

## Cotutelle-Guide:

The cotutelle programme allows an early career researcher to complete a joint doctorate at two universities in two different countries. Essentially, it involves one degree awarded on the basis of a single academic contribution (i.e. doctoral thesis) produced as a result of research undertaken at two different institutions. The participating institutions cooperate closely in the selection, supervision and assessment of the particular candidate and accredit doctoral research work completed at the other institution. The following contains advice on ways in which to regulate a cooperation of this nature based both on legal requirements and on the experience of cotutelle programmes from the past few years. Most of the recommendations are based on a German-French context since the cotutelle programme was first introduced on a French initiative and the majority of the experience thus far has been with German-French cooperations. The basic principles of the cotutelle model can also be applied to joint supervision projects with universities in other countries, but may in some specific cases need to be supplemented by individual agreements. The type of candidate most suited to a cotutelle programme is one who, above all, wishes to:

- Secure academic links to both participating countries,
- Decide at a later date which country they would like to work in,
- Continue in bi-national fields of work, or
- Maintain a research focus that is strongly connected to the other country.

Through joint supervision by a professor in Germany and another in the respective partner country, the doctoral student engages intensively with different types of research culture and academic structures. This equips them with additional skills that extend far beyond advanced foreign language skills and an in-depth understanding of the other country. It can, therefore, be assumed that graduates from cross-border doctoral programmes have better career prospects. The experience of doctoral degree holders thus far seems to indicate that this is indeed the case, although there is no quantifiable evidence available as yet. A requirement of this additional qualification is a balance between the proportion of time spent at each of the participating institutions. On a cotutelle programme, the length of stay at each of the participating institutions should be at least 12 months.

In view of the internationalisation of higher education as part of the Bologna Process and the inclusion of doctoral studies in this development, it can be expected that cotutelle arrangements will play an increasingly significant role in the future. Although the cotutelle model does not itself offer a set structure for doctoral studies, the negotiation and agreement of the expected requirements by two institutions will generally lead to a clear structuring of the research project in specific stages. As structured programmes start to become established, it is likely that the cotutelle model will become an important tool in developing cooperations between different Graduate Schools/Doctoral Schools. As a result, the cotutelle model programme will make a significant contribution to the internationalisation of doctoral studies.

### **Legal requirements**

A prerequisite of any cotutelle programmes is a contract on joint supervision, which is to be concluded by the two institutions involved in each individual cotutelle project. A subject-specific or general contract on joint supervision between two institutions can provide the basic foundation of an agreement but this must be supplemented by an

individual agreement. The contract on joint supervision should be drawn up very carefully in order to avoid potential problems arising during the course of the joint doctoral programme. The agreements on the format of the oral examination and the composition of the jury in particular should be defined very precisely, since this is the stage of the process where the most difficulties in reaching a consensus generally occur. Since there is a lack of a unified national policy similar to the French decree of January 2005 because of the federal structure of Germany and the rights of institutions, German institutions may encounter some problems in implementing the recommendations of the French institution.

It is, however, not possible for institutions to proceed with a cotutelle programme without a legal basis. Several institutions have, therefore, taken the step of amending or supplementing their doctoral examination regulations to accommodate the requirements of cotutelle programmes. The HRK strongly recommends an amendment to the doctoral examination regulations where necessary to enable an institution to proceed with a cotutelle programme. In contrast with an earlier decree issued by the French Ministry of Education, the current decree (of January 2005) includes a general opening clause allowing for some divergence from the procedures prescribed in France in individual cases. The procedure that is to be followed can, therefore, be negotiated by both institutions in accordance with their respective doctoral examination regulations without any obligation on the part of the French institution to adhere to binding ministerial regulations.

### **Point of contact at the institutions**

The HRK strongly recommends that any institution interested in participating in a cotutelle programme nominate a single point of contact at their institution (e.g. the international office, doctoral committee or graduate office or the student advisory office).

### **Contract on joint supervision ('Kooperationsvertrag')**

The following comments refer to the most important aspects of a contract on joint supervision for cross-border doctoral examination procedures and are thus deliberately general in their formulation. Please also refer to the template for a cotutelle contract which includes suggested formulations for a German-French contract.

The participating institutions are responsible for the final version of the contract and for ensuring that the respective doctoral examination regulations and also any possible particular requirements of the doctoral student are given due consideration. If necessary, the institutions are obliged to agree mutually on a specific bilateral arrangement.

The contract on joint supervision must take into account the stipulations of the doctoral examination regulations of each of the participating institutions. If necessary, an amendment to the doctoral examination regulations to accommodate the requirements of cotutelle programmes may be recommended (c.f. the Law faculties at the universities of Freiburg, Munich and the Saarland).

