

UNIVERSITY GAZETTE

of the
UNIVERSITY OF GRAZ



68th SPECIAL EDITION

Academic year 2022/23

Issued on 24 May 2023

Item 31.c

Curriculum

for the Doctoral Programme of Religious Studies and Sociocultural Discourses

Curriculum 2023

Publication details: Media owner, publisher and author: University of Graz, Universitätsplatz 3, 8010 Graz. Place of publication and production: Graz.
Address of the Editorial Department: Law and Organisation, Universitätsplatz 3, 8010 Graz.
E-mail: mitteilungsblatt@uni-graz.at
Internet: <https://mitteilungsblatt.uni-graz.at/>

Disclosure pursuant to Section 25 of the Media Act (MedienG)

Media owner: University of Graz, Universitätsplatz 3, 8010 Graz. Purpose of business: Fulfilment of the objectives, guiding principles and responsibilities pursuant to Sections 1, 2 and 3 of the Federal Austrian Act on the Organisation of Universities and their Degree Courses (Universities Act 2002 - UG), Federal Law Gazette I No. 120/2002, in the latest applicable version.

Type and amount of equity holding: owned 100%.

Registered office: Universitätsplatz 3, 8010 Graz

Names of the authorised representatives of the media owner: Dr Peter Riedler, Univ.-Prof. Dr Joachim Reidl, Univ.-Prof. Dr Catherine Walter-Laager, Univ.-Prof. Dr Markus Fallenböck, LL.M., Univ.-Prof. Mireille van Poppel, PhD

Principle concept: Announcement of information pursuant to Section 20 (6) of the Universities Act (UG) in the latest applicable version.

Curriculum for the doctoral programme Religious Studies and Sociocultural Discourse



The legal bases for the humanities and cultural studies doctoral programme are the Universities Act (UG) and the Statutes of the University of Graz.

On 17 May 2023, the Senate issued the following curriculum for the Doctoral Programme of Religious Studies and Sociocultural Discourses in accordance with Section 25 (1) 10a of the Universities Act (UG).

Table of contents

Section 1: Subject, qualifications profile and relevance of the study programme	2
(1) Subject of the study programme.....	2
(2) Qualifications profile and skills	2
(3) Demand for and relevance of the study programme for academia and the labour market.....	3
Section 2: Admission	3
(1) Admission criteria	3
(2) Supplementary examinations	4
(3) Qualitative admission conditions	4
(4) Language.....	4
(5) Selection Committee	4
(6) Application documents	5
Section 3: Structure of the study programme	5
(1) Duration and organisation	5
(2) Subjects.....	5
Section 4: Modules	5
(1) Modules and examinations.....	5
(2) Number of possible participants in courses and ranking criteria.....	6
(3) Substitute academic achievement.....	6
Section 5: Doctoral thesis	6
(1) Requirements	6
(2) Doctoral thesis topic	7
(3) Supervision.....	7
(4) Assessment	7
Section 6: Doctoral examination	8
Section 7: University degree	8
Section 8: Entry into force of the curriculum and transitional provisions	8
(1) Entry into force.....	8
(2) Transitional provisions.....	8
Appendix I: Subject groups from which the topic of the doctoral thesis may be drawn:	9
Appendix II: Supervision agreement	9

Section 1: Subject, qualifications profile and relevance of the study programme

(1) Subject of the study programme

As a result of diverse globalisation processes, many societies are experiencing an increasing plurality of religions and world views as well as moral and ethical perspectives. These developments are leading to new forms of social organisation but are also potential sources of conflicts and call for new political and social responses. They also pose particular challenges in the area of education as well as for public and political discourse. Accordingly, they have prompted discussions at various levels of culture and society. The complexity of these sociocultural discourses concerning diversity in religious, ideological and ethical perspectives and their various interdependencies also pose new questions for researchers. The Doctoral Programme of Religious Studies and Sociocultural Discourses provides an academic qualification in analysing this discourse at an international level. In cooperation with other disciplines from these fields, this study programme drawn from the humanities and cultural studies analyses questions of religion, ethics, ideology and culture in their various manifestations including politics, education and the media and opens them up for debate within the scientific community. Each issue will have its own specific point of reference in the corresponding other discipline.

The doctoral programme tackles the complex interrelationships between strands of religious, cultural and ethical discourse from a historical, systematic and/or current perspective. In particular, the doctoral programme sets out to study complex issues of society, culture and politics in their interdependencies with religion, address them in an academic context and present them in light of their relevance to society, culture and politics.

