



Thesis Submission & Defence at the UoC

at the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences – MNF

1. Official Regulations – Please Read First

All legally binding information regarding thesis submission, admission to the doctoral examination, defence (Disputation), grading, and publication is provided exclusively by the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences (MNF), University of Cologne.

Please consult:

🔗 Completion of the Doctorate – MNF Doctoral Office <https://mathnat.uni-koeln.de/en/phd/completion-of-the-doctorate>

The MNF website provides:

- Overview of the doctoral procedure (scheme)
- Deadlines & examination periods
- Required forms
- Checklist
- [Doctoral Degree Regulations](#) (June 12, 2025)

The official homepage is continuously updated. Always rely on the MNF website as the primary and binding source.

This IMPRS document highlights practical aspects relevant for MPIPZ / GSfBS doctoral candidates and common points where complications may arise.

2. IMPRS / GSfBS Requirements Before Admission

These points are frequently checked during admission to the doctoral examination.

2.1 TAC Meeting Intervals

- The time between two TAC meetings must not exceed **14 months**.
- Deviations (e.g. scheduling constraints, special circumstances) must be:
 - communicated to the [IMPRS PhD Office](#), and
 - communicated in advance to the GSfBS coordinators ([Isabell Witt](#): A–L; [Katerina Vlantis](#): M–Z).

The internal IMPRS TAC schedule (6 – 12 – 24 – 36 months etc.) remains unchanged:

- 6-month TAC report = project proposal
- Final TAC report = thesis outline

2.2 TAC Documentation (Docfile – GSfBS G-folder)

After each TAC meeting, you must upload:

- TAC report
- Signed TAC meeting minutes to the **GSfBS G-folder in Docfile**.

This upload is the responsibility of the doctoral candidate.

Failure to upload complete documentation may delay admission to the doctoral examination.

2.3 Good Scientific Practice Training

Participation in a course on Good Scientific Practice within the first year is mandatory.

For IMPRS candidates, this is covered by internal training (e.g. PhD Welcome Days). Make sure your participation is properly documented and ideally uploaded into the GSfBS G-folder in Docfile as well.

3. Examination Committee – Key Points for MPIPZ Candidates

The official regulations regarding the examination committee are defined in §8–§10 of the [Doctoral Degree Regulations](#) and described on the [MNF homepage](#).

Below are practical clarifications relevant for MPIPZ candidates.

3.1 Composition (Typical Case)

The examination committee consists of:

- Reviewer 1
- Reviewer 2
- Chair
- Assessor (Beisitzer)

Reviewer 1

Typically your formal supervisor.

Please note: Not all MPIPZ group leaders have the formal right to supervise at UoC. Clarify early if needed.

Reviewer 2

Must fulfill the eligibility requirements defined by MNF.

Important for MPIPZ candidates:

- One reviewer must be a **full professor of the MNF at UoC**.
- If your first reviewer is an MPIPZ group leader, your second reviewer must typically be a full professor at UoC.
- The second reviewer must be independent (no direct scientific collaboration with you, but can be a TAC member if no publication with you, your group leader and the reviewer was published).

If you are unsure about eligibility or independence, contact the [✉IMPRS PhD Office](#) early.

Chair

- Must be a professor of the MNF at UoC.
- Must be sufficiently independent (see regulations).
- Does not evaluate the written thesis but co-evaluates the defence.

Assessor (Beisitzer)

- Must hold a PhD.
- Takes minutes of the defence.
- Does not grade thesis or defence.

Ensure that your assessor is familiar with the official minute form before the defence.

Early clarification of committee composition prevents significant delays at admission stage.

4. Scheduling the Defence – Practical Steps at MPIPZ

The examination period is linked to the submission date of your thesis. Therefore, coordinate your defence date well before submission. [Official deadlines and examination periods](#) are published on the MNF homepage.

4.1 Format of the Defence (On-Site, Online, Hybrid)

According to the [Doctoral Degree Regulations](#), the defence may take place:

- On-site (in person),
- Online, or
- In a hybrid format.

At MPIPZ, online or hybrid defences are possible **if the chair and both reviewers explicitly agree**.

Please clarify the format early when assembling your examination committee.

Important:

- The doctoral candidate remains responsible for the technical setup in online or hybrid formats.
- Ensure stable internet, proper audio, and presentation functionality.
- The examination must remain confidential during the evaluation phase.

If you are unsure whether your planned format complies with current MNF requirements, contact the [✉MNF doctoral office](#) and inform the [✉IMPRS PhD Office](#).

