

Regulations for the PhD in Art Practice

Hochschule für bildende Künste Hamburg

April 25, 2024

The Executive Committee of the Hochschule für bildende Künste Hamburg has approved the following regulations for the PhD in Art Practice, as decided by the University Senate on 25 April 2024, in accordance with § 108, paragraph 1, sentence 3 of the Hamburgisches Hochschulgesetz (Hamburg Higher Education Act).

Preamble

The Hochschule für bildende Künste Hamburg (HFBK Hamburg) supervises PhDs in Art Practice, which contribute to artistic practice and research in the arts, their methods, contexts, and tools from various perspectives.

This includes artistic works and their engagement with historical, societal, media, and cultural processes that influence or are influenced by artistic discourses, as well as artistic research on topics where the arts reflect on and articulate their self-conception, such as in art theory and philosophy.

The HFBK Hamburg thus enables and promotes practice-based artistic PhDs that apply artistic research approaches. The focus is on advancing and strengthening the production of aesthetic knowledge in and through the arts. A central part of the program is interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research within and through processes of artistic practice. Research is fundamentally understood as open-ended within the context of comprehensive knowledge production. The methods of artistic knowledge production and reflection on them play a central role. They form the necessary and comprehensible basis for epistemic investigations and analyses aimed at developing a methodological toolkit and a reflective practice of work and research. The emphasis is on the independent and critical development of knowledge in a specific field of the arts, encompassing both process and outcome, practice and theory. The goal is also to expand the dialogue of the respective field with broader society.

The PhD program in Art Practice can be completed in various artistic specializations at the HFBK: sculpture, design, film, painting/drawing, stage design, time-based media, and graphics/photography. The applied research topics and methods should be related to the contemporary and historical practices and theories of these specializations.

The interdisciplinary program qualifies graduates to produce independent artistic research that meets international standards, as well as to take on coordinating and leadership roles in teaching and the art world. The curriculum is in German and English.

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§ 1

Doctoral Degree and Content of the Dissertation

- (1) The HFBK Hamburg awards the academic degree of PhD in Art Practice based on the successful completion of the doctoral program.
- (2) The doctoral program at the HFBK Hamburg demonstrates the ability to conduct deep independent artistic research beyond successful completion of the doctorate. This is demonstrated by:
 1. Completed courses according to § 7 paragraph 3 totaling 11 weekly hours per semester
 2. An artistic work in the form of artworks or groups of works and their public presentation at the HFBK Hamburg during the Graduate Show
 3. A written description of the candidate's own work, critical reflection on the methods used, and contextualization of the artistic practice
 4. A concept for documenting the work in a media-specific archivable form
 5. A public disputation at the university, where the dissertation project and its artistic significance as a contribution to research are explained, and the ability to critically reflect on the artistic practice is demonstrated
- (3) Artistic works according to paragraph 2 no. 2, the written, reflective part of the dissertation according to paragraph 2 no. 3, and the concept for documentation according to paragraph 2 no. 4 can also be created collaboratively. This requires the approval of the Doctoral Committee, which also decides on the justified form of proof of individual contributions in each dissertation, which must each make a verifiably independent contribution to the artistic work.

§ 2

General Provisions for the Doctoral Procedure

- (1) The doctoral procedure is conducted in the following order:
 1. Admission and acceptance as a doctoral candidate according to §§ 5 and 6
 2. Initiation of the doctoral procedure according to § 9
 3. Evaluation of the artistic research work and its public presentation according to § 10
 4. Acceptance of the dissertation according to § 11
 5. Disputation according to § 13
 6. Evaluation of the completed doctoral requirements according to § 14
 7. Publication or documentation according to § 15
 8. Completion of the doctoral degree according to § 16
- (2) Decisions and resolutions within the procedure are the responsibility of the Doctoral Committee of the HFBK Hamburg or the Doctoral Examination Committee appointed by it for the respective procedure according to §§ 3 and 12.
- (3) Professors, due to their academic or artistic achievements according to § 15 paragraphs 1 and 5 of the Hamburgisches Hochschulgesetz (Hamburg Higher Education Act) or the corresponding state higher education laws, are eligible to participate in doctoral procedures as supervisors, reviewers, and members of the doctoral or Doctoral Examination Committee s. The Doctoral Committee of the HFBK Hamburg decides on exceptions.