(2) Qualifications profile and skills

The objective of the Doctoral Programme of Religious Studies and Sociocultural Discourses is for the doctoral researchers to explore the various avenues of inquiry arising from religious, ethical and cultural discourses, including their role in societal debates, at a high level of scholarship and in interaction with the national and international research landscape and to enable the doctoral researchers to participate in scholarly debate in the respective field of speciality through critical reflection and substantive discourse.

The academic papers of the doctoral researchers should contribute to the expansion and innovation of their field of speciality and serve for the exploration of new questions and analytical methods. A research focus on current social, cultural and political issues and their entanglements with religious and ethical debates is an explicit goal of the doctoral programme.

The doctoral programme aims to give graduates a high-level academic qualification that will enable them to complete an academic paper in this academic discipline. After completing the Doctoral Programme of Religious Studies and Sociocultural Discourses, graduates will be able to:

- write academic papers independently that will share new questions and findings with the scientific community;
- analyse the interrelationships between religious, ethical and cultural strands of discourse in the past and present;
- handle academic literature, including their active reception and potential critique, critically and confidently, and assess it professionally;
- organise and run academic events, following international professional standards and taking account of topical issues and problems;
- participate in an academic dialogue in individual sub-disciplines in the form of oral and/or written contributions to academic discussion forums (specialist journals, conferences, etc.).

(3) Demand for and relevance of the study programme for academia and the labour market

The Doctoral Programme of Religious Studies and Sociocultural Discourses

- gives graduates the skills they need to use appropriate academic methods to research and present the manifold change processes in the field of religion and in the ideological and ethical pluralism of societies under the conditions of globalisation and global communication processes;
- confers the ability to make critical statements on current trends towards the functionalisation and ideologisation of religions for sociopolitical, economic and individual ends.

The Doctoral Programme of Religious Studies and Sociocultural Discourses also qualifies graduates to take on a range of roles in leadership positions that require high-level academic expertise in the various sub-areas of religious studies but that are not necessarily university-based:

- Culture in the public space and how it interacts with religion (performing arts, visual arts, literature, etc. where debate or confrontation with religion is aggressively sought).
- Politics in conjunction with ethnic and religious conflicts or potential areas for conflict. Here, the ability to reflect critically on existing problems at the cutting edge of academic research is just as vital as a set of tangible instructions for de-escalating conflicts or preventing them from erupting in the first place.
- The economy as the stage for the necessary cooperation between members of different religions and cultures. In an age of globalisation, staff at companies that operate throughout Europe or the world and that employ migrants in their work processes require a high level of expertise in religious and ethical diversity.
- NGOs and their work in multi-religious and multi-ethnic contexts.
- The media: dealing appropriately, competently and soberly with issues from all the areas affected by the kinds of discourse outlined here – migration, diversity, religious plurality, ethnic debates, designing education in a plural society, etc.

Section 2: Admission

(1) Admission criteria

Prerequisites for admission to the Doctoral Programme of Religious Studies and Sociocultural Discourses

1. The completion of a master's programme worth at least 60 ECTS credit points or a diploma programme worth at least 240 ECTS credit points or another study programme of at least the same educational level at a recognised Austrian or foreign post-secondary educational institution in the area of theological studies or the humanities and cultural studies or in a subject that is meaningfully related to theological studies or the humanities and cultural studies.
2. Fulfilment of the qualitative admission conditions as per (3).
3. Evidence of the level of German or English required to successfully pursue the study programme as per Section 2 (4).
4. If the prerequisites according to items 1 to 3 are not fulfilled and also cannot be achieved by completing supplementary examinations according to (2), no admission is possible.

(2) Supplementary examinations

To compensate for significant subject matter differences from the studies mentioned in (1) (1) or to compensate for significant subject matter differences as necessary for the doctoral thesis, supplementary examinations may be required.

