English reading version of the Rules and Regulations governing the Doctoral Program in Biodiversity, Evolution & Ecology at Dahlem Research School of Freie Universität Berlin

Preamble

By virtue of section 14 no. 1 and 4 of the Partial Basic Regulations (Teilgrundordnung) dated October 27, 1998 (FU Mitteilungen No. 24/1998) the Department Council of the Department of Biology, Chemistry, and Pharmacy issued the following rules and regulations for the doctoral program **Biodiversity, Evolution & Ecology** at Dahlem Research School of Freie Universität Berlin in its meeting held on July 13, 2016.*)

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*) These rules and regulations were confirmed by the competent senate office in charge of universities on August 17, 2016.
**) Please find these appendices in the official German Version.

Section 1
Area of Validity, Competent Authorities

(1) These Rules and Regulations for admission cover prerequisites, application, and selection procedures, as well as the content, structure, goals, organization, and performance requirements for the doctoral program **Biodiversity, Evolution & Ecology** at Dahlem Research School (DRS) of Freie Universität Berlin.

Section 2
Objectives and Components of the Doctoral Program

(1) The doctoral program consists of academic research, with special emphasis on writing a dissertation, and academic coursework with content as defined in section 9, paragraph 1 and sections 10 through 12, and the elements of the supervisory program.

(2) The objective of the doctoral program is to promote excellence in academic research by providing outstanding doctoral education. Both the academic program and the course requirements pursuant to section 9, paragraph 1 and sections 10 through 12 as well as participation in the offered supervisory program are designed to achieve this objective. In addition to acquiring academic skills, the doctoral program shall also aim to impart key general qualifications, especially in the fields of knowledge transfer, research management, and foreign language skills. The doctoral program is designed to prepare doctoral candidates in particular for junior positions at universities, research institutes, and other academic private and public institutions and civil society that require academic qualification.

Section 3
Application, Selection, and Admission Procedures

(1) The application deadline is February 1 of each year for the following summer semester and August 1 of each year for the following winter semester. As a rule, studies may be taken up on October 1 or April 1, respectively. In certain exceptional cases, applications may be considered at another time, if it is deemed possible and reasonable to commence studies at that time and provided that two university professors involved in the doctoral program give their approval.

(2) The department council of the Department of Biology, Chemistry, and Pharmacy shall name a selection commission. Its members, along with a substitute for each member, shall be appointed by the department's Dean on behalf of the executive board of the University. The commission shall consist of the following members:

- The Representative of the doctoral program as the committee chair
- Three university professors, who are involved in the doctoral program; and
- One postdoctoral researcher, who is involved in the doctoral studies program, all as members with voting privileges, as well as

- One doctoral candidate of the doctoral program in an advisory capacity.

The members with voting privileges shall be nominated for two years; the doctoral candidates shall be nominated for one year.

(3) The admission requirements are as follows:

a) A written declaration by the Doctoral Degree committee (Promotionsausschuss) stating that unlimited and unconditional admission for doctoral studies is possible,

b) Potential for excellent academic performance and development;

c) Proficiency in English equal to a B 2 level as defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) or proof of equivalent proficiency in English. Said proof may be provided during the selection interviews pursuant to section 4. The Selection Commission shall decide on equivalency on a case-by-case basis.

d) A short description of the planned dissertation project.

e) If applicable, attendance at a selection interview according to section 4.

(4) For application to the doctoral program, candidates shall submit a written application including the certificates and documents as defined in paragraph 3, a) through d) to the chairperson of the Selection Commission by the application deadline defined in paragraph 1.

(5) The Selection Commission shall make a decision on the applicant's acceptance to the doctoral program based on the written application documents and, as the case may be, on the selection interview. Applicants may be permitted by the Selection Commission to submit missing certificates or documents at a specified later date. In case of doubt, the Commission may request applicants to supply additional information in written or oral form. The gender equality officer of the Department of Biology, Chemistry, and Pharmacy will be invited to participate in the selection process. The selected applicants will be accepted for doctoral studies at the DRS.

(6) If, after completion of the selection procedure, there are more suitable applicants than vacant places, the Selection Commission shall draw up a ranking list of applicants. When making the ranking list, the following requirements shall be considered:

a) grades scored in previous academic degrees and other achievements;

b) quality of the proposed dissertation project;

c) the applicant's previous professional and practical experience relevant to the doctoral program;

d) international experience.

If there are several applicants of equal ranking, the successful applicant shall be drawn by lot.

