DANUBE PRIVATE UNIVERSITY
Austria

Doctoral Regulation for Obtaining the Academic Degree Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Precision and Personalized Medicine

at the
Danube Private University (DPU)

June 08, 2026

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§ 1 Type, Purpose and Execution of the Doctoral Studies

(1) The Danube Private University (DPU) confers the academic degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the field of Precision and Personalized Medicine (PPM) in recognition for doctoral achievements as defined in § 2.

(2) The doctoral degree certifies a candidate's ability to carry out independent, original, and high-quality research that advances knowledge in their field. It showcases the candidate's expertise in using advanced methodologies, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills to address intricate questions. This includes fulfilling the academic and professional standards outlined in § 2 (2), § 7, and § 9 (2).

(3) The objectives and structure of the doctoral program are detailed in § 2 (3), which, along with any applicable Implementation Rules for the Doctoral Regulations, constitutes an integral part of these regulations. For specific requirements regarding coursework and evaluations (§ 2, § 9 and § 11).

(4) The doctoral studies must primarily be conducted at the DPU. In exceptional cases, the Doctoral Affairs Committee may approve arrangements for conducting the thesis partially or entirely at external institutions, provided that all academic and procedural requirements are met, as detailed in § 4 (3), § 2 (2), § 7, and § 9 (2).

§ 2 Doctoral Achievements

(1) The doctoral achievements comprise a comprehensive framework designed to ensure that candidates acquire interdisciplinary knowledge, demonstrate advanced research capabilities, and contribute meaningfully to their field of study. This framework, totaling **180 ECTS** credits, integrates coursework, original research, and skill-building activities to support the holistic development of PhD students.

1. **Course Program Participation:**

   Candidates must successfully complete the structured course program, which includes core and elective courses as well as workshops and training concepts designed to enhance both theoretical knowledge and practical skills.

   This component equates to **30 ECTS** credits, as specified in § 2 (3), and ensures that candidates acquire interdisciplinary competencies and professional skills relevant to their research.

2. **Doctoral Thesis and Final Examination:**

   Doctoral candidates are required to undertake original research and successfully submit and defend a doctoral thesis, a process that underscores the program's emphasis on independent, high-level scholarship. The thesis process and final examination, collectively contributing **150 ECTS** credits, are designed to evaluate the candidate's ability to produce significant scientific contributions and demonstrate advanced expertise in their field. This comprehensive evaluation includes:

- Candidates present a detailed and innovative proposal by the end of their first semester, which includes a research proposal as well as an interim report on the research activity conducted. The proposal ensures that students receive valuable feedback on their planned research project right from the start and can make any necessary adjustments at an early stage.

- Regular evaluations of research progress are conducted through presentations and reports, ensuring alignment with program goals and providing constructive feedback to address challenges.

- Candidates deliver a seminar lecture during the midterm and again during the final year, presenting their research findings to peers and faculty, as specified in § 2 (4). This allows for valuable feedback – enabling further development after the midterm and thorough preparation for the final dissertation defense.

- The doctoral thesis is evaluated on its scientific contribution, methodological rigor, and adherence to academic standards. Internal and external experts assess the thesis to ensure its quality and impact, as specified in § 9 (2).

- The final oral defense is a critical component, where candidates must articulate their research findings, address questions, and demonstrate expertise in their field, as specified in § 10.

3. **Publication and Dissemination:**

   Candidates are encouraged to publish their research in peer-reviewed journals and present at scientific conferences, as outlined in § 2 (4) and § 7 (6). The quality and impact of these publications are considered in the overall evaluation of doctoral achievements.

4. **Impact Assessment:**

   The significance of the candidate's research in advancing knowledge, solving practical problems, or contributing to Precision and Personalized Medicine is vital aspect of the evaluation.

(2) Of the 30 ECTS credits allocated for coursework, 18 ECTS must be earned through core courses (3 courses, 6 ECTS each, selected from three different disciplines), 8 ECTS through elective courses (2 courses, approximately 4 ECTS each, selected from two different disciplines), and 4 ECTS through workshops (e.g., Teaching Methods Workshop and Supervision Skills Workshop). All course selections must be made in consultation with the research supervisor, and, where applicable, with the co-supervisor. The Doctoral Affairs Committee will regulate the coursework structure and approve the recognition of ECTS credits on a case-by-case basis.

(3) Courses will be held in English. The course program for the PhD in Precision and Personalized Medicine is structured into three core modules. ECTS credits can only be awarded once for each course. Detailed information on workload, types, and descriptions of the modules and courses shall be regulated by the Doctoral Affairs Committee in the Module Manual:

- **Module 1: Core Disciplines**
  - Students must select three core courses (6 ECTS each) from different disciplines to ensure an interdisciplinary foundation.
  - Core courses include options in Precision Medicine, Life Sciences, Engineering, Computer Science, and Interdisciplinary Approaches.