§ 3

Doctoral Committee

- (1) For the proper conduct of doctoral procedures, the HFBK Hamburg Senate appoints a Doctoral Committee for a term of at least three years.
- (2) The Doctoral Committee includes four professors from the HFBK Hamburg, of which at least three must be from artistic disciplines; one professor from another university; and one doctoral candidate in Art Practice from the HFBK Hamburg as primary members. Four substitutes are elected from among the professors at the HFBK Hamburg.
- (3) The Doctoral Committee elects a chairperson from among its professorial members, who is responsible for organizing the tasks of the committee and executing its resolutions. The chairperson must be a member of the HFBK Hamburg.
- (4) The Doctoral Committee is quorate if at least three members from the group of professors are present during decision-making. If the chairperson is unable to attend, a chairperson is determined from among the group of professors by the members present. Decisions are made by a simple majority of the present voting members.
- (5) The Doctoral Committee handles all matters related to the doctoral procedure and has the following specific tasks:
 1. Decision-making regarding:
 - a. Fulfillment of admission requirements according to § 4
 - b. Acceptance of doctoral candidates and the appointment of primary and secondary advisors according to § 5
 - c. A change of advisors
 - d. A joint thesis and the form of proof of individual contributions according to § 1 Paragraph 3
 - e. The initiation of the doctoral procedure based on the submitted doctoral thesis according to § 9
 - f. The appointment of reviewers according to § 10
 - g. The acceptance of the doctoral thesis based on the reviews according to § 11
 - h. The appointment of the members of the Doctoral Examination Committee according to § 12
 2. Supervision of the proper conduct of the doctoral procedures and mediation in case of disputes

§ 4

Admission Requirements

- (1) Admission to the doctoral program requires a successful diploma, completion of a master's student program, or master's degree with an artistic and practical focus at a German university or an equivalent degree from a foreign university, usually with at least a "good" overall grade. Exceptions require the approval of the Doctoral Committee.
- (2) Another prerequisite is evidence of special aptitude for artistic research work. This can be demonstrated through relevant parts of the completed studies, artistic research projects, scholarships, internships, or work experience.
- (3) Applicants who have completed their studies at a foreign university must demonstrate the equivalence of their degree according to paragraph 1 to the Doctoral Committee.

§ 5

Acceptance as a Doctoral Candidate

- (1) Applications for admission as a doctoral candidate at the HFBK Hamburg are to be made online using the form provided by the HFBK Hamburg (admission application) and must be received by 14 October at the latest (deadline). If the deadline falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or a public holiday, the application period ends on the next working day at 4:00 p.m.
- (2) In addition to the admission application, the following documents must be submitted in a form prescribed by the HFBK Hamburg (by upload, electronic storage medium, or in paper form) in German or English:
 1. A summary of the planned work, not exceeding 15 lines
 2. A portfolio that outlines the artistic research practice in view of the planned work, from which the methods, media, and formats of the work must be discernible. Sources and tools used must also be indicated.
 3. The records required for admission to the doctoral program according to § 4
 4. A curriculum vitae
 5. A proposal for a primary advisor and a proposal for a secondary advisor according to § 6
 6. A statement on whether and, if applicable, with what result the applicant has already taken part in a doctoral program elsewhere or has applied for admission to one
 7. A declaration that the applicant is aware of the current regulations for the PhD in Art Practice and has acknowledged the guidelines for good artistic practice. The deadline according to paragraph 1 applies accordingly.
- (3) The Doctoral Committee may invite applicants to admission interviews.
- (4) The Doctoral Committee decides on the acceptance or admission as a doctoral candidate and on the supervision according to paragraph 2 no. 5. The suggestions of the applicant should be followed where possible in case of acceptance or admission.