(7) Admitted applicants will receive an official letter with a deadline for them to accept the offer of a place in the doctoral program in written form and a deadline for enrollment. Failure to meet the deadlines shall result in the position being offered to another applicant according to the ranking following point 6. Admitted applicants have to register in the departmental Doctoral Degree office of the Department of Biology, Chemistry, and Pharmacy. Rejected applicants will receive a written notice stating reasons for the decision.

(8) In cases of expiration of admission to doctoral studies at the department as stipulated by the Bylaws on Academic Matters, the admission to the doctoral program “Biodiversity, Evolution & Ecology" shall also expire.

Section 4
Selection Interviews and Other Selection Tools

(1) The Selection Commission can invite applicants to participate in admission interviews, especially for equally ranked applicants. The interview shall be carried out by the future Supervisor.

(2) The invitation to an interview should be sent out at least ten working days prior to the admissions interview. The deadline shall be suitably extended for invitations to international applicants.

(3) The selection interview shall consist of a presentation in English of approximately 20 to 30 minutes, followed by a discussion.

(4) A written record of the admissions interview shall be prepared containing the substantial reasons behind the assessment of the applicant.

Section 5
Structure of the Doctoral Program, Standard Period of Study, Languages of Instruction

(1) The doctoral program at DRS contains project-related and transdisciplinary academic elements (section 9) as well as general courses on knowledge transfer (section 10), research management (section 11), and foreign language courses (section 12).

(2) The standard period of study is six semesters.

(3) The languages of instruction in the doctoral program Biodiversity, Evolution & Ecology are English and German. It is possible to fulfill all the requirements in English.

Section 6
Organization of the Doctoral Studies and Responsibilities

(1) The department council of the Department of Biology, Chemistry, and Pharmacy appoints a Representative, who is responsible for conducting the doctoral program as well as a Deputy for the Representative for a term of two years.

(2) The Representative conducts the day-to-day business of the doctoral program. In particular, the Representative is responsible for the scientific coordination. The Representative reports to the Dahlem Research School (DRS) regarding basic information about the program development within the previous year as a background for the DRS performance report.

(3) The Representative ensures that individual doctoral candidates each have a supervisory team, which consists of three people. Included among the members of the supervisory team shall be the Supervisor of the dissertation project and at least one other full professor. At least one member of the supervisory team, however, must be involved in the doctoral program. External supervisors may also be included.

(4) The Representative makes sure, that an Ombudsperson is installed as a contact person for doctoral candidates in conflict situations. The Representative of the doctoral program names the Ombudsperson.

(5) The supervisory team and the doctoral candidate together define the type and scope of the individual curriculum based on the measures stipulated in sections 7 to 12.

(6) Details of the supervision relationship are defined in the supervision agreement (see appendix 4), recording the duties and obligations of the doctoral candidate and the supervisory team. The signed agreement is kept in the doctoral candidate's file.

(7) The supervision agreement may be changed if necessary, e.g., for long-term illness or special situations like the birth of a child and/ or childcare. For the new agreement, the doctoral candidate, the supervisory team, and the Representative of the doctoral program should find a consensus.

Section 7
Workload

(1) The level of achievement for doctoral candidates to have successfully fulfilled the academic and supervisory requirements of the doctoral studies program in Biodiversity, Evolution & Ecology consists of accumulating thirty credit points (Leistungspunkte/LP) in total. 1 credit point

comprises 25 to 30 hours according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). An example of the curriculum is given in appendix 1.

(2) At most, 2 of the 30 credit points within 3 years may be earned through language courses as defined in section 12.

(3) For the course categories knowledge transfer, science management, and key skills, a total of 9 credit points as a maximum of the 30 credit points in the 3 years may be accepted for credit. Doctoral candidates are free to participate in further courses without being given additional credit.

Section 8
Scientific Research Project and Position in International Research Projects

(1) The scientific research work in accordance with section 2 (1) shall serve as substantiation of the ability to carry out research independently.

(2) As a rule, the content of the planned doctoral research work shall be based on the research topics of the doctoral candidate's supervisors and instructors.

(3) Research residencies at appropriate national and international research institutions are recommended as part of the scientific research work. Their location, frequency, and duration shall be determined in each case by the research milestones actually achieved. Achievement points collected abroad may be accepted for the curriculum of the doctoral program.