Discipline	Core Course Title	ECTS
Biomedical Sciences	• Human Physiology and Pathophysiology • Molecular and Cellular Biology	6 each
Life Sciences	• Molecular Genomics and Bioinformatics • Systems Biology	6 each
Engineering	• Biomedical Engineering Fundamentals • Nanotechnology in Medicine • Fundamentals of Biosensor Development	6 each
Computer Science	• Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare • Computational Biology • Imaging Biomarker Development	6 each
Interdisciplinary Courses	• Interdisciplinary Approaches to Health Innovation • Ethics and Policy in Biomedicine	6 each

- **Module 2: Specialized Electives**
  - Students must select two elective courses (4 ECTS each) that align with their research focus, in consultation with their supervisor, and, where applicable, with the co-supervisor.
  - Topics include advanced imaging techniques, AI in healthcare, drug delivery, biosensing, and regulatory science.

Discipline	Core Course Title	ECTS
Medical Imaging	• Advanced MRI Techniques • Imaging in Oncology • Medical Imaging for Non-Medics	4 each

AI in Healthcare	• Deep Learning for Healthcare • Explainable AI in Medicine	4 each
Drug Delivery Systems	• Nanotechnology in Drug Delivery	4
Advanced Biosensing	• Electrochemical Biosensors • Optical Biosensors	4 each
Computational Biology	• Genomic Data Science	4
Regulatory Science	• Regulatory Affairs for Medical Products • Translational Medicine	4 each
Health Economics	• Health Economics	4

- **Module 3: Workshops and Training**
  - This module includes mandatory workshops to build essential skills in research and academic development.
  - Workshops include "Teaching Methods" Workshop and "Supervision Skills" Workshop.

Discipline	**Core Course Title**	**ECTS**
Academic Development	• Teaching Methods Workshop	2
Leadership and Mentoring Skills	• Supervision Skills Workshop	2

(4) **Evaluation and Progression Milestones in the PhD program:**

1. **Proposal Examination and Annual Reviews:**

- By the end of the first semester, the PhD candidate must submit a proposal including a research proposal and an interim report (up to 25 A4 pages) that structures as follows:
  - Cover Page:
    - Title: "Research Proposal and interim report for PhD."
    - Research title in English
    - Student's full name
    - Research Advisor's name
    - Co-Advisor's name (if applicable)
  - Abstract
  - Background and Literature Review

- Research Problem and Its Significance
- Research Goals
- Work Plan
- Research Methods
- Preliminary Results
- Bibliography
- Anticipated outcomes
- Brief summary of ongoing research activity

- A Proposal Examination Committee evaluates the proposal and delivers recommendations regarding how to proceed. The Proposal Examination Committee consists of 5 members, as follows:
  - The candidate's main supervisor
  - Two faculty members from DPU
  - Two external experts whose academic degree is equivalent or higher than the main supervisor.

- **Proposal Evaluation:**
  - The Proposal Examination Committee will determine if the proposal meets the academic thresholds required by the program.
  - The committee may approve the proposal or request revisions to ensure it meets DPU's standards for excellence and feasibility.

- **Annual Reviews:**

  After the proposal is accepted, the candidate's progress will be evaluated annually.
  - A meeting will be held between the candidate and the Proposal Examination Committee (or at least four of its members) to review research advancements and discuss any challenges.
  - Feedback and guidance will be provided to ensure the candidate remains on track with their research.

2. **Seminar Lecture, Thesis Submission, and Editing:**

- Each PhD candidate must give a seminar lecture on the topic of their thesis twice during the program – once at the midterm stage and once during the final year of study.
    - The midterm seminar should be scheduled around the midpoint of the doctoral study period, while the final seminar must occur at least two weeks, but no more than one year, prior to submitting the thesis for final evaluation.
    - These seminars provide the candidate with the opportunity to present their research findings to peers and faculty, receive feedback – either for continued development after the midterm or refine their work before final submission.
- After completing the thesis and successfully passing the examination, the PhD candidate will proceed with submitting the final thesis. Adhering to the prescribed thesis structure and submission requirements is essential for ensuring the document meets academic standards and institutional guidelines. This section outlines the structure and formatting of traditional theses as well as the option for a thesis based on cumulative publications, along with submission requirements. PhD students may choose between two thesis formats:
    - **Traditional Monograph Thesis:** A comprehensive, single-document work that presents the full scope of the PhD research. It typically includes the following sections:
        - *Title Page:* Official identification details of the thesis.
        - *Abstract:* 250–300 word summary of objectives, methods, results, and significance.
        - *Acknowledgments:* Optional section for recognizing support and contributions.
        - *Table of Contents and List of Figures/Tables:* Organizational tools for navigation.
        - *Introduction:* Outlines research background, objectives, and significance.
        - *Literature Review:* Critically reviews existing research and identifies gaps.
        - *Methodology:* Details research design, methods, and analysis.
        - *Results:* Presents research findings with visuals where appropriate.
        - *Discussion:* Interprets results in context, addresses implications and limitations.
        - *Conclusions:* Summarizes contributions and suggests future directions.
        - *References:* All cited works, properly formatted.
        - *Appendices:* Supplementary materials such as raw data and technical details.
    - **Cumulative Thesis:** A collection of at least **three published or accepted peer-reviewed articles** where the student is the lead author in at least two cases, one co-authorship is possible. It emphasizes the candidate's contribution to academic publishing and includes:
        - *Title Page, Abstract, Acknowledgments, Table of Contents:* As in the monograph.
        - *Introduction:* Describes the overarching theme and unifies the included articles.
        - *Summary of Articles:* Brief overviews of each article, showing relevance and connection.

