

Winter Semester 2026/27

Orientation for Doctoral Students



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- Overview and short introduction
- Facts & figures
- Curriculum structure
- What is a dissertation?
- FAQs
- Resources

- Five doctoral programs – about 800 people ,in the system`
 - Doctorate Social and Economic Sciences / PhD Economic and Social Sciences
 - Doctorate Business Law
 - PhD Finance and PhD International Business Taxation
- During last year, 167 students started their doctoral studies at WU
- Admissions last winter semester (those for this semester are still ongoing)
 - 33 Doctoral program Social and Economic Sciences
 - 26 Doctoral program Business Law
 - 39 PhD Economic and Social Sciences
- PhD WiSo: only for WU's academic staff
- About 70 persons successfully complete their studies per year
- Admisson: only with preliminary confirmation of supervision & synopsis

Structure

Research Proposal	Courses please see curricula for details
Dissertation	
Defensio Dissertationis	

■ Research Proposal:

- Submission within 1 year after admission
- Graded by the Supervision Team (Main Supervisor and at least 2 more members)

■ Dissertation Agreement

- Dissertation and Defense are graded by a Doctoral Committee consisting of 3 members (all with habilitation or equivalent qualification, at least one not from WU)

Dissertation Agreement

[according to §34 (2) of the WU by-laws]

- Written agreement between student & their main supervisor covering
 - requirements for the dissertation (monography/article-based, paper requirements, etc.)
 - planned next steps & expectations
 - (courses to be completed)
- Submission
 - within the first year of studies, together with the Research Proposal

PhD in Econ. and Social Sciences Curriculum

- For administrative details contact the doctoral office: Barbara Bauer / Antonia Lanner / Daniela Eder: 313 36/4025 or 4696; E-Mail: doctoraloffice@wu.ac.at
- The [curriculum](#) is highly flexible and offers many degrees of freedom for customization

Subject / course title	ECTS
Academic Writing (1-3 courses)	6-18
Research Methods (1-3 courses)	6-18
Methodology and Theory (1-3 courses)	6-18
Interdisciplinary Research Seminar (1-2 courses)	6-18
Research Seminar – Participating in Scientific Discourse (2-6 courses)	12-36
Electives (outside WU; 2 courses – presentations at a peer-reviewed academic conference)	6
Research Proposal	-
Defensio Dissertationis	6

PhD in Econ. and Social Sciences

Suggested Structure

- Dissertation agreement, build supervisory team (main supervisor + co-supervisor(s))
- Agree with supervisory team on course plan for first 2 years
- Work on research proposal (RP) for doctoral project / attend department research seminars
- Course work (36 ECTS)
 - Research Methods I, II, III (see course availability) – 18 ECTS
 - Theory and Methods I & II (Philosophy of Science, theory seminar) – 12 ECTS
 - Academic Writing – 6 ECTS

- Based on RP feedback: Decision on additional course work, revising research proposal, ...
- Continue work on doctoral research project / attend department's research seminars
- Course work (36 ECTS)
 - Research Seminars (incl. discourse with supervising team) I, II, III, IV, V – 30 ECTS
 - Electives (Presenting at academic conferences, specialized course(s)) – 6 ECTS

- Dissertation: Papers suitable for publication in leading academic journals (see department-specific dissertation guidelines) or monography
- Prepare for (academic) job market (academic job market trainings, presentation coaching, etc.)
- Formally defend dissertation research in front of committee – 6 ECTS



Admission
(1st Sem.)



Y 1+2

Submit RP
(~3rd Sem.)



Y 3,4,5

Submit Thesis
(~9/10th Sem.)



Y 6

What is a dissertation?

- **Original** academic work, supported by Supervision Team
- Participation (at least temporary) in academic discourse in the respective academic unit(s)
- Playing by the rules of...
 - Good scientific practice within the subject / discipline
 - WU as an academic institution
 - the Supervision Team
- More than just an extended diploma/master thesis

- Can I study the doctoral program beside my job?
- What are the chances for students from abroad/from other universities/from universities of applied science?
- Can I spend a research stay abroad / attend courses somewhere else?
- What are the critical points in a doctoral program?
- Do I have to „explain the world“ in my dissertation?
- How do I know if it would be better to abandon the dissertation project?

Can I study the doctoral program beside my job?

- Studying should have priority
- Time requirements
 - 180 ECTS in total = 4500 working hours in the course of 3 years
 - in 3 years: about 30 hours/week
 - in 4 years: about 20 hours/week
 - dissertation itself: about 15 hours/week
 - Continuity is important – interruptions may have negative effects
 - Plunging into another (mental) world
- Checking your resources
 - intellectual, temporal, social
 - financial
- It is possible to work on the side
- Good intentions alone are not enough ... ask your employer for support / leave options, etc.

What are the chances for students from other universities?