§ 6

Supervision of the Doctoral Thesis

- (1) Only professors from the artistic disciplines of the HFBK Hamburg (sculpture, stage design, design, film, graphics/photography, painting/drawing, time-based media) can be appointed as primary advisors. A secondary advisor is to be selected who represents a discipline relevant to the doctoral thesis. If the selected secondary advisor is a professor at a different university than the HFBK Hamburg, a commitment to serve as supervisor must be included with the admission application.
- (2) The primary advisor enters into an agreement to serve as supervisor of the doctoral candidate, specifying the title of the doctoral thesis, rights and duties of both parties, a work plan in accordance with the standard completion time, and possibly the number and duration of completed requirements to demonstrate the ability to engage in artistic research work. The aforementioned rights and duties include, among other things, a mandatory and regular exchange about the progress of the doctoral thesis and regular feedback on the performance and potential of the doctoral candidate.

§ 7

Enrollment and Doctoral Studies

- (1) Candidates admitted to the doctoral program are enrolled as doctoral students at the HFBK Hamburg. The admission is valid for six semesters. During this time, the doctoral thesis should be completed. On justified request to the Doctoral Committee, the length of the candidate's studies can be extended once by a maximum of four semesters.
- (2) A leave of absence during and/or suspension of the doctoral studies is possible on application under justified circumstances, as decided by the Doctoral Committee.
- (3) In addition to the artistic doctoral thesis, the following requirements must be fulfilled and documented in the study book for successful completion of the doctoral degree:
 1. Successful participation in courses on methods and practice of artistic research, totaling 2 weekly hours per semester (within the first two semesters of the study program)
 2. Successful participation in joint research colloquia, held once per semester, in which all doctoral students present and reflect on the progress of their artistic research (3 weekly hours per semester)
 3. Participation in annually held public events within the context of the study program, together with external experts
 4. Contribution to and development of courses in the field of artistic teaching at the HFBK Hamburg, in consultation with the advisor (2 weekly hours per semester)
 5. Regular participation in individual discussions and/or doctoral seminars offered by the respective advisor (2 weekly hours per semester)

§ 8

Artistic Doctoral Thesis

- (1) The artistic doctoral thesis consists of an artistic work and its public presentation according to § 1 paragraph 2 no. 2, a written description according to § 1 paragraph 2 no. 3, and a concept for documentation according to § 1 paragraph 2 no. 4. It must meet artistic standards and represent an independent contribution to contemporary art practice.
- (2) If an artistic doctoral thesis results from collaborative work, the individual contribution must be identifiable.
- (3) The written components of the doctoral thesis should be submitted in German or English. Deviations from this rule may be approved by the Doctoral Committee if evaluation is ensured.
- (4) The artistic doctoral thesis must include a sworn declaration by the doctoral candidate that the work was completed independently; that only the stated resources, materials, and tools were used; and that the work was created according to the principles of good artistic practice. In the case of collaborative works, the respective individual contribution must be justified and made clear.

§ 9

Initiation of the Doctoral Procedure

- (1) A prerequisite for the initiation of the doctoral procedure is the completion of the artistic doctoral thesis according to § 1 paragraph 2 nos. 1–4.