- *Discussion and Conclusion:* Synthesizes findings across articles and highlights the collective contribution.
- *References:* Covers all citations from both articles and supporting sections.
- *Appendices:* Optional supplementary materials beyond the published articles.

3. **Final Examination:**

- At the conclusion of the doctoral studies, a Final Examination will be conducted.
- An Examination Committee will evaluate the candidate's dissertation and overall research achievements.
    - The committee consists of five members (the candidate´s main supervisor, two faculty members and two external experts) and will include at least three members holding an academic degree equivalent to or higher than that of the main supervisor. Additionally, at least two members must have served on the original Proposal Examination Committee to ensure continuity and objectivity.
    - The committee will assess the dissertation's contribution to the field of Precision and Personalized Medicine, its methodological rigor, and its adherence to academic standards.
    - Upon successful completion, the examination records are forwarded to the Committee for Scientific and Ethical Questions (RCSEQ) for a statement. The process follows the guidelines outlined by the RCSEQ.

(5) **Grading Scale for Examination Evaluation:**

Each examination is evaluated by the examiners in accordance with the following grading scale:

- **Sehr gut (1):** Very good – Outstanding performance with only minor errors.
- **Gut (2):** Good – Above-average performance, but with some errors.
- **Befriedigend (3):** Satisfactory – Generally sound work, though with notable errors.
- **Genügend (4):** Sufficient – Performance meets the minimum criteria.
- **Nicht genügend (5):** Fail – Performance does not meet the minimum criteria.

A grade of **Genügend (4)** or higher is required to pass the course examination and a grade of **Genügend (4)** or higher is required to pass the thesis examination. This scale ensures a consistent and objective evaluation of academic achievements.

(6) **Re-Examination and Retake Policy:**

1. **Course Retake Policy**

   Candidates who do not pass a course examination are permitted one retake:

   - The retake must be scheduled within three to six months and no later than the end of the fourth semester.

   - The Doctoral Affairs Committee will set a new examination date in consultation with the candidate's supervisor and, where applicable, with the co-supervisor.

2. **Thesis Re-Examination Policy:**

   If a PhD candidate does not pass the research proposal examination or the final thesis defense, DPU allows a re-examination opportunity:

   - The candidate is permitted one additional attempt to address deficiencies identified by the Examination Committee.

   - After making the required revisions, the candidate must resubmit the work for review to ensure it meets the academic standards of the program.

3. **Consequences of Failure:**

   - For courses, failure to pass the retake may impact the candidate‘s progression in the doctoral program, as course completion is a mandatory component.

   - For the thesis, failure to pass the re-examination disqualifies the candidate from continuing with the same doctoral thesis topic. However, a repetition under § 12 regulations remain possible.

(7) **Publication Requirement:**

Candidates must demonstrate that results or partial results from their research (whether submitted as a monograph or as part of a cumulative thesis) have been:

- Published in a subject-specific scientific publication or at least accepted for publication, as outlined in § 2 (1), § 2 (7), § 7 (6) and § 13,

- For a monograph, there is no requirement for peer-reviewed publications to be included in or form part of the thesis. “Sehr gut”: at least one chapter is published or accepted in a high-impact peer-reviewed journal.

- Three or more such articles, with the candidate as first or lead author in at least two cases, one co-authorship is possible, qualify the submission as a cumulative thesis. „First author" refers to the author listed first in the publication's author byline. "Lead author" refers to the author who has taken primary intellectual, organizational, and/or writing responsibility for the work. First and Lead Author both qualify as „Main Author".

As a general rule, publications shall appear in SCIE-ranked (Science Citation Index Expanded) journals in the relevant subject area to ensure academic quality and impact. In exceptional cases, where a publication appears in a widely recognized top-tier, flagship journals (e.g., Nature, Science, Cell, etc.), the Doctoral Affairs Committee may consider and approve the publication based on its academic merit. In such cases, the standard requirement of two publications may be reduced, subject to the Committee's academic evaluation and justification of the publication's exceptional standing and contribution.