(3) Qualitative admission conditions

Admission to the Doctoral Programme of Religious Studies and Sociocultural Discourses requires fulfilment of the following qualitative admission conditions. The fulfilment of the criteria will be evaluated by the Selection Committee of the Doctoral School of Theology, Religious Studies and Ethics in the course of the admission process:

- The doctoral thesis proposal (with indication of the preliminary topic of the planned doctoral thesis) corresponds to the academic standards and good scientific practice.
- Outstanding prior academic knowledge in the field of research.
- The statement of purpose and preliminary time plan demonstrate realistic planning of the research project. The objectives for the desired doctoral programme, including future career plans for an academic career and/or a career path outside of academia, are plausibly presented.
- The doctoral thesis project is meaningfully related to one of the subject areas situated within the Faculty of Theology or can be assigned to a subject area of one of the doctoral schools named in the application for admission.

(4) Language

Evidence of the level of German or English required to successfully pursue the study programme is required in order to be admitted to it. The form that this evidence is to take is to be stipulated in a set of regulations from the Rectorate.

(5) Selection Committee

1. The Selection Committee consists of three persons. The (Vice) Dean of Studies responsible for the doctoral programme, the head of the doctoral school and the proposed supervisor are all members of the Selection Committee. If one of these persons holds two of the listed roles, their substitute must participate in the Selection Committee as a replacement.
2. The Selection Committee evaluates the criteria according to (1) to (3) of this curriculum as to whether the applicant's prior studies are appropriate for the desired doctorate and the qualitative admission conditions are met and issues on this basis a unanimous decision as a recommendation to the Rectorate concerning the admission decision as well as any supplementary examinations to be completed by the applicant. If the doctoral thesis project requires the use of an academic unit's financial or material resources, the admission may only be recommended if the head of this unit has been informed and has not prohibited the project on the basis of a significant impairment of instruction and research at the unit. In the event that the admission application is rejected or the imposition of supplementary examinations is recommended, the Selection Committee must justify why the admission criteria were not (fully) met.
3. The Selection Committee must issue to the Rectorate its recommendation concerning admission within four weeks after complete submission of the application documents.

(6) Application documents

The following application documents must be submitted by the applicant upon application for admission:

- Form: application for admission to the doctoral programme and acceptance to the doctoral school
- Academic curriculum vitae with documentation (completion certificates) of the completed prior studies / research and study focus
- Synopsis of the planned doctoral thesis amounting to approximately 15,000 characters (including spaces), including a description of the underlying theories and methods as well as listing of fundamental literature
- Statement of purpose
- Signed supervision agreement
- Documentation of the completed prior study programme, any additional academic achievements and the required language skills

Section 3: Structure of the study programme

(1) Duration and organisation

The doctoral programme has a planned study time of six semesters and is organised into a curricular portion (modules), the doctoral thesis and the doctoral examination:

Modules	ECTS
Module A: Doctoral colloquium: organisation, presentation and discourse within the scientific community	12
Module B: Subject-oriented doctoral thesis module	12
<i>Total</i>	24
Doctoral thesis	
Doctoral examination	6

(2) Subjects

A list of the subjects to which the topic of the doctoral thesis can be assigned can be found in Appendix I. The subject to which the doctoral thesis should be assigned must be indicated in the application for admission to the doctoral programme and evaluated by the Selection Committee.

Section 4: Modules

(1) Modules and examinations

The modules and examinations are listed below with module title, course title, course type, ECTS credit points and contact hours (C. hrs).

	Modules and examinations	Course type	ECTS	C. hrs
Module A	Doctoral colloquium: Organisation, presentation and discourse within the scientific community		12	4
A.1	Seminar in the subject of the doctoral thesis: preparation for presentation and discourse	SE/PV/DQ	6	2
A.2	Presentation and discourse within the scientific community	SE/DQ	6	2
Module B	Subject-oriented doctoral thesis module		12	4
B.1	Seminar in the subject of the doctoral thesis	SE/PV/DQ	6	2
B.2	Seminar in a related subject or sub-area of the doctoral thesis	SE/PV/DQ	6	2

(2) Number of possible participants in courses and ranking criteria

1. The number of participants in the individual course types may be limited for pedagogic/didactic reasons and space limitations, based on the available equipment or for safety reasons:

Course type	Number of participants
Seminar (German abbreviation: SE)	25
Research seminar (German abbreviation: PV)	15
Doctoral colloquium (German abbreviation: DQ)	15

2. If the stipulated maximum number of participants is exceeded, students shall be admitted to the courses in accordance with the criteria for the ranking method of the South-East Development Network (EVSO) as set out in the Senate directive on allocating places in courses with a limited number of participants, as amended.
3. In addition to the electronic course registration, students must be present at the first session of the course, where the final allocation of course places shall take place. Students who miss this session without being excused shall be ranked after the students in attendance.

