

Code of Conduct for Doctorates in Cooperation with Commercial Enterprises



The following principles have been enacted by the executive board of TU Berlin on 27 July 2017.

Technische Universität Berlin considers the dissertation to be the first independent scientific and academic activity for candidates; the process of obtaining a doctorate is seen as the initial independent professional experience for a researcher. We expect each researcher at TU Berlin to actively participate in the public discussion and publication of research designs, and to share the interim and final results of the research process throughout the doctoral period. All data and facts serving as the bases for a thesis must be subject to extensive debate and verifiable.

Successful cooperation between science and industry is generally based on mutual interests and should benefit society as a whole. In the context of the advancement of early stage researchers and the right of TU Berlin to award doctoral degrees, it is hereby noted that any research question put forward that is essentially limited to the interests of a specific employer, and cannot and/or is not allowed to be rendered completely transparent, does not satisfy the criteria of TU Berlin.

Technische Universität Berlin has adopted the following best practices for the preparation and support of the doctoral process in cooperation with commercial enterprises. In line with the definition put forward by the German Association of University Professors and Lecturers of 20 January 2016 and the position of German Technical Universities decreed in June 2017¹, in respect of doctoral degrees that are conferred in cooperation with commercial enterprises (so-called industry-sponsored doctorates), TU Berlin recognizes scientific and research activities performed by employees of a company in the context of specially arranged "doctoral programs" and under the supervision of a university lecturer of TU Berlin. To date, doctorates obtained in cooperation with companies have typically involved dissertation topics that have been specified by the companies themselves.²

A distinctive cooperation and supervisory culture that is based on clearly-defined underlying principles is an essential prerequisite in order to obtain high-quality dissertations in the context of cooperation with commercial enterprises. This approach also serves to ensure mutual certainty of action.

1. Choice of topic

The choice of a concrete research topic by the doctoral candidate is the first prerequisite in the initiation of concrete academic and research activities. Any research topic defined in a contract with the employer must allow sufficient latitude so as to facilitate independent scientific research work. Any dissertation topic that is defined primarily by the industrial partner is deemed unacceptable.

2. Supervisory responsibilities

The formal framework conditions pertaining to academic supervisors (in this context only) are to be clarified in a meeting with the supervisor. The compiling of a PhD agreement is recommended. As regards the topic of

¹ See <http://www.hochschulverband.de/cms1/fileadmin/redaktion/download/pdf/resolutionen/Industriepromotion.pdf> and https://www.tu9.de/media/docs/tu9/Positionspapier_Promotionen%20mit%20der%20Industrie_06.2017.pdf

² By analogy, this also pertains to research facilities external to the university, if the delegation of topics is handled in a similar manner.

the doctoral thesis, supervisory services should include

1. the research desideratum (scientific and academic issues)
2. the subject-specific methods and/or research design, and
3. the research literature and sources.

The doctoral candidate are informed by the appropriate person or entity, e.g. the supervisor or the TU-DOC Office for doctoral and postdoctoral services, in a timely manner as regards any legal protection options that may be required his/her research findings such as patent registrations or publications in journals. External doctoral candidates are to be directly informed of any possible conflicts that might arise from the secrecy agreement between them and their employers in the context of their specific doctorate requirements.

An academically qualified contact person within the company should be named for this purpose.

3. Conflict of interest prevention

Academic supervisors are not allowed to provide advisory services to partners in industry and commerce if they have any business relationship whatsoever with such partners; any potential conflict of interest must be disclosed.

4. Integration into the academic environment of TU Berlin

The opportunity to exchange ideas in the context of scientific and academic events is a prerequisite to obtaining a doctorate. In particular, candidates should be able to actively participate in colloquia and subject-related continuing education events during working hours. In accordance with customary publication rules (e.g. authorship regulations), no restrictions should be put on doctoral candidates in their presentation of interim results and research findings.

5. Participation in conferences and conventions

Participation in conferences and conventions, as well as events arranged by cooperation partners in the specific subject area are integral components of academic work and research activities. Participation in such events should be encouraged and facilitated. The authoring of related publications should be fostered.

6. Dissertation publication

The publication of a dissertation as required in the context of the doctoral procedure must be completed within a 12-month period after disputation, see § 9 (1) of the doctoral regulations. In particular, the supervisor and contact person or responsible person in the doctoral program within the company are to be informed that the deadline cannot be extended due to any content-related protection-worthy interests.

7. Final provision

This Code of Conduct form is to be communicated to the companies by the university lecturers and must be countersigned by the companies. A consent of supervision will be provided only after all those involved have signed the Code form. The signed code of conduct must be enclosed in the application as Doctoral Candidate, in accordance with § 4 of the doctoral regulations.

Read and approved (date)

Doctoral candidate

Supervisor (responsible person)

Advisor/TU-Berlin