Section 9
Project-related Doctoral Studies, Type of Instruction, and Learning Courses

(1) The following instructional and learning modes are intended as part of the project-related doctoral studies:

(a) Interdisciplinary graduate seminars and colloquia/ talk series

One or several university professors are responsible for one event, aiming to teach the latest research results, with particular focus on interdisciplinary aspects. The graduate seminars are listed in the course catalog of Freie Universität Berlin. The Dahlem Center of Plant Sciences Colloqium, and the Ecology & Evolution colloquium are particularly suitable.

These events held mostly by scientists from outside Freie Universität shall enable doctoral researchers to bridge between their own project and other systems, approaches, and organismic groups in biodiversity research, ecology, and evolution. Additionally, doctoral candidates are encouraged to take part in the yearly retreat of the graduate program to foster interdisciplinary exchange. Doctoral candidates are allowed

to visit external interdisciplinary events such as summer schools to collect credit points. On average, 5-8 credit points should be earned in this category.

(b) Advanced project related courses

Attendance at such courses shall enable the doctoral candidates to acquire the scientific skills required for successful completion of their dissertation projects. Participation should be based on specific needs and will be defined as stated in section 6 (5). Examples are graduate seminars, lab courses, and workshops at the Dahlem Center for Plant Sciences, at the Berlin-Brandenburg Institute of Advanced Biodiversity Research, or others comprising discussion of research literature or dealing with methods of biodiversity research in different disciplines of ecology and evolution, as well as summer schools and other advanced courses. Within this section 6 to 10 credit points should be earned in three years.

(c) Presentation of the candidate's research project

Seminar attendance shall enable the doctoral candidate to present and discuss his or her own research projects and other scientific issues in English. To achieve this, doctoral candidates should give talks with following discussion in suitable seminars. These seminars are held by the respective research groups in biodiversity, ecology, and evolution science (or by cooperation among several groups). Doctoral candidates shall attend scientific conferences to present their research regularly and learn the necessary presentation and communication strategies. If possible, doctoral candidates should publish parts of their dissertation in peer-reviewed journals.

(d) Good scientific practice

Courses about good scientific practice ought to inform doctoral candidates about scientific misconduct and encourage doctoral candidates to follow the rules of good scientific practice. Participation in at least one course about good scientific practice is obligatory. Doctoral candidates may attend DRS courses.

(2) Doctoral candidates are expected to attend regularly and participate actively in the scheduled courses and supervision of the graduate program appropriate to Section 10 to 12, as stated in Appendix 1.

(3) As long as their requirements and teaching methods are equivalent to the courses in the Biodiversity, Evolution & Ecology program, courses offered by the following institutions may be included in the doctoral program: other graduate schools, including graduate schools abroad, research training groups of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Foundation), courses offered in the framework of Max Planck Research Schools, Collaborative Research Centers, or other collaborative research initiatives and doctoral programs offered by other universities or independent institutions. The Representative shall decide on equivalency on a case-by-case basis.

Section 10
Acquisition of Expertise in Knowledge Transfer

The supervisory teams should give the doctoral candidates an opportunity to present their research in the context of other courses. In addition, doctoral candidates may be involved in the supervision of bachelor's and master's theses, to the degree that they are related to the doctoral student's own research. The supervisory team shall support the doctoral candidates to acquire didactic skills. Doctoral candidates may attend suitable DRS courses.

Section 11
Acquisition of Expertise in Research Management

Doctoral candidates shall gain experience in planning and conducting research projects and acquiring third-party funding as well as develop general skills in research management, especially in organizing and coordinating academic activities and projects.

Section 12
Acquisition of Expertise in Relevant Foreign Languages

During their doctoral studies, doctoral candidates who are not native English speakers have to prove or acquire language skills sufficient to communicate and write effectively in scientific English.

Section 13
Reporting Requirements and Completion/ Termination of the Doctoral Program

(1) Doctoral candidates have to report to their supervisory team at regular intervals regarding the progress and status of their dissertation. Details concerning form, deadlines, and the length of these reports are defined in the supervision agreement in section 6, (6) and appendix 4. A meeting between the doctoral candidate and all members of the supervisory team should take place at least once a year. The doctoral candidate will keep a written record of this meeting.

(2) The doctoral candidates shall submit a written report annually, three to five pages in length, on the progress of their dissertation project and on the courses, symposia, and workshops they attended. The DRS template may be used for this report. All the reports will be collected in the doctoral candidate's file.