(3) Substitute academic achievement

1. Course attendance can be replaced by academic achievements in the amount of at most 12 ECTS credit points after consulting with the supervisor of the doctoral thesis and with the approval of the head of the doctoral school.
2. These academic achievements include:
 - a. Papers or poster sessions presented at an academic conference.
 - b. Articles published or accepted for publication in a scientific journal or a collected volume. Publication of a master's or diploma thesis does not count as a substitute academic achievement.

(4) Language

Not all courses in all subjects can be offered both in German and in English. Information on which subjects feature courses in the different languages must be published on the website of the Dean's Office and made available to the applicants by the supervisor in the course of the admission process.

Section 5: Doctoral thesis

(1) Requirements

A doctoral thesis must be written. Through their doctoral thesis, the student is required to demonstrate – above and beyond what is required of a master's thesis / diploma thesis – that they have acquired the ability to solve problems facing current scientific research independently and have arrived at new findings. The doctoral thesis represents a self-contained, original piece of academic work that was produced and written by the student themselves.

The doctoral thesis must include the new academic findings generated from the work carried out by the doctoral researcher and must present these findings in the context of the latest academic research in the relevant subject area. The investigations performed must be documented, and the findings must be presented in a clear and transparent manner. The style adopted by the doctoral thesis must comply with the standards customary in the subject area. In the case of research collaborations, the contribution made by the doctoral researcher themselves must be clearly demarcated, and each doctoral researcher involved must write their own doctoral thesis.

(2) Doctoral thesis topic

1. The topic of the doctoral thesis must fall within the subject groups listed in Appendix II and must be announced in the course of the admission process.
2. A subsequent change to the doctoral thesis topic is possible up until the point when the doctoral thesis is submitted. The Selection Committee must be informed of this in writing, including the reasons for the change. A change to the doctoral thesis topic is possible only with the approval of the Selection Committee.
3. If the doctoral thesis topic is changed, another evaluation of the doctoral thesis project must be carried out by the Selection Committee in accordance with Section 2 (5) of the curriculum.

(3) Supervision

1. Only persons who have fulfilled the prerequisites according to Section 39 of the statutory part of the study regulations (Satzungsteil Studienrechtliche Bestimmungen) of the University of Graz may serve as a supervisor.
2. The Dean of Studies can approve an additional supervisor at the student's request.
3. The first supervisor must be a member of the University of Graz staff. The remaining supervisors may come from other universities or from institutes deemed equivalent to a university.
4. The first supervisor must be selected from the subject area of the doctoral thesis and announced in the course of the admission process. All other supervisors may belong to different subject areas and must also be indicated in the course of the admission process.

(4) Assessment

1. The completed doctoral thesis must be submitted to the dean of studies. They must appoint – at the suggestion of the doctoral researcher – two reviewers who satisfy the requirements according to Section 39 of the statutory part of the study regulations (Satzungsteil Studienrechtliche Bestimmungen). The first supervisor is also a reviewer.
2. Reviewers should also come from other universities or institutions deemed equivalent to a university.

Section 6: Doctoral examination

(1) The doctoral examination is an oral committee examination that lasts up to 90 minutes in total.

(2) This doctoral examination has two parts:

Part 1 comprises a public presentation and defence of the doctoral thesis, taking account of the reviewers' comments, as part of a general discussion. This part lasts up to 60 minutes, 30 of which are earmarked for the presentation of the doctoral thesis.

Part 2 is an examination on the subject covered by the doctoral thesis. This part lasts up to 30 minutes.

(3) The examination committee must be assembled by the Dean of Studies at the suggestion of the doctoral researcher.

The examination committee for the doctoral examination has three members. The first supervisor (first reviewer) is in any case a member of the committee. The second reviewer and any other reviewers as well as the second supervisor do not need to sit on the examination committee.

(4) An overall grade is issued for the doctoral examination, which comprises the arithmetic mean of the grades for the two parts of the examination. Decimal values larger than x.5 are to be rounded up, otherwise rounded down.

Section 7: University degree

Graduates from the Doctoral Programme of Religious Studies and Sociocultural Discourses are awarded the university degree of "Doctor of Philosophy", abbreviated to "Dr.phil."