- (2) For the initiation of the doctoral procedure, the following documents must be submitted to the Examinations Office of the HFBK Hamburg:
 1. The study book with certifications of the completed doctoral studies signed by the primary advisor according to § 7 paragraph 3
 2. The written description of the doctoral thesis, critical reflection on the methods, and contextualization of the artistic practice, in five copies, and additionally on a common storage medium
 3. A concept for adequate documentation of the artistic work, in five copies
 4. A suggestion for the format and parameters of the presentation during the Graduate Show at HFBK
- (3) The doctoral thesis must include the following information:
 - a) Author
 - b) Title
 - c) Advisors
 - d) Date of submission
 - e) Mention of the HFBK Hamburg as the institution where it was submittedAdditionally, a handwritten signed declaration must be attached that the work has not been submitted as a doctoral thesis at another university.
- (4) The Doctoral Committee decides on the basis of the submitted documents whether to initiate the doctoral procedure.
- (5) The initiation will be denied if:
 1. The required documents are incomplete or incorrect
 2. The doctoral candidate has already failed a similar examination at another university or the dissertation has been presented in the same or a different form in another examination procedure
 3. The Doctoral Committee can prove violations of good artistic practice
- (6) If the procedure is not initiated, the submitted documents will remain in the files of the HFBK Hamburg with the corresponding records.

§ 10

Evaluation of the Doctoral Thesis

- (1) Upon initiating the doctoral procedure, the Doctoral Committee will appoint at least two reviewers, with § 2 paragraph 3 being applicable accordingly. Typically, the supervisors of the doctoral thesis are appointed as reviewers. One reviewer must be a university lecturer in an artistic major at the HFBK Hamburg. The doctoral candidate has the right to propose reviewers.
- (2) Typically, the reviews should be available three months after the request for evaluation and the appointment of the reviewers. If a review is not submitted on time, the Doctoral Committee may appoint another reviewer after a reminder and with the consent of the doctoral candidate.
- (3) The reviewers independently assess the entire doctoral thesis according to § 1 paragraph 2 nos. 2–4. The presentation of the artistic component of the doctoral thesis in an appropriate form takes place at HFBK Hamburg during the Graduate Show. Any deviations from the location and time require the consent of the Doctoral Committee.
- (4) The reviewers recommend to the Doctoral Committee either the acceptance or rejection of the doctoral thesis; each must be substantiated. The reviews must appreciate the significance of the doctoral thesis and its results in a broader context and present any defects. The grading is done according to the grading scales provided in § 14 paragraph 1.

- (5) The reviews should include at least the following contents:
 - a) Importance of the chosen artistic approach in the context of contemporary art discourse and current research using artistic means
 - b) Description of the chosen approach, methodology, and contextualization of the artistic practice
 - c) Appreciation of unique aspects or possibly criticism
 - d) A summary comparison of strengths and weaknesses
 - e) A clear verdict derived from the foregoing
- (6) The reviewers may suggest to the Doctoral Committee to conditionally accept the doctoral thesis or consider amendments and supplementary suggestions before publication if the defects of the thesis do not justify a rejection. Such conditions will not delay the admission to the disputation.

§ 11

Acceptance of the Doctoral Thesis

- (1) After the reviews are submitted, the Doctoral Committee decides on the acceptance of the doctoral thesis. The acceptance may be conditional, requiring compliance before publication. The reviews must always be treated confidentially.
- (2) If the difference in grades in the reviews for the doctoral thesis is two or greater, or if there is an equality of votes recommending acceptance or rejection of the doctoral thesis, the Doctoral Committee will appoint another reviewer. In this case, the grade will be determined by the arithmetic mean of the grades given in the reviews.
- (3) A doctoral thesis cannot be accepted if it is not recommended for acceptance by the majority of the reviews.
- (4) A rejection will be communicated to the doctoral candidate stating the reasons and observing § 19. In this case, the candidate has the right to access the reviews within one month of notification.
- (5) Upon rejection of the doctoral thesis, all submitted documents along with all reviews will remain in the doctoral files at the HFBK Hamburg. A revised version of the doctoral thesis may be resubmitted no earlier than six months later, but only once. Further resubmission is not possible.
- (6) Upon acceptance of the doctoral thesis, the doctoral candidate has the right to be informed about the content of the reviews by the chair of the Doctoral Committee at least two weeks before the date of the disputation, excluding the evaluation part.

