

**GUIDELINE CONCERNING REQUESTS TO WITHHOLD ACCESS
TO DISSERTATIONS
BY THE ACADEMIC DIRECTOR OF THE PHD/DOCTORAL PROGRAM¹**

§ 86 of the Universities Act 2002 governs the publication of academic dissertations. According to paragraph 2 it is possible to withhold access to the dissertation for a maximum of five years:

1) Before the award of the degree, a graduate shall publish one complete copy of the accepted academic thesis [...] by lodging it with the library of the university where the degree is awarded. The statutes can stipulate that this submission shall be done only electronically. [...]

(2) An accepted doctoral thesis [...] shall also be published by lodging a copy with the Austrian National Library. The statutes can stipulate that this submission shall be done only electronically. [...]

(4) On lodging an academic thesis [...] with a library, the author shall be entitled to apply for access to the copies deposited therewith to be withheld for a maximum of five years from the time of delivery. The officer responsible for study matters shall allow such applications, if the student establishes that his/her legal or business interests would be materially endangered by permitting access.

Possible reasons for withholding access:

It is an integral aspect of academic practice, that new ideas and research findings which are obtained in the course of an academic career, especially during the composition of a dissertation, become part of the wider scientific community's discourse. The idea of withholding access to a dissertation stands in stark contrast to this practice. It impedes the academic discourse as it produces a kind of temporary secret knowledge, which can be used only by the author of the dissertation and the examiners and has no value for the larger scientific community. Also there is the danger of producing a disputable image of universities in general, as they should be devoted to the furthering of the academic discourse and are funded for this by the public.

The simple claim „I would not have been granted access to the data had I not promised to withhold access“ or „If access is not withheld, some other party might exploit my data for commercial purposes“ will not be accepted as reason for withholding access. To the contrary, taking up research results and discussing published ideas is essential for an understanding of academic discourse where the goal is to change the scientific landscape in a collaborative effort (exceptions like epoch making break-throughs only prove the rule). The goal of writing a dissertation can never be the accumulation of commercially exploitable competitive advantages or the production of a business plan in the guise of a dissertation.

¹ Univ.Prof. Dr. Thomas Reutterer, Institute of Marketing and Consumer Analytics, WU (Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien).

To make sure: This does not mean that sensitive data should be shared with everyone. It is absolutely reasonable to keep original data private. The scientific conclusions drawn from these data in form of the dissertation, however, must in principle be made available.

It is our policy that the results of a dissertation must become part of the public discourse as soon as possible. If you request to withhold access to your dissertation and thus depart from this policy, you must demonstrate convincingly that

- a) the temporal deferral will be outweighed by the gain of scientific insight
- b) the deferred publication will not lead to a decrease of value for the scientific discourse, e.g. because of outdated results.

Course of Action:

When uploading the dissertation on myWU, you can apply for withholding access, giving the duration and the reasons for your request (if you plan to publish the dissertation with a specialist printing house, for example, it may be the case that the publisher stipulates that the dissertation should not be made accessible even internally to library users before the publication of the book). It may be advisable to seek clarification with the Academic Director via the Doctoral Office beforehand.

After the Academic Director has agreed to your request, the library will withhold access to the dissertation, which will not be available to library users for the duration granted.