

Binational PhD

The “cotutelle de thèse” process within the scope of Dr. phil. / Dr. rer. pol. degrees at the Ludwig Maximilian University Munich

How binational PhDs started at LMU

At the end of the 1990s some doctoral students decided to do their PhDs within the framework of a “cotutelle” agreement with universities in France. They had studied in France during their Magister degrees and their supervisors in both countries set themselves the goal of continuing the cooperation. A French decree dated 18.01.1994 provided the legal foundation for binational PhDs.

Voilà! With the support and help of the French embassy, the Dr. phil. examination board at LMU launched the binational PhD in the humanities and social sciences. In August 1999, three agreements were signed with Université Paris 8, Université Paris 12 and the University of Tours.

The PhD examination board has since signed cotutelle agreements with many universities in France and in other European countries: Italy, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Switzerland, Spain, the Czech Republic and Hungary. An amendment governing the conclusion of cotutelle agreements was also added to the doctoral degree regulations (Dr. phil. / Dr. rer. pol.).

The cotutelle process

The cotutelle process is specifically for young academics who have already gained academic experience abroad during their first degree and who want to expand on this experience, pursue a particular area of research abroad, or benefit from the special cooperation of two professors at LMU and at a foreign university.

The doctoral degree is acquired in a joint examination procedure based on an agreement between the foreign university and LMU. The supervision by professors at the two universities, enrolment and the periods of time spent at the universities, and the terms of the examination (subject of the dissertation, language of the dissertation and the oral examination, members of the jury) are set out in the agreement. LMU and the participating university undertake – after the PhD has been completed (receipt of the dissertation, completion of the oral examination and publication of the dissertation) – to each issue the candidate with a doctoral certificate in line with the national regulations.

The skills and knowledge are acquired in two countries that generally have different languages, cultures and university systems. The cotutelle process facilitates mobility between the different systems. Thus it is specifically tailored to candidates pursuing an international academic career. The cotutelle process is not the right tool if the candidate only wants a second expert from a foreign university to participate in the doctoral examination process. In this case, the appointment of an examiner would be the more appropriate procedure.