§ 12

Doctoral Examination Committee

- (1) With the acceptance of the doctoral thesis, the Doctoral Committee appoints a five-member Doctoral Examination Committee responsible for further proceedings, particularly for reviewing the individual components of the artistic doctoral thesis, conducting the disputation, and the overall evaluation of the completed doctoral requirements.
- (2) The Doctoral Examination Committee consists of the reviewers according to § 10 paragraph 1 and three additional members, including:
 - a. A professor specializing in an artistic major closely related to the doctoral thesis
 - b. A professor from another university with relevant artistic research practice
 - c. A professor belonging to the Doctoral Committee

- (3) The Doctoral Examination Committee elects a chairperson from among its members. The committee is quorate if at least three members are present.

§ 13

Disputation

- (1) After the acceptance of the artistic doctoral thesis, a disputation is to be scheduled within a period of typically three months. The components of the thesis according to § 1 paragraph 2 nos. 3 and 4 are publicly displayed in a media-specific and archivable form in the library of the HFBK Hamburg two weeks before the disputation.
- (2) The disputation is public unless the doctoral candidate objects. Upon the candidate's request, the chairperson of the Doctoral Examination Committee may exclude the public if necessary for the proper conduct of the disputation; members of the Doctoral Committee are not considered part of the public in this context.
- (3) At the beginning of the disputation, the doctoral candidate presents in a lecture the artistic context from which the doctoral thesis emerged and discusses key processes and methods.
- (4) This is followed by questioning and discussion related to all parts of the doctoral thesis. There may also be a discussion of the reviews.
- (5) After the doctoral candidate's contribution and possibly the disclosure of the content of the reviews, the reviewers, other members of the Doctoral Examination Committee, and then all attendees have the right to ask questions to the doctoral candidate, but not to comment on the doctoral thesis. The chairperson may dismiss questions if they are inappropriate to the subject of the disputation.
- (6) The disputation should not last longer than one and a half hours.
- (7) Immediately after the disputation, the Doctoral Examination Committee decides in a non-public session on the pass or fail of the disputation and its grading. Each member of the committee grades the disputation according to the scale provided in § 14 paragraph 1. The disputation passes if it is rated at least "satisfactory" by the majority of the committee members present.
- (8) If the disputation passes, the Doctoral Examination Committee determines the overall grade of the doctorate according to § 14 paragraph 2. The doctoral candidate is informed immediately after the decision.
- (9) A record of the disputation is drafted including:
 - a. Location and time of the disputation
 - b. Name of the doctoral candidate
 - c. Names of the members of the Doctoral Examination Committee
 - d. Subjects and account of the disputation
 - e. Individual grades given in the reviews for the doctoral thesis and for the disputation by the reviewers and other committee members
 - f. The decision of the Doctoral Examination Committee on awarding the academic degree and the overall grade of the completed doctoral requirements
 - g. Signature of the chairperson of the Doctoral Examination Committee
- (10) If the doctoral candidate misses the disputation without a valid reason, the Doctoral Examination Committee decides on the validity of the reason for absence. If the absence is due to illness, the committee may require a medical certificate. If the committee recognizes the reasons provided by the doctoral candidate for the absence, a new date will be scheduled.
- (11) If the doctoral candidate fails the disputation, it may be retaken within one year, but not earlier than six weeks after the initial attempt. If it is failed again, the procedure is deemed unsuccessfully concluded. The chairperson of the Doctoral Committee informs the doctoral candidate of the final

non-passing with a notice that includes information on legal recourse. The doctoral thesis according to § 1 paragraph 2 nos. 3 and 4 along with all the reviews remain in the records of the HFBK Hamburg.