(3) Based on this annual report, the supervisory team shall evaluate the doctoral candidate's progress. The supervisory team shall assess whether the doctoral candidate is making adequate progress with respect to participation in the doctoral program and in his or her dissertation project. In particular, they must certify that the doctoral candidate meets the

requirements stipulated in the rules and regulations of the program. The requirements involve completing the dissertation on time, fulfilling the requirements of the study program as defined in section 9, (1) and sections 10 through 12, as well participation in the supervisory program. If the results of the evaluation are negative, the Representative of the doctoral program shall be notified accordingly in written form.

(4) Based on the vote of the supervisory team, the Representative of the doctoral program shall make a decision as to whether the doctoral candidate can remain in the doctoral program.

(5) If all requirements mentioned in point 3 are fulfilled, graduation certificates and transcripts of records about the successful completion of the doctoral studies at the DRS will be issued in accordance with appendices 2 and 3.

Section 14
Effective Date

These rules and regulations shall take effect one day after being published in the FU Mitteilungen (official register of Freie Universität Berlin).

Appendix 1 of the Rules and Regulations governing the Doctoral Studies Program in Biodiversity, Evolution & Ecology: Sample Curriculum. The listed courses are examples.

Modules/Requirements	**Credit points**	**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 3**
Scientific Training	**19-24**			
Transdisciplinary courses ▪ Workshops and lectures, as well at partner institutions of BBIB*, DCPS and BeGenDiv ▪ Colloquia/ Seminars (Presentations by guest researchers); colloquia at partner insitutions of BBIB; (e.g.: DCPS colloquium, Ecology & Evolution colloquium (organized by Prof. Rolff et al.) ▪ Annual Retreat "Biodiversity, Evolution & Ecology" ▪ Interdisciplinary summer schools	**5-8**	**b**	**b**	**d**
Advanced courses ▪ Seminars, DCPS and BBIB seminars too, e.g.: 23813 Research Seminar: Plant & Soil Ecology; 23801 Current Topics of Plant - Insect Interactions; 23802 Functional biodiversity: Progress and literature seminar; 23814 PhD-Seminar: Current problems in molecular ecology, etc. ▪ Biodiversity lectures and workshops, e.g. within BeGenDiv about molecular diversity and biodiversity informatics ▪ Lab courses (molecular ecology/ evolution et al.) ▪ Statistic/ informatics courses (e.g. „R"; bioinformatics) ▪ Summer schools (e.g. International Summer School on Stable Isotopes in Animal Ecology (IZW))	**6-10**	**b**	**b**	**d**
Presentation of candidate's own research: ▪ Conference contributions (talks and posters at conferences lasting several days, preferably international conferences, e.g. annual meeting of the Ecological Society of Germany, Austria and Switzerland ▪ Invited talks not at the home institute, e.g. in the framework of colloquia ▪ Authorship of a publication at a peer reviewed journal or book	**2-6**	**b**	**b**	**d**
Additional Training	**max. 9**			
Knowledge transfer ▪ Teaching cooperation in courses ▪ Co-supervision of master's- or bachelor's theses	**2**	**d**	**d**	**d**
Research management ▪ Involvement in a third-party funding proposal ▪ Involvement in the organization of scientific events (e.g. scientific workshops in the framework of BBIB; Annual Retreat "Biodiversity, Evolution & Ecology") ▪ Membership in the selection commission of the graduate program	**2**	**d**	**d**	**d**
Key Qualifications (e) ▪ Course good scientific practice obligatory ▪ Courses about transferable skills like scientific writing, presentation, public relations, etc. (e.g. DRS courses)	**1-5**	**b**	**b**	**d**

Language training **German** For non-native speakers **Scientific English** For non-native speakers and doctoral candidates with non-adequate language skills in English	**max. 2**	**c**	**d**	**d**
Scientific research project, especially work on the dissertation	**150**	**a**	**a**	**a**
Total	**180**	**-**	**-**	**-**

a = obligatory; b = obligatory, point in time and extent in agreement with the supervisory team; c = obligatory if necessary; d = optional participation

The current partner institutions of the Berlin-Brandenburg Institute of Advanced Biodiversity Research (BBIB) are listed here: http://www.bbib.org/partners.html

DCPS – Dahlem Center of Plant Sciences; BeGenDiv – Berlin Center for Genomics in Biodiversity Research (www.begendiv.de); IZW – Leibniz Institute for Zoo- and Wildlife Research

For Appendix 2 (certificate template), appendix 3 (template for transcripts of records), and appendix 4 (supervision agreement), please consult the German version of the rules and regulations, as these documents are already in English in the original German version of the rules and regulations. The supervision agreement is available as writable pdf on the program website.