- No formal barriers
- Degree holders of other disciplines (e.g., Psychology):
300 ECTS of previous studies (Master & Bachelor) ->
additional courses prescribed (max. 28 ECTS)
- Generally, finding a supervisor it is easier for WU
students, as they are known to professors

Can I spend a research stay abroad / attend courses at another institution?

- NEURUS (Network of European and US Regional and Urban Studies)
 - Grant for working at dissertation abroad
 - 1 year program: one semester at WU, one semester at selected US schools (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, University of California at Irvine).
 - managed by International Office

- ENGAGE.EU PhD exchange
 - to attend courses at Engage partner universities

- Mobility grants for doctoral / PhD candidates (short term stay)
 - intended as help to cover travel expenses and encourage mobility
 - amount of up to €2000 per applicant (depending on yearly budget)
 - managed by Doctoral Office

Credit Transfer:

- courses attended at another university / summer schools / workshops / conferences (only as elective and if you presented a paper) can be accredited if certain criteria - formal ones (ECTS, doctoral level course) as well as with regard to contents (learning goals fit into curriculum) - are met
- -> application for credit transfer after attending the event to anerkennung@wu.ac.at

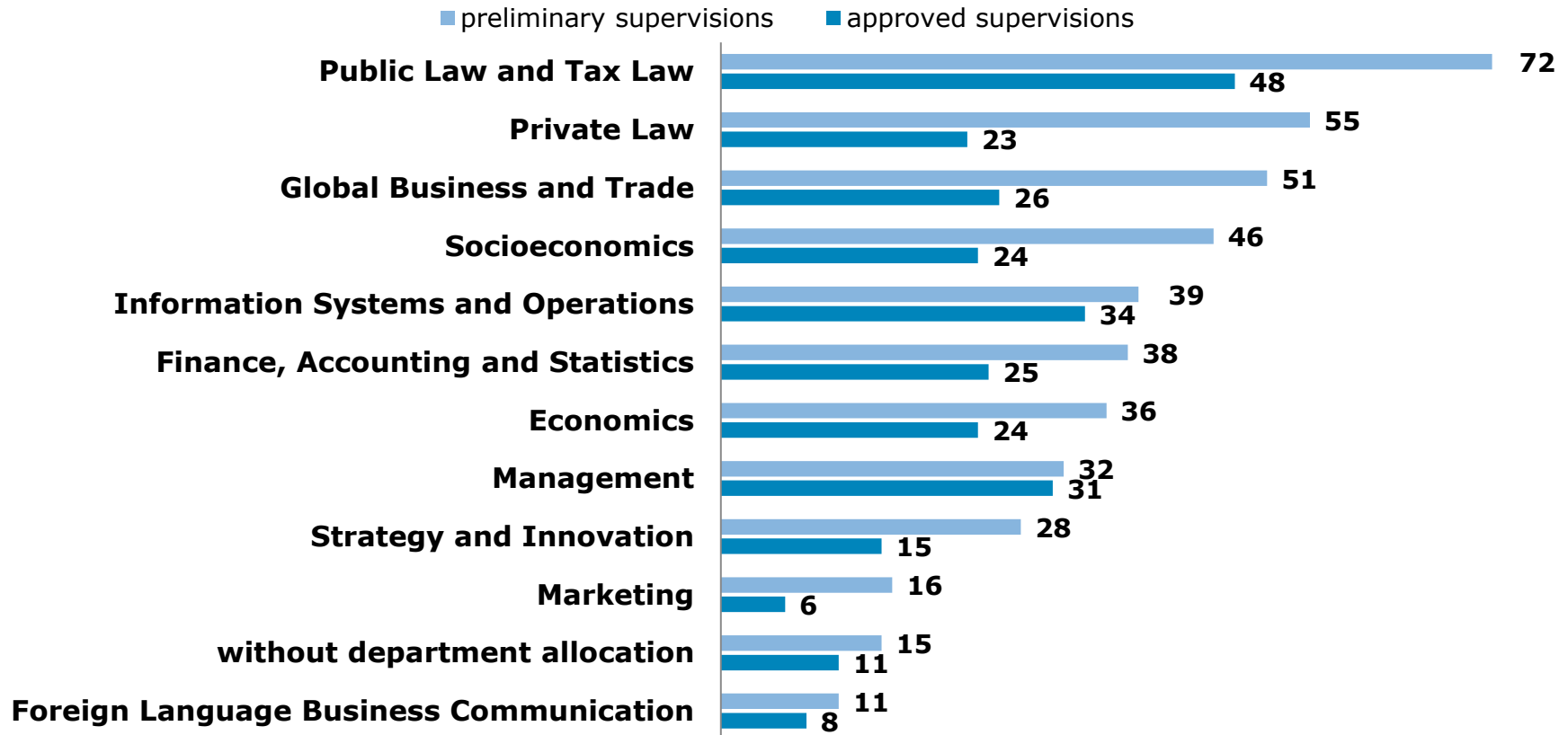
Co-registration / Mitbelegung:

- doctoral courses attended at another **Austrian** university as "Mitbeleger" can be transferred to your WU curriculum
- -> please write to doktoratsreferat@wu.ac.at **before** the course starts, as this has to be approved of in advance

What are the critical points in a doctoral program?