(8) **Formal and Non-Formal Education, Informal Learning:**

- Formal or non-formal periods of study, coursework and examinations completed in a degree programme at other recognized higher education institutions in Austria shall be credited, unless significant differences in knowledge and skills have been identified.

- Formal or non-formal periods of study, coursework and examinations completed at recognized foreign universities shall be recognized unless significant differences in knowledge and skills have been identified. The Rectorate is responsible for recognition. If the grading system of the foreign university does not correspond to the set criteria, the grade of the recognized examination achievement is determined according to a university-wide grade conversion key.

- Non-formal, institutional examinations completed outside of higher education institutions shall be recognized in accordance with para. 2, provided that the requirements set out in para. 2 are met.

- Informal competencies can be credited instead of attendance requirements, provided that the respective examination of the module in question has been passed. The existence of the informal competence must be justified in advance and recognized by the head of degree programme on a case-by-case basis.

§ 3 Regular Period of Study and Leave of Absence

(1) The regular period of study for the doctoral study program is six semesters, equivalent to three years, with a total workload of 180 ECTS credits, as outlined in § 2 (1). The academic year is divided into summer and winter semesters.

(2) Extensions beyond the regular study period of six semesters may be considered upon formal and justified request by the student.

- Such requests are evaluated on a case-by-case basis by the Doctoral Affairs Committee.
- Extensions aim to accommodate students facing significant challenges, while ensuring academic standards are upheld.

(3) Upon request, PhD students may be permitted to take a leave of absence for a maximum period of two semesters during their studies for justified reasons.

- Justified reasons may include medical conditions, family emergencies, or unforeseen personal circumstances.
- During the leave of absence, students are not entitled to attend courses or examinations, nor can they claim supervision or assistance for their theses.

§ 4 Admission Requirements and Annulment of Admission

(1) **Admission Requirements:**

Application Review and Acceptance & Approval of Supervisors

- DPU will carefully review each applicant's qualifications, prior accomplishments, and research potential.
- Only candidates who meet the program's rigorous academic standards will be admitted.
- Each admitted student must have an approved supervisor whose expertise aligns with the proposed research.
- The DPU will ensure that supervisors are balanced in their workload, preventing overloads and ensuring equitable mentorship across the program.
- The PhD student must ensure that an appropriate supervisor is identified, whose research interests align with the proposed research. This alignment will be verified by DPU during the application review.

To be eligible for admission to the PhD program, candidates must meet the following criteria:

1. **Academic Qualifications:**
   - The applicant must have reached NQR level 7 in order to be enrolled in the degree program.
   - Hold a Master's degree or equivalent from an accredited institution with a minimum GPA of 2.7 (> 80%) (or an equivalent grade).

- For applicants with non-research Master's degree, additional prerequisites may apply, such as exploratory research or supplementary coursework.
- Relevant disciplines include, but are not limited to:
    - Biomedical Sciences
    - Medical Sciences
    - Engineering and Technology
    - Data Sciences and Artificial Intelligence
    - Life Sciences
    - Public Health and Epidemiology
    - Translational Sciences and Clinical Applications
    - Diploma degree or Master´s degree (Dr. med. dent., Dr. med. univ.) in Medicine or Dentistry
- Applicants with non-research Master's degrees may need to complete additional prerequisites, such as exploratory research or supplementary coursework, to qualify. The Doctoral Affairs Committee decides on the necessity, structure and fullfilment of additional requirements.

2. **Language Proficiency:**

   Candidate should demonstrate proficiency in English through:

   - TOEFL (score > 80) or IELTS scores (score > 6.5) for non-native English speakers.
   - Exemptions apply for candidates with prior degrees conducted in English.

3. **Supervisor Confirmation: Application Documentation:**

   Candidates are required to provide the following documentation as part of their application:

   - Transcripts and diplomas from all previous academic institutions.
   - Two academic recommendation letters, including one from the Master's thesis advisor.
   - A research intent letter detailing the proposed area of study and objectives.
   - GRE scores.

4. **Additional Program-Specific Requirements:**

   Certain departments or programs may impose additional requirements on graduates of non-research master´s programs, such as specific preparatory coursework (academic writing and statistics totaling 4 ECTS), or pre-assessment tasks (the results of exploratory research conducted by the applicant must be included in the research letter), as determined by the Doctoral Affairs Committee.

