

Freie Universität Berlin,  
Department of History and cultural studies,  
PhD office,  
Fabeckstr. 23-25, 14195 Berlin

Dear Ladies and gentlemen,  
dear colleagues,  
dear doctoral students,

Due to the current situation regarding SARS-CoV-2, we would like to provide you with the latest information on upcoming and ongoing doctoral procedures at the Department of History and Cultural Studies. The Freie Universität Berlin is closing its facilities until further notice.

*Attention: Please use your FU e-mail address (zedat) for inquiries or, in the case of external e-mail addresses, always send a copy of a personal document as an attachment for verification purposes.*

- All consultation hours are cancelled until further notice. From now on, the PhD office can only be contacted by email. If you wish to contact us by phone, please let us know your phone number and a possible calling time during normal business hours.
- Documents and applications can still be sent to us by post (letters) or until further notice by scan (with signature) via email from the FU address. If you use an external email address, please always send us a copy of a valid, official personnel document in the attachment for verification purposes. The sending of packages is currently not possible. Please understand that the processing of requests will be delayed.
- If your regular processing time will end in the near future, please send us the application for extension of the regular processing time as a scan (with scanned signature or "Digitale Signatur"). From the seventh year of admission, we still need an informal approval from your supervisor, currently by e-mail. The supervisor's e-mail should be sent directly from the personal institution e-mail to the PhD office.
- Documents that require the signature/approval of your supervisors must be sent to us from their email address. Forwarding with scanned signatures by doctoral candidates is unfortunately not sufficient.
- The issuing of PhD certificates will unfortunately be delayed for an undefined period of time. We apologize for this. If you urgently need a confirmation of the status of your doctoral studies after the publication, we can try to send you an electronic confirmation in advance. This will include confirmation about the publication from the university library ("Hochschulschriftenstelle").

Due to the minimal presence at the FU Berlin, the PhD Board of the department has, in its meeting on 22.04.2020, made the following decisions regarding the digital processing of doctoral procedures:

### **Submission of dissertations / opening of doctoral procedures**

From now on and until further notice, until the FU Berlin is fully operative, it will be possible to submit dissertations as unchangeable PDF files to open doctoral procedures without the need for a separate application. In addition to the regular documents required for the opening of doctoral procedures, the following points must be fulfilled for the submission of a dissertation in digital form and the following documents must be submitted:

- Sending of an unchangeable PDF document of the dissertation from a zedat address with identification of the version of the dissertation. The version corresponds to the date of the file's sending and should be indicated on the title page
- Declaration of consent of the doctoral students, in the email with which the PDF document is sent, that the PDF document of the dissertation may be sent by e-mail to the participants in the procedure / commission members for evaluation
- Declaration of consent of the doctoral students, in the email with which the PDF document is sent, for the digital presentation of the dissertation as well as the evaluations and possible statements to university teachers and doctoral members of the department within the display period
- Declaration of consent of the doctoral students, in the email with which the PDF document is sent, to send the reports to the members of the commission and the members of the PhD board
- Additional submission of one printed version of the dissertation (hardcopy), which must be identical to the submitted PDF document, at the latest by the start of full regular operation of the FU Berlin. We recommend to order the print directly after sending the PDF version of the dissertation at a copy shop in order to avoid confusion in the versions which would cause procedural mistakes.
- Signed declaration by the doctoral students inserted in the printed dissertation that the submitted PDF document and the bound dissertation are identical

### **Display of dissertations**

The PhD Board decides to display dissertations and the corresponding grade suggestions digitally via the FU Box during the minimum presence of the FU Berlin. Interrupted display periods resulting from the minimum presence will also be continued digitally.

### **Carrying out disputations**

The PhD board decides that during the minimal presence of the FU Berlin, disputations via video conferencing are possible on application. The decision about the application is made by the chairperson of the PhD Board, provided the following points are met:

- Submission of a reasoned application with a scanned signature by the doctoral candidates for the holding of a disputation via video conferencing, naming a video system that complies with data protection regulations. The video conferencing systems supervised by Zedat are suitable for this purpose.

- All persons involved in the procedure (commission members / doctoral candidates) must agree to the carrying out of the disputation via video conference call. The consent can be communicated informally from a Zedat e-mail address for FU members or from an institute e-mail address of external commission members
- For disputations via video conferencing, the PhD board recommends the Cisco Webex System, which is supported by Zedat.
- The chairperson of the committee should be the host of the video conference and organize the technical preparation of the disputation via video conference.
- The invitation to the video conference system should also be sent to the PhD office.
- The verification of the candidate's identity must be ensured by presenting an officially valid personal document, e.g. by showing the document visibly and readably to the camera.
- Interruptions during the disputation that are due to technical reasons must be noted in the protocol. In the case of technical interruptions, the disputation and voting session can be continued as soon as all parties to the proceedings are back in the video conference system. Should the systems of certain participants be unavailable for