

Faculty of Theology Heidelberg

F.A.Q. on Ph.D.

Application and Admissions Process

1. [WHAT IS THE PH.D.?](#)
2. [WHAT ARE THE PREREQUISITES FOR AN APPLICATION?](#)
3. [ADMISSIONS PROCESS](#)
4. [WHAT HAPPENS AFTER ADMISSION TO THE PH.D. PROGRAM?](#)
5. [WHAT TITLE WILL BE AWARDED?](#)
6. [CONTACT PERSON](#)

1. WHAT IS THE PH.D.?

The structured doctoral program towards a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) is aimed primarily at doctoral students whose previous academic qualifications are in neighboring disciplines (e.g., ancient history or psychology) or from foreign universities (e.g., China or the USA), but who wish to write their dissertation on a theologically oriented topic under the theologically competent aegis of our faculty. The target group also encompasses doctoral students who have completed a specialized theological program of study (e.g., a Master's in "Christianity and Culture").

This program, oriented towards research and interdisciplinarity, imparts the competence to successfully work on academic research questions from the various fields within theology or the border areas between theology and other disciplines. The structured curriculum offers courses (e.g., advanced seminars, doctoral colloquia, departmental society meetings, modules on methodology) that enable learning processes which directly support the dissertation project and guarantee a high-quality education.

2. WHAT ARE THE PREREQUISITES FOR AN APPLICATION?

1. A completed degree, normally with a **good to very good final grade**, from a German university, or from an equivalent educational institution with a course of study equivalent to a German Diplom, state exam, or Master's degree in a field essential to the dissertation.
2. The admission of applicants who have completed a college or university degree outside of Germany and whose native language is not German additionally requires **proof of sufficient German language skills (at least DSH-2)**.
3. Skills in **source languages** necessary for the dissertation. Proof of such linguistic ability, if lacking at the time of application, can be submitted until the end of fourth semester of the Ph.D. program.
4. **Declaration of willingness from a university lecturer** or private lecturer to serve as academic advisor to the doctoral student in the framework of the Ph.D. program.

3. ADMISSIONS PROCESS:

What is the deadline for application?

Applications for admission to the Ph.D. program must be received by the Theology Faculty by **December 15th or June 15th**, respectively, for the following semester.

What documents are necessary for my application?

The application should be accompanied by the following documents:

1. **C.V.** with photo and presentation of academic career
2. **Documentation** of the prerequisites named above
 - degree completed with good to very good final grade
 - German language skills (at least DSH-2)
 - necessary skills in source languages
 - declaration from university lecturer of willingness to serve as advisor

3. **Two letters of recommendation** from university lecturers confirming the academic ability of the applicant
4. A **proposal** of the intended doctoral project, agreed upon with the potential advisor, of max. 5 pages (without attachments)

As soon as you find an academic advisor and a topic for your doctoral thesis, you have to register on the online platform [heiDOCS](#). After that you can hand in your application.

Who decides about my admission?

The **admissions committee** makes decisions about the admission of applicants to the Ph.D. program with a majority of members present. This committee consists of the dean as well as one faculty member from each of the four areas of specialization. One or two possible advisors of the dissertation from the Faculty of Theology can be brought in as advising members for individual cases.

Is there a limit to the number of participants?

Yes. At most **20 doctoral students** can be admitted to the Ph.D. program per semester. If there are more applicants than places, the admissions committee makes decisions through a ranking process.

What criteria determine the ranking?

1. university performance, achievement in studies
2. quality of the submitted proposal
3. existing linguistic and theological skills in areas relevant to the dissertation
4. assessment of the letters of recommendation

4. WHAT HAPPENS AFTER ADMISSION TO THE PH.D. PROGRAM?

At the beginning of the first year of study, an **orientation interview** takes place between the doctoral student and the advisor, where a set of objectives will be agreed upon in which the **doctoral topic** and a **three-year work schedule** will be established. At the beginning of each following year of study, the doctoral student will submit a report, on the basis of which further orientation interviews will take place.

5. WHAT TITLE WILL BE AWARDED?

Following the completion of the doctoral procedure within this structured Ph.D. program, the Theology Faculty of the University of Heidelberg awards the academic degree **“Doctor of Philosophy” (Ph.D.)**.

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