- Before admission: Finding a supervisor
 - Who is a potential Main Supervisor?
 - Any WU professor with a habilitation
 - External supervisors: only as a further member of the Supervision Team or Doctoral Committee
 - How to go about the search
 - Independently
 - Academic Director does NOT allocate supervisors
 - Job vacancies at WU – job advertisements
- What do I need when looking for a supervisor?
 - good idea / research gap / access to data
 - draft for a research proposal

Number of supervisions per department



Critical Point: Supervision

- Main Supervisor
- Supervision Team
 - On submission of the Research Proposal
 - Confirmed by the Academic Director
 - Proposed by the student, usually after consulting the Main Supervisor
 - Usually from WU, external professors possible

Critical Point: Research Proposal

- First phase of dissertation project:
 - What is the project's contribution to academic discourse?
 - How will the dissertation answer the research question?
- Three goals
 - Orientation
 - Mutual commitment
 - Initiation
- Accessible to all WU professors via the Intranet
- Comments from the Supervision Team
- Attendance of Academic Writing-course recommended
- Please submit early (within one year)

Do I have to “explain the world” in my dissertation?

- Scientific progress is a collective effort – we are standing ,on the shoulders of giants`
- A dissertation is a (usually small) contribution to academic discourse
 - In Germany alone, there are about 25,000 dissertations per year (all disciplines)
 - WU-Journal ratings (A+, A, B): 521 journals – about 10,000 articles per year
 - Journals not ranked: multiplied by 4
- That`s a relief...

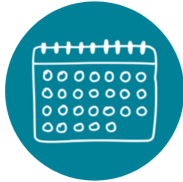
A dissertation is public!?

- § 86 of the Universities Act governs the **publication** for academic dissertations
 - If the student establishes that his/her legal/business interests would be materially endangered by permitting access, it is possible to withhold the access to the dissertation for a **maximum of 5 years**.
 - „I would not have been granted access to the data if had I not promised to withhold access“ or „If access is not withheld, some other party might exploit my data for commercial purposes“ are not good reasons...
- **Withholding access is in stark contrast to WU's open access policy!**
- Integral part of academic practice is that research findings are available to the scientific community – no „secret knowledge“
- Should sensitive data be shared with everyone? No – it is reasonable to keep original data private **BUT**
- results of doctoral thesis must become part of public discourse as soon as possible!
- Make sure at an early stage that you have permission to publish data, or that at least the scientific conclusion drawn from data can be made available.
- That articles are still under review is **not** a reason for withholding access!

How do I know if it would be better to abandon the dissertation project?

- Realizing that resources are not sufficient
 - resources = time, money, energy, intellect, ...
 - Synopsis as a first test
 - Introductory courses as a second test
- Unsuccessful search for a supervisor
 - ,make or break'-point
- Framing important: not a dropout (,failure'), but a decision taken after an exploration phase
- The earlier the better (most of the time...)

- Website
 - for persons interested in a doctoral/PhD program:
<https://www.wu.ac.at/studium/doktorat-phd/>
 - For doctoral/PhD students:
<https://www.wu.ac.at/studierende/mein-studium/doktorat-phd/programmuebergreifende-informationen/>
- Doctoral Office: Barbara Bauer / Antonia Lanner / Daniela Eder:
313 36/4025 or 4696; E-Mail: doctoraloffice@wu.ac.at
- ÖH-WU (StV Doktorat): stv-doktorat@wu.ac.at;
<https://www.wu.ac.at/en/stv-doktorat/home>
- [Our WU Student Counselling Team](#) can help in stressful situations and conflicts
- Consultation hours of the Academic Director
 - By appointment, registration via the Doctoral Office



Calendar of Activities

Each semester, we offer **interactive talks, trainings and workshops** on a variety of relevant topics that aim to make your student life easier and more effective.



Peer groups

Peer groups are spaces for exchange & learning from each other in **specific contexts**: studying & **neurodiversity**, **writing your bachelor theses**, **finding motivation**, **studying with children**. Our peer groups are held in German; English speakers welcome.



One-to-one Coaching

Do you have a **personal issue** that **you would like to share in a confidential setting** to figure out your own solution? - Make an appointment for one-on-one coaching.



DIY Toolbox

We've put together a few **tools** for you online that **you can use to work independently at home**.





VIENNA UNIVERSITY OF
ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

All the best for
your
intellectual
journey!