(2) **Termination of Admission:**

Admission to the PhD program may be terminated under the following circumstances:

- If the candidate fails any course examination after exhausting the final retake or re- examination opportunity.
- If the doctoral thesis is finally rejected or the defense of the doctoral thesis is failed despite repetition.
- If the doctoral candidate does not maintain a valid doctoral thesis agreement for a period exceeding 12 months.
- If the doctoral candidate voluntarily exmatriculates from the university.
- If the doctoral candidate fails to pay the required tuition fees within the designated deadlines.
- In cases of severe deceit, plagiarism, falsification of data, or other significant violations of academic integrity or university regulations.

(3) **Appeals Process:**

- Candidates have the right to appeal decisions related to the termination of admission by submitting a formal request to the Doctoral Affairs Committee within 30 days of receiving the termination notice.
- The appeal will be reviewed by a panel, and a final decision will be communicated within 60 days.

§ 5 Doctoral Affairs Committee

(1) **Appointment and Responsibilities:**

The Doctoral Affairs Committee is appointed in accordance with DPU's Constitution and serves as the responsible collegiate body for managing the PhD program. It is tasked with ensuring compliance with the provisions of the Doctoral Regulations and the Module Manual. The committee is also responsible for adopting appropriate implementation rules when necessary. Its primary duties include:

- Reviewing and approving admissions to the PhD program.
- The Doctoral Affairs Committee decides on the necessity, structure and fullfilment of additional requirements for applicants with non-research master degrees.
- Overseeing the progress and evaluation of doctoral candidates, including coursework, examinations, and thesis submissions.
- Assigning supervisors and approving the composition of examination committees.
- Monitoring adherence to academic and ethical standards throughout the PhD program.
- Addressing appeals, requests for re-examinations, and disputes related to doctoral procedures.
- Proposing amendments and updates to the Doctoral Regulations and Module Manual as needed.

(2) **Composition:**

The Doctoral Affairs Committee is composed of the following members:

- At least two representative of the DPU's professors.
- At least one representative of scientific / clinical research employees of DPU.
- At least one student representative, ensuring students make up at least 25% of the total members.
- Substitute Members:
    - Each member may have a designated substitute who may attend all meetings.
    - Substitute members only have voting rights in the absence of the primary member.
- Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson:
    - The chairperson and deputy chairperson are elected from among the university professors by a simple majority vote of the committee.

(3) **Term of Office:**

- The Doctoral Affairs Committee is elected for a term not exceeding the Senate's term of office, which is three years.
- Individual members may be re-elected, and their term begins immediately after the election.

(4) **Meetings and Decision-Making:**

- **Meetings:**
  - The chairperson is responsible for inviting all members to meetings in a timely manner.
  - The committee is considered to have a quorum if:
    - At least half of its members are present, including the chairperson or deputy chairperson.
    - At least half of the professor representatives are present.
- **Voting:**
  - Decisions are made by a majority of valid votes cast.
  - Abstentions do not count as votes cast.
  - In the event of a tie, the chairperson's vote is decisive.

(5) **Day-to-Day Operations**

- The chairperson conducts the day-to-day business of the Doctoral Affairs Committee and ensures efficient administration of the committee's responsibilities.

(6) **Oversight and Reporting**

The committee reports its decisions and recommendations to DPU's Senate and other relevant governing bodies, ensuring transparency and alignment with institutional goals.

§ 6 Acceptance as a Doctoral Candidate

Acceptance as a PhD candidate is overseen by the Doctoral Affairs Committee. The committee is tasked with ensuring compliance with the Doctoral Regulations and the Module Manual, evaluating applications, and maintaining the academic integrity of the doctoral program. It is responsible for reviewing eligibility, approving supervisors, and committing to the oversight and support of the doctoral procedure upon acceptance.

(1) **Application for Acceptance:**

Students seeking to become PhD candidates must submit a formal request for acceptance to the Doctoral Affairs Committee prior to preparing their doctoral thesis. The request must include:

- Evidence that the admission criteria outlined in § 4 are fulfilled.

- A proposed working title for the doctoral thesis.
- The nomination of a supervisor approved by the Doctoral Affairs Committee for the designated research area.
- A signed agreement between the doctoral candidate and the supervisor and, where applicable, co-supervisor.
- A statement affirming that the candidate has not submitted a request for acceptance or admission to a doctoral procedure at another institution.

The Doctoral Affairs Committee ensures that all required documents meet the program's standards before proceeding with the evaluation.

(2) **Termination of the Doctoral Thesis Agreement:**

If the doctoral thesis agreement is terminated (§ 4 (2)) by mutual agreement or unilaterally by the supervisor or the doctoral candidate, the following applies:

- The doctoral candidate must submit a new request for acceptance within 12 months of the termination.
- The Doctoral Affairs Committee evaluates the new request and facilitates the continuation of the doctoral process.