4.2 Room Booking (On-Site Defence)

A general procedure how to book rooms can be found [here](#). Typical lecture halls used at MPIPZ / UoC:

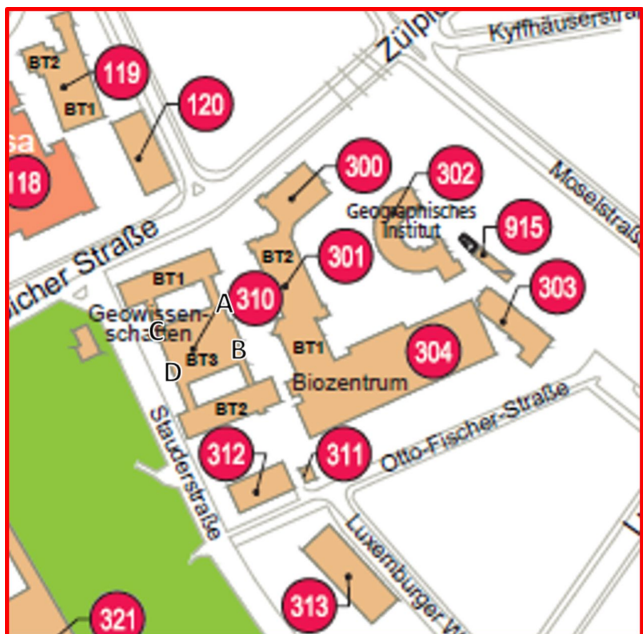


Figure: Overview Buildings typically used for defences at UoC

UoC:

Lecture Hall Cologne Biocenter (building 304)

- Hörsaal 0.024 (*Hörsaal* 0.024, code: 304/EG/0.024)
- Zulpicher Str. 47b, Ground floor
- contact ✉ [Ann-Katrin Ullrich](mailto:Ann-Katrin.Ullrich@uni-koeln.de) and ✉ [Jan Weber](mailto:Jan.Weber@uni-koeln.de)

COMB – Center of Molecular Biology (building 301)

- Hörsaal 0.40 (*Hörsaal* 0.40, code: 301/EG/0.40),
- Zulpicher Str. 47a, Ground floor
- contact ✉ comb-rooms@uni-koeln.de

COPT Building (building 315)

- Hörsaal 0.10 (*Hörsaal* 0.10, code: 315/EG/0.10)
- Luxemburger Str. 90, Ground floor
- contact ✉ lehrraum54@verw.uni-koeln.de

MPIPZ:

Jeff Schell Lecture Hall

- Carl-von-Linné Weg 10, Ground floor
- Reservation via your departmental office

Room booking is the responsibility of the doctoral candidate.

After booking:

- Confirm date and location with your examination committee.
- Complete and sign the [Terminbogen](#) (defence scheduling form).
- Upload the form to the Docfile **D**-folder.
- Inform the ✉ [MNF doctoral office](#) (cc: ✉ [IMPRS PhD Office](#), Subject: “Disputation Date, Biology”)
- If you need to book hybrid setup, keep in mind to include the IT at MPIPZ early one.

Important:

Send the notification at least **one week before the examination period begins** — not one week before the defence itself.

4.2 Defence Announcement at MPIPZ

PhD defences should be announced via the institute’s screens using the [template](#).

Please:

- Send an email announcement using the [template](#) to the whole institute or to your department only.
- Send the completed template to the ✉ [IMPRS PhD Office](#) once the defence date is fixed for upload on the institute’s screens.

5. Thesis Submission – Administrative Checklist

Before contacting the ✉ [MNF doctoral office](#) (cc: ✉ [IMPRS PhD Office](#)):

5.1 Update Docfile Completely

Upload required documents to:

- G-folder (GSfBS documentation) – Select GSfBS only
- D-folder (admission documents)

Typical required D-folder documents include:

- CV with photo
- Course of study certificate (KLIPS)
- Signed Application for Admission
- ID copy

Important:

The deadline for GSfBS signature processing for the application for admission is typically **Friday 12:00 (noon)** before the Monday MNF deadline. Plan accordingly.

Incomplete Docfile entries are one of the most common causes of delays.

5.2 After Upload

Email the [✉MNF doctoral office](#) (cc: [✉IMPRS PhD Office](#)) with subject: "Admission to examinations, Biology". State that all required documents are uploaded.

5.4 Thesis Template and Publication Version

An official thesis template is available via the [MNF doctoral office](#). The template includes:

- The required title page format
- The Declaration (Eidesstattliche Erklärung)
- Mandatory formal elements according to the [Doctoral Degree Regulations](#)

Please use the official template and adhere strictly to the required title page format. The wording and structure of the title page must not be altered.