§ 14

Evaluation of the Completed Doctoral Requirements

- (1) The completed doctoral requirements according to § 1 paragraph 2 nos. 2–5 are evaluated using the following scale:
 - 1 = very good
 - 2 = good
 - 3 = satisfactory
 - 4 = insufficientIntermediate values for fine-grained assessment can be formed by lowering or raising the full grade numbers by 0.3. However, grades 0.7, 3.7, and 4.3 are excluded.
- (2) The overall grade is calculated from the average of the grades from the reviews and the average of the grades from the disputation. The average from the reviews contributes 75% and that from the disputation 25% to the final grade. The averages and the final grade are rounded up to one decimal place to favor the doctoral candidate within a deviation of 0.05. The overall grade is “very good” (*magna cum laude*) for an average from 1.0 to under 1.5, “good” (*cum laude*) from 1.5 to under 2.5, and “satisfactory” (*rite*) from 2.5 to under 3.5. For outstanding achievements (an average of 1.0 in all examination requirements), the Doctoral Examination Committee may unanimously award the grade “excellent” (*summa cum laude*).

§ 15

Publication/Implementation of Documentation

- (1) If the Doctoral Committee has issued conditions for publication according to § 11 paragraph 1, their completion must be submitted to the designated examiner before publication. The designated examiner must explicitly give their consent for publication.
- (2) Within one year after passing the disputation, the doctoral candidate must provide the following evidence:
 1. The documentation part of the doctoral thesis according to § 1 paragraph 2 no. 4 has been realized based on the concept and printed in ten copies as a book or photo print on aging-resistant, wood- and acid-free paper, permanently bound, and submitted to the library of the HFBK Hamburg. Furthermore, the documentation part must have been made digitally available in the repository of the HFBK Hamburg.
 2. All digital and physical copies must include a link to the HFBK repository, where the complete works or groups of works according to § 1 paragraph 2 no. 2 are adequately documented and presented, and thus permanently stored and made accessible to the public.
 3. If other publications (invitations, programs, brochures, etc.) have been produced in connection with the presentation of the artistic work or groups of works, five copies of these must be included in the documentation.
 4. If the work consists of multiple components, media, or formats, reference to the additional components must be made at the location of the digital and physical publication.

- (3) The doctoral candidate grants the HFBK Hamburg the right to produce and distribute further copies of the doctoral thesis or to make them available on data networks within the legal responsibilities of university libraries.

§ 16 Conferral of the PhD

- (1) After the doctoral candidate has demonstrated publications according to § 15 paragraph 2 to the chairperson of the Doctoral Committee, the doctorate is conferred by the issuance of the certificate. Only from this point on is the newly graduated individual entitled to carry the academic degree of a PhD in Art Practice.
- (2) The doctoral certificate is dated on the day of the disputation. It includes the title of the submitted doctoral thesis according to § 1 paragraph 2 nos. 2–4, the names of the examiners, and the overall grade. It is signed by the president of the HFBK Hamburg and the chairperson of the Doctoral Committee and is sealed with the seal of the HFBK Hamburg. A copy of the certificate remains in the records of the HFBK Hamburg.

§ 17 Revocation of the PhD

- (1) The doctoral degree can be revoked by a decision of the Doctoral Committee if it turns out that it was obtained through deception or that essential prerequisites for the awarding of the degree were mistakenly assumed to have been met.
- (2) Before the decision is made, the holder will be given the opportunity to respond. The decision will be justified and delivered to the affected individual with instructions for legal recourse.

§ 18 Access to Records

In justified cases, the doctoral candidate or graduate may be granted access to the doctoral records upon written request to the chairperson of the Doctoral Committee.

§ 19 Legal Remedies and Appeals Process

- (1) All adverse decisions of the Doctoral or Doctoral Examination Committee must be made in written form and accompanied by instructions for legal recourse.
- (2) An appeal can be made against all decisions of the Doctoral and Doctoral Examination Committee according to § 66 of the Hamburgisches Hochschulgesetz (Hamburg Higher Education Act). A formal appeals process will take place before an objection committee.

§ 20
Effective Date

These doctoral regulations take effect the day after their approval by the Executive Committee of the HFBK Hamburg. They apply for the first time to doctoral candidates who begin their doctoral studies in the PhD in Art Practice program in the summer semester of 2025.