Section 8: Entry into force of the curriculum and transitional provisions

(1) Entry into force

This curriculum enters into force on 1 October 2023. (Curriculum 2023)

(2) Transitional provisions

Students in the Doctoral Programme of Religious Studies and Sociocultural Discourses who are subject to the 2019W curriculum at the time when this curriculum enters into force on 1 October 2023 shall be subject to the 2023W curriculum as of 1 October 2023. For students who have completed the course "Presentation and discourse in the scientific community" as part of the 2019W curriculum, this shall also be considered completed in the 2023W curriculum.

The Chair of the Senate:
Niemann

Appendix I: Subject groups from which the topic of the doctoral thesis may be drawn:

Humanities and cultural studies subject group

- ✓ Ethics and Social Studies
- ✓ Philosophy
- ✓ Religious Studies

Biblical history subject group

- ✓ Old Testament Studies
- ✓ Church History
- ✓ New Testament Studies
- ✓ Patrology

Systemic theology subject group

- ✓ Dogmatics
- ✓ Fundamental Theology
- ✓ Moral Theology
- ✓ Ecumenical Theology

Practical theology subject group

- ✓ Canon Law
- ✓ Catechetics and Religious Education
- ✓ Liturgical Studies and Sacramental Theology
- ✓ Pastoral Theology and Pastoral Psychology

Appendix II: Supervision agreement



**Supervision agreement for a doctoral thesis at the University of
Graz within the framework of a doctoral programme
Religious Studies and Sociocultural Discourses**

This supervision agreement must be filled out for the admission application and signed by the applicant as well as the supervisor and enclosed with the application documents. It is concluded pending admission to the doctoral programme and enters into force as of the time of admission.

Supervisor	
Applicant	
Registration number*	
E-mail address and tel. no. of the applicant	
Doctoral school	
Planned completion of the doctoral thesis [month/year]	

* If available, otherwise provide the applicant's date of birth

(Working) title/topic of the doctoral thesis:

**With this supervision agreement, the supervisor undertakes the following:**

- to supervise the doctoral thesis project upon admission to the doctoral programme.
- to work together with the doctoral researcher in creating a time plan for the individual phases of the work up until conclusion of the doctoral thesis.
- to be available to the doctoral researcher for at least two supervisory meetings per semester.
- to confirm the documentation of the supervisory meetings compiled by the doctoral researcher or to clarify the content of such documentation with the doctoral researcher as necessary.
- to refer to compliance with the criteria of good scientific practice within the subject matter context.
- to regularly provide constructive feedback on the condition of the doctoral thesis work.
- to support the doctoral researcher in modification of the original research concept if it is determined over the course of the work that the originally planned form of the project is not feasible.
- to provide the doctoral researcher with corresponding information on calls for papers and academic events as well as to facilitate contacts with academic colleagues in the subject-relevant disciplines.
- to support the doctoral researcher in public presentation of the doctoral thesis or individual research findings.
- to give the doctoral researcher an opportunity before submission of the doctoral thesis to discuss the doctoral thesis with regard to possible improvements and necessary adaptations.
- to support doctoral researchers in publication of the doctoral thesis or parts of the doctoral thesis in the form of articles/papers.
- to inform the doctoral researcher about university and non-university career options and directly assist those doctoral researchers who wish to continue working in research.

With this supervision agreement, the supervised doctoral researcher undertakes the following:

- to work together with the supervisor in creating a time plan for the individual phases of the work up until conclusion of the doctoral thesis.
- to strive for completion of the doctoral thesis by the date specified on page 1.
- to participate in at least two supervisory meetings with the supervisor per semester. to document the content of and agreements resulting from the supervisory meetings and to have this confirmed or, if necessary, clarified by the supervisor.
- to keep the supervisor informed of the progress of the doctoral thesis within the framework of the supervisory meetings, in particular with regard to delays or interruptions.
- to inform the supervisors of the interruption of the doctoral thesis project or the abandonment of the topic.
- to comply with the criteria of good scientific practice within the subject matter context.
- to publicly present the doctoral thesis or individual research results, if possible.



Dissolution of the supervision agreement

Up until submission of the doctoral thesis, it is possible to dissolve the supervision agreement by mutual agreement at any time. In the event of serious violations of the obligations stipulated in the supervision agreement, the head of the respective doctoral school or the responsible Dean of Studies may be contacted.

.....

Date, signature of supervisor

.....

Date, signature of applicant