(3) **Decision on Acceptance:**

The Doctoral Affairs Committee decides on the acceptance or rejection of the doctoral candidate:

- The decision is communicated in written form.
- In the case of rejection, the committee provides a clear written explanation for the decision.
- Upon acceptance, the committee confirms its responsibility for conducting the doctoral procedure and ensures the candidate receives full academic support.

(4) **Validity and Extensions:**

- The acceptance as a doctoral candidate is valid for a period of four years, during which the Doctoral Affairs Committee oversees the doctoral procedure.
- Extensions may be granted in justified cases, such as delays due to unforeseen circumstances or approved leave of absence, to ensure candidates can complete their research without compromising academic integrity.

(5) **Conducting the Doctoral Thesis:**

- The doctoral thesis is expected to be conducted at DPU, ensuring access to institutional resources and maintaining academic standards.
- In exceptional cases, the Doctoral Affairs Committee may approve alternative arrangements, such as conducting the thesis partially or entirely at an external institution, provided that all academic and procedural requirements are met.

(6) **Change of Supervisor:**

In exceptional cases, the Doctoral Affairs Committee may approve a change of supervisor, such as:

- Academic or professional incompatibilities between the candidate and the supervisor.
- Changes in the scope or direction of the research.
- Unavailability of the assigned supervisor due to unforeseen circumstances.

The committee ensures a smooth transition by appointing a qualified replacement supervisor.

(7) **Commitment to Oversight and Support:**

The Doctoral Affairs Committee is committed to initiating and managing the necessary steps for the expert evaluation of the doctoral thesis, providing academic support, and facilitating a structured and fair doctoral procedure. Its decisions ensure transparency, consistency, and academic rigor throughout the doctoral process.

§ 7 Doctoral Thesis

(1) The doctoral thesis must adhere to established scientific standards, represent an independent work of the doctoral candidate, and contribute meaningfully to progress in research.

(2) With the supervisor‘s agreement, the results of the doctoral thesis may be partially or fully published prior to the doctoral procedure. Such publications must be properly cited in the doctoral thesis, with adequate references to the original sources.

(3) Final papers used as academic achievements in other studies cannot be submitted as a doctoral thesis. However, portions of such papers may be included in the doctoral thesis, provided they are appropriately cited and referenced to the original source.

(4) The doctoral thesis must be written in English and must include summaries in both German and English, regardless of the primary language of the thesis.

(5) The doctoral thesis may be submitted either as a monograph or as a cumulative thesis.

(6) A cumulative doctoral thesis must meet the following requirements:

- A minimum of three subject-specific publications are required, with the doctoral candidate listed as the lead author in at least two cases, one co-authorship is possible. „First author" refers to the author listed first in the publication's author byline. "Lead author" refers to the author who has taken primary intellectual, organizational, and/or writing responsibility for the work. First and Lead Author both qualify as „Main Author".

- Be published by a renowned subject-specific publication organ through a peer-review process or accepted for publication, as specified in § 2 (6).

- Be scientifically related to one another and aligned with the subject area of the doctoral thesis. The relationship must be clearly specified.

- The cumulative thesis must integrate the publications into a written work, as outlined in § 6 (1).

(7) At the latest, upon submission, a cumulative doctoral thesis must be presented to the Senate

Commission for Research Evaluation for assessment of its subject-specific relevance, quality, and coherence.

- The commission must provide a decision within six weeks.

- If no decision is issued within this timeframe, the Doctoral Affairs Committee may proceed with the doctoral process without the commission's input.

(8) Detailed requirements for writing a monograph or a cumulative doctoral thesis shall be specified by the Doctoral Affairs Committee in the Implementation Rules.

§ 8 Initiation of the Doctoral Procedure

(1) After having completed the doctoral thesis, the doctoral candidate shall submit a request to the Doctoral Affairs Committee for the initiation of the doctoral procedure. The Doctoral Affairs Committee shall decide on the initiation of the procedure. Before submission of the doctoral thesis, the doctoral candidate shall take a test to detect potential plagiarism, e.g. by means of DPU's Anti-plagiarism software, and shall attach the result of this test in digital form to the request for initiation of the doctoral procedure.

(2) Furthermore, the candidate needs to prove successful acquisition of the 30 ECTS credits, as outlined in § 2 (1) and § 2 (2).

(3) The Doctoral Affairs Committee shall request a statement from the supervisor of the doctoral thesis. The supervisor proposes the acceptance, rejection or revision of the doctoral thesis.

(4) The initiation,

- shall be rejected if one of the admission criteria set out in § 4 has not been fulfilled;
- may be rejected if the supervisor proposes rejection or revision of the thesis.