Important:**Submitted Version vs. Published Version**

The version submitted for examination contains signed documents (e.g. Declaration).

Before publication via KUPS (see point 7), all pages containing signatures must be removed.

The published version must:

- Contain the correct title page (including place of publication, typically "Köln", and year of publication)
- Not contain any signatures
- Be identical in scientific content to the examined version (no content changes permitted)

Only formal corrections (e.g. spelling or formatting) may be made after submission. Changes to scientific content are not allowed.

If you are unsure which pages must be removed prior to publication, contact the [✉MNF doctoral office](#) (cc: [✉IMPRS PhD Office](#)) before uploading to KUPS.

5.3 Thesis submission

The MNF doctoral office will review your application for admission to the doctoral examination. You will receive confirmation once you are formally admitted and allowed to submit your thesis.

After receiving admission confirmation:

- Upload the final version of your thesis (PDF) to the Docfile D-folder.
- Submit the thesis by the official deadline.
- Send the thesis (PDF or download link, if file size is too large) to your examination committee (reviewers and chair), with the [✉MNF doctoral office](#) and the [✉IMPRS PhD Office](#) in copy.

Please ensure that all committee members receive the thesis on the same day and within the official submission deadline.

6. Defence Procedure (Short Overview)

The defence:

- Is open to university members.
- Includes a 20-minute presentation.
- Followed by questioning by the examination committee.
- Must last at least one hour and not exceed 90 minutes.

After the defence:

- The committee evaluates in private.
- The minute form must be submitted by the chair or assessor to the [✉MNF doctoral office](#).
- Ensure that the chair or assessor sends the signed minutes.

The doctoral thesis and the defence are graded separately using the following scale:

- **0** = with distinction (*summa cum laude*)
- **1** = very good (*magna cum laude*)
- **2** = good (*cum laude*)
- **3** = sufficient (*rite*)
- **4** = insufficient (*insufficiens*)

Intermediate grades are possible (e.g. 0.7, 1.3, 1.7, 2.3).

Important Clarifications Regarding a Third External Reviewer:

If a thesis is proposed for *summa cum laude*, an additional external reviewer is required according to the [Doctoral Degree Regulations](#).

Based on current faculty practice, please consider the following when proposing an external reviewer:

- The external reviewer should normally be a professor at a university or hold an equivalent senior academic position at a research institution (e.g. Director at a Max Planck Institute).
- Junior professors may be eligible if they have demonstrated scientific achievements beyond their dissertation.
- The external reviewer must be independent. In particular, close scientific collaboration (e.g. recent co-authorship within the past years) with the supervisor or doctoral candidate may prevent eligibility.
- We strongly recommend clarifying eligibility and independence with the MNF doctoral office before formal nomination.

The MNF doctoral office will formally assess whether all requirements are fulfilled.

For legally binding criteria, please consult the [Doctoral Degree Regulations](#) and the [✉MNF doctoral office](#) (cc: [✉IMPRS PhD Office](#)) directly.

7. After Successful Defence

Congratulations — but administrative steps remain.

7.1 Publication of the thesis

The thesis must be published, typically within one year. Publication is handled via the KUPS system (University of Cologne publication server).

Consult the [MNF homepage](#) and [KUPS website](#) for:

- Electronic publication
- Non-electronic publication
- Author's agreement
- Library submission

Failure to publish within deadline delays issuance of the doctoral certificate. Printed versions for the MNF doctoral office are no longer required.

7.2 Doctoral Certificate

Upon successful publication of the thesis in the KUPS system, KUPS will usually inform the MNF doctoral office automatically. To be on the safe side, we recommend to inform the [✉MNF doctoral office](#) (cc: [✉IMPRS PhD Office](#)) by email about your library submission.

The formal certificate is issued after:

- Successful defence
- Publication of the thesis

It is only sent within Germany. Contact the [✉IMPRS PhD Office](#) if special arrangements are required.

In addition, the [✉IMPRS PhD Office](#) will in addition issue an IMPRS certificate as well as an IMPRS transcript and will contact you after your successful defence.

8. General Recommendation

Throughout the entire process:

- Inform the [✉IMPRS PhD Office](#) early.
- Include the [✉IMPRS PhD Office](#) in relevant email communication.
- Clarify uncertainties before submission.

Our goal is to ensure that your admission to the doctoral examination and defence proceeds smoothly and without preventable delays.