#### *Administrative issues:*

- The doctoral student enrolls at both institutions. Any fees required for administration or tuition are only to be paid at one of the institutions. He/she has the same rights and responsibilities as any other doctoral student enrolled at the institutions.

- The doctoral student is subject to regulations on social security insurance and is responsible for obtaining adequate insurance cover.
- The travel and living costs of doctoral students must be financed from private sources (or possibly funded through a research grant).
- An agreement must be reached by all parties involved on responsibility for travel expenses related to supervision and the final examination.

*Doctoral examination procedure:*

- Prior to agreeing an individual contract on joint supervision, the candidate in question must have been formally accepted as a doctoral student, that is, the candidate must have fulfilled the admission requirements. The stipulations of the doctoral examination regulations of both institutions must be taken into account.
- The doctoral thesis will be supervised equally by the academic supervisors at both institutions. Both supervisors must commit completely themselves to providing academic supervision of the doctoral thesis and must agree to consult each other on any related issues as and when required.
- At least 12 months must be spent working at the partner institution.
- Protection of the thesis topic as well as the publishing, processing and protection of the results (i.e. intellectual copyright) is governed by the regulations applicable in both of the countries involved in supervising the doctoral studies. The number of copies of the thesis to be submitted to each of the institutions is defined by the respective regulations of the institution. The institutions are obliged to inform each other about the precise conditions of their formal requirements.
- It should be noted that in the case of contract research for private institutions or companies the conditions of publication for each of the countries involved must be agreed with the contracting authority.
- Language policy: the thesis should be written in the language of one of the participating institutions and a summary written in the other language. In addition, the doctoral examination regulations may stipulate that a summary in a further language also be included. It is also envisaged that the oral component of the doctoral examination procedure can be conducted in both languages. In the case of a doctoral thesis written in a third language, summaries in the languages of the participating institutions are to be included.
- The issue of the form which the oral examination is to take must be defined in the contract on joint supervision. Whereas in France the common form of oral assessment is a 'soutenance' (equivalent to a 'Disputation' or oral defence), many German doctoral examinations require the candidate to take a 'Rigorosum'. Any exceptions made in the specific case of a cotutelle doctoral programme must be previously defined in the doctoral examination regulations (with an amendment to the doctoral examination regulations where necessary), since individual subject regulations are not valid. Furthermore, the contract partners must agree on the specific requirements of the oral examination. Whereas in France doctoral students will study and be examined in one subject only, it is common in Germany for a second subject to be examined during the 'Rigorosum' form of oral examination. In practice, the 'Disputation' form of oral examination has become common in cotutelle programmes.

- An agreement must be reached on the composition of the jury for the oral examination. It should be noted that French state specifications have become more flexible since the decree of January 2005, so that an equal representation of both countries in the composition of the jury is no longer absolutely necessary. The doctoral examination regulations of the participating institutions may include very different provisions. An agreement between the two parties must, therefore, be reached on the composition of the jury (with an amendment to the doctoral examination regulations where necessary).
- An agreement must be reached on who is to cover the expenses of the supervisors and the members of oral examination jury.
- Awarding of grades: due to the different grading traditions in the countries involved and the different consequences for the (academic) job market, a consistent joint grading of the written and oral components of the doctoral degree requirements has proven difficult in practice. The recommendation is, therefore, to retain the grading systems of both countries involved. This may, in certain circumstances, result in two different types of grade according to the common practices of each country. The participating institutions should come to a prior agreement on the format for the awarding of grades (e.g. grades given in the original form) and specify this in the contract on joint supervision.
- On successful completion of the doctoral examination procedure, a certificate jointly issued by both partner universities will be awarded (based on the HRK template). The certificate will include a statement indicating that the doctoral examination procedure was conducted in cooperation with a partner university abroad. The doctoral degree certificate will include the official insignia of both participating faculties. On receipt of the doctoral degree certificate, the doctoral student attains the right to bear the title of doctor in the Federal Republic of Germany and also to bear the corresponding doctoral title in the country in which the participating faculty is based.
- If both institutions cannot agree on the awarding of a single certificate, then the separate certificates must include a note to the effect that the certificate is only valid in conjunction with the other doctoral degree certificate. This cross-reference on the certificates will prevent any abuse regarding the use of doctoral titles. The doctoral degree holder has the right to use either the German or the foreign form of the doctoral title. The names of the two universities at which the doctoral studies have been supervised can be included here in brackets. Since doctoral degree certificates in France are all issued by the Ministry of Education, and French employers will, in practice, only these accept these the French Ministry of Education will issue an additional certificate in the generally recognised format. This (national) certificate will include an explicit reference to the specific cross-border nature of the doctoral thesis.