§ 9 Assessment of the Doctoral Thesis

(1) **Appointment of Reviewers for the Doctoral Thesis:**

After the initiation of the doctoral procedure, the Doctoral Affairs Committee is responsible for appointing reviewers out of the members of the Examination Committee to evaluate the doctoral thesis. The process is outlined as follows (see also § 2 (4)):

- The Doctoral Affairs Committee shall appoint an Examination Committee consisting of five members to review the Doctoral Thesis: At least two members must have served on the original Proposal Examination Committee. The Doctoral Affairs Committee selects three reviewers from the Examination Committee, each of whom prepares a written report. These three reports form the basis for the Examination Committee's decision.
- Reviewers must hold an academic degree equivalent or higher than that of the main supervisor.
- Reviewers must not be listed as co-authors in any publications submitted as part of a cumulative doctoral thesis and they must not be the supervisor.
- At least two of the three reviewers must be drawn from the original Proposal Examination Committee to maintain continuity and a clear understanding of the research journey. In exceptional cases, deviations from this requirement may be approved by the Doctoral Affairs Committee, particularly in cases of conflicts of interest or unforeseen circumstances.
- The doctoral candidate or their supervisor or co-supervisor, where applicable, may propose reviewers to the Doctoral Affairs Committee for consideration. Yet, the final decision on the appointment of reviewers lies solely with the committee to ensure objectivity and adherence to academic standards.
- All expert opinions must be written independently to preserve the integrity, rigor, and impartiality of the evaluation process.

(2) **Assessment and Evaluation of the Doctoral Thesis**

1. Expert opinions on the doctoral thesis must:

   - Provide a brief description of the aim, importance, and contents of the work.
   - Analyze the structure, content quality, research methods, formal quality, and the candidate's scientific personal contribution.
   - Assess the thesis within the framework of an overall grade.

2. Reviewers must grade the thesis according to § 11 (4) and propose one of the following:

   - Acceptance of the thesis as-is.
   - Revision of the thesis.
   - Rejection of the thesis.

(3) Reviewers are given a period of eight weeks to evaluate the thesis, starting from the date they receive the doctoral thesis.

(4) Following the decision of the Doctoral Affairs Committee, the thesis and expert opinions are made available for inspection at the Student Service for ten workdays.

- Access is granted to university professors, lecturers, members of the Senate of DPU, and members of the responsible Doctoral Affairs Committee.
- During this period, objections regarding the contents or format of the thesis may be submitted in written form to the Doctoral Affairs Committee.
- The committee shall address any objections in detail, including consulting further expert opinions if necessary, and consider them when determining the next steps in the doctoral procedure.

(5) If one of the reviewers proposes to reject the doctoral thesis:

- The doctoral candidate may review the negative expert opinion and propose another reviewer.
- The Doctoral Affairs Committee will appoint this additional reviewer for a new assessment of the thesis.
- All procedures outlined in § 9 (1) to § 9 (4) will apply in this case.

(6) If at least two original reviewers unanimously recommend rejection, or any newly appointed reviewer under § 9 (5) recommends rejection, the thesis is rejected, the doctoral procedure is terminated, and the Doctoral Affairs Committee will notify the candidate in writing.

(7) If at least one reviewer suggests revisions to parts of the thesis:

- The Doctoral Affairs Committee will deliberate, considering all expert opinions.
- The committee may require the doctoral candidate to revise the thesis within four to six months and resubmit it.
- Recommendations for revisions by the reviewers and the committee will be recorded and communicated to the candidate.
- If the candidate fails to resubmit the revised thesis within the designated period, the thesis is rejected, and the doctoral procedure is terminated.
- The candidate is allowed to revise and resubmit the thesis only once.

(8) After the timely resubmission of the revised thesis:

- The thesis is reassessed following the procedures outlined in § 9 (1) to § 9 (7).
- The Doctoral Affairs Committee may appoint new reviewers if necessary.
- The expert opinions on the revised version must specifically address whether the revisions recommended in § 9 (7) have been adequately fulfilled.

A revised thesis can only be rejected if:

- The recommended revisions were not satisfactorily addressed.
- Scientific objections arise against reworded or newly inserted sections added during the revision process, which warrant rejection of the thesis.

§ 10 Examination Committee, Defense of the Doctoral Thesis

(1) The Doctoral Affairs Committee shall appoint an Examination Committee as pointed in § 2 (4) and § 9 (1), unless, otherwise, the doctoral thesis is ejected according to § 9 (7).

(2) Student Service shall coordinate the date of the defense of the doctoral thesis in agreement with the members of the Examination Committee and the doctoral candidate. The defense of the doctoral thesis may take place at the earliest five working days after the expiry of the inspection period (§ 9 (4)).

(3) In the defense, the doctoral candidate presents his/her finished doctoral thesis and answers critical questions posed by the Examination Committee.

(4) The oral defense of the doctoral thesis shall last between one to two hours. There shall be a written record of the defense of the doctoral thesis, which shall be signed by the members of the Examination Committee.

