following wording for your affidavit (also see §7(4) of the Promotionsordnung): *„Hiermit erkläre ich an Eides statt, dass ich die vorliegende Dissertationsschrift selbst verfasst und keine anderen als die angegebenen Quellen und Hilfsmittel benutzt habe.“* Even when your dissertation is in English you need to insert and sign the German affidavit.

6. Can I write my dissertation in a cumulative manner?

Generally, the MIN-Promotionsordnung offers the possibility to submit a cumulative dissertation, see §7(2) MIN-Promotionsordnung. Whether a cumulative dissertation is appropriate to present the research results depends on individual conditions, especially the subject area, the coherence of the subject and the publication performance.

Non-cumulatively dissertations enable the overall presentation of research effort in a coherent way. They enable a high level of detail and also the representation of negative results. Cumulative dissertations normally need less time for the writing of the dissertation itself. Thus they could allow the pursuit of additional, potentially higher ranked publications.

We recommend to talk to your supervisor one year before submission of the dissertation at the latest to judge the pros and contras individually.

Requirements

According to §7(2b) MIN-Promotionsordnung, the Fach-Promotionsausschuss determines the requirements for cumulative dissertations. For the subject computer science the following applies:

- At least three publications have to exist which can be related clearly to the doctoral topic with regard to contents. In particular, well-argued cases, the PhD student can apply for an exception at the Fach-Promotionsausschuss.
- The Ph.D. student should be first author or equal-contributing first author of the publications and be involved significantly in the published research results
- The publications should appear in approved, international journals or proceedings of international conferences which pursue a strict peer-review
- All listed publications must be accepted at the time of submission of the dissertation

Note that your Promotionsprüfungskommission decides about the acceptance of the dissertation according to the recommendation of the reviewers. Thus we strongly recommend to discuss a cumulative dissertation closely and in detail with your supervisor.

Arrangement

In addition to the formal guidelines on content and structure in §7(5) there are further regulations for a cumulative dissertation in §7(2) Promotionsordnung. The dissertation must have a complete title, an introduction, the single publications and also a coherent text, which in a comprehensive way interpretes, evaluates and discusses the single publications. In addition the Fach-Promotionsausschuss recommends:

- The single publications should be clearly separated and be visible as entities in the dissertation. You should integrate the single publications preferably in same form as they were published. Each single publication should be introduced with a cover page, which includes the complete reference and a single identification within the cumulative dissertation
- A list of the individual publications should be included in the appendix – best in front of the individual publications. The specific contribution of the PhD-student and all co-authors should be described in a short paragraph (see §7(3)). We strongly recommend to synchronise this demarcation of the contributions with all co-authors and to obtain written approval from them.
- Publications in journals and conference proceedings are often very limited with regard to the page numbers. Thus details cannot be explained in a sufficient manner. If a single publication has a textual „Supplementary Material“ this should be specified in the cumulative dissertation. Please use the possibility to write chapters or appendices to include more details like extensive results, methods and their parametrisation or alternatives on the route to the published end result.

Publication

In addition to the rules for the publication of dissertations (see §13 MIN-Promotionsordnung), there has to be turned a special attention to copyrights. The Fach-Promotionsausschuss recommends to aim at a publication of the cumulative dissertation as a coherent document with the included publications. The necessary rights have to be obtained from the journal publisher

or conference organiser. In case that the rights for the publication of an article in the framework of the dissertation are not available the article has to be removed before publication and be replaced in an appropriate form with the complete reference.

7. What rules apply to the choice of reviewers?

The Ph.D. student is allowed to suggest reviewers. Even though supervisors are not allowed to suggest reviewers, the Departmental Doctoral Committee would like them to give a short statement about the reviewers suggested by the doctoral student. Regulations concerning the reviewing process can be found in §9 of the Promotionsordnung. Please note the following suggestions concerning the choice of reviewers:

- One of the supervisors is generally appointed to be a reviewer
- The Departmental Doctoral Committee recommends that *at least one of the reviewers does not have any joint publications with the doctoral student* that have become part of the dissertation
- In case the work receives the grade “summa cum laude” the Ph.D. regulations request another review by an external reviewer. This third reviewer *shouldn't have had any joint projects or publications with the doctoral student or the supervisors during the last five years* (please see §7(5) of the Promotionsordnung). In this case, the Departmental Doctoral Committee would like to obtain *at least two suggestions of scientifically renowned scientists*.

8. What does the disputation process look like?

The Departmental Doctoral Committee recommends the following procedure for the disputation process (for legal provisions please see §11 of the Promotionsordnung):

To start with, everyone is welcomed and the members of the examination board as well as the doctoral student are introduced to the audience. Then, the doctoral student is invited to start his presentation which should last about 30 minutes. The following Q&A session may last from 30-90 minutes total. First, the members of the examination board have the opportunity to ask further questions concerning the presentation or the wider scientific context of the problems discussed in the dissertation. After that, the Q&A session is also open for questions from other members of the university.

After the Q&A session, the examination board consults and evaluates the disputation according to §12(1) and determines the final grade which it then tells the doctoral student (in private). The board usually makes the Ph.D. student aware of his duty to publish the dissertation within one year and that she/he is only allowed to use the PhD title after receiving the certificate.

9. Where can I find all the relevant documents and further information?

General information:

<https://www.min.uni-hamburg.de/en/forschung/promotion/verfahren.html>

Code of best scientific practice:

http://www.uni-hamburg.de/forschung/service/gute-wissenschaftliche-praxis/_satzung-gute-wissenschaftliche-praxis.pdf

Promotionsordnung 2010:

http://www.uni-hamburg.de/campuscenter/studienorganisation/ordnungen-satzungen/PromO_MIN_20101201.pdf

Changes to the Promotionsordnung 2010 from 02.05.2012:

http://www.uni-hamburg.de/campuscenter/studienorganisation/ordnungen-satzungen/PromO_Aenderung_MIN_20120502.pdf and

http://www.uni-hamburg.de/campuscenter/studienorganisation/ordnungen-satzungen/PromO_Aenderung_Teil2_MIN_20120502.pdf

Changes to the Promotionsordnung 2010 from 10.10.2012:

http://www.uni-hamburg.de/campuscenter/studienorganisation/ordnungen-satzungen/PromO_Aenderung_MIN_20121010.pdf

Promotionsordnung 1998:

http://www.uni-hamburg.de/campuscenter/studienorganisation/ordnungen-satzungen/PromO_MIN_Informatik_19981125.pdf

Leaflet of the MIN faculty about the choice of reviewers:

<https://www.min.uni-hamburg.de/forschung/pdf-promotion/merkblatt-einsetzung.pdf>

Partiality guidelines by the DFG:

http://www.dfg.de/formulare/10_201/

Form for the submission of the dissertation:

<http://www.min.uni-hamburg.de/de/forschung/pdf-promotion/formular-einreichung-dissertation.pdf>

10. Who can I contact with my questions about the Ph.D.?

For questions please contact *Annegret Immer at the academic office of the department for Informatics* either during office hours (<https://www.inf.uni-hamburg.de/de/studies/orga/stb.html>) or via email (studienbuero@informatik.uni-hamburg.de). For more far-reaching questions please contact the chairman of the Departmental Doctoral Committee, Prof. Dr. Matthias Rarey. Please write an email to rarey-office@zbh.uni-hamburg.de in order to make an appointment.