(5) The defense of the doctoral thesis is open to all students and employees of the university. The discussion and the notification of the result of the examination, however, are not open to the public. Upon request by the doctoral candidate or for any other important reason, the Doctoral Affairs Committee may restrict or exclude the public from parts of the examination.

§ 11 Decision on the Doctoral Thesis

(1) The Examination Affairs Committee shall decide after the defense of the doctoral thesis if the candidate has passed the defense.

(2) If the candidate has passed the defense of the doctoral thesis, the Examination Committee shall decide on the overall grade based on the evaluation of the doctoral thesis by the Doctoral Affairs Committee and the candidate's performance during the defense of the doctoral thesis. Thus, the overall grade is based on the results of the written expert opinions and the defense of the doctoral thesis, whereby there is an emphasis on the result of the written part accounting for 70% of the final dissertation grade, while the oral defense shall account for 30%. However, „Sehr gut" as overall grade may only be awarded if all three evaluations unanimously were assessed „Sehr gut" and if one of the two expert opinions was written by an external reviewer.

(3) The determination of the overall grade and its notification by the Examination Committee are not open to the students and employees of the university.

(4) The evaluation of a doctoral thesis and its defense shall be based on the following scale, aligning with corresponding academic performance levels:

- Excellent performance (equivalent to Sehr gut (1) – Outstanding work with only minor errors).
- Very good performance (equivalent to Gut (2) – Above-average work with some errors).
- Good performance (equivalent to Befriedigend (3) – Sound work with notable errors).
- Sufficient performance (equivalent to Genügend (4) – Meets the minimum criteria).
- Insufficient performance (equivalent to Nicht genügend (5) – Does not meet the minimum criteria).

(5) If the doctoral candidate fails the defense of the doctoral thesis, they may retake it once. The Examination Committee will determine the date for the retake, which shall be scheduled no earlier than four weeks after the initial defense. If necessary, a newly composed Examination Committee may be appointed in accordance with § 10 (1). Failure to pass the retake of the defense will result in the rejection of the doctorate, and the doctoral procedure will be considered terminated.

§ 12 Repetition

If the initiation of the doctoral procedure pursuant to § 2 or the doctoral thesis according to § 7 and § 8 and have been rejected or if the defense of the doctoral thesis has not been passed (§ 11 (5)), the doctoral candidate upon presenting a new topic for the doctoral thesis may once submit a request for acceptance as doctoral candidate according to § 6.

§ 13 Publication of the Doctoral Thesis

The doctoral thesis shall be formally published through DPU's institutional repository and deposited at the Austrian National Library, ensuring accessibility for academic and public audiences. In exceptional cases, a request for delaying the publication of the thesis for up to two years may be submitted. Such delays may be granted in cases where patents are under registration, commercially-sensitive know-how are involved, or other circumstances necessitate confidentiality. The request must be approved by the Doctoral Affairs Committee and include a justification outlining the reasons for the delay.

§ 14 Award and Use of the Academic Degree, Award Certificate

(1) After the accomplishment of all doctoral achievements (§ 2), the DPU's Rector shall award the academic degree to the doctoral graduate by means of a certificate (award certificate) within a period of eight weeks. In addition, the doctoral graduate shall be issued a copy of his/her transcript of records and a diploma supplement.

(2) Persons who Individuals who have been conferred an academic degree are entitled to use the degree as specified in the award certificate. The degree may also be used in its abbreviated form, with the option to include a gender-specific suffix.

§ 15 Revocation and Withdrawal of the Admission, Invalidity of the Doctoral Achievements

(1) If prior to the handing over of the certificate it turns out that the doctoral candidate has cheated regarding the admission criteria or that essential admission criteria have been considered fulfilled by mistake, the Examination Committee shall revoke the admission as a doctoral candidate or the admission to the doctoral procedure.

(2) If prior to the handing over of the certificate it turns out that the doctoral candidate has cheated regarding one of the doctoral achievements, the Examination Committee shall declare this doctoral achievement or any doctoral achievement fulfilled so far as invalid or, in severe cases, revoke the admission to the doctoral procedure.

(3) Before a decision is taken, the candidate shall be heard. The reasons for the decision shall be stated in writing.

§ 16 Revocation of the Doctoral Degree

(1) The award of the doctoral degree shall be revoked, and the doctoral certificate shall be reclaimed if it turns out later that the doctoral degree was obtained surreptitiously - by deceit.

(2) The Doctoral Affairs Committee shall be responsible for the revocation of the doctoral degree and the reclaim of the doctoral certificate. The Committee shall decide if and to what extent this procedure may be assigned to the Rector.

(3) Before a decision is taken, the candidate shall be heard. The reasons for the decision shall be stated in writing.

§ 17 Entry into force

(1) These Doctoral Regulations shall enter into force on 24 September 2026.

Krems, 24 September 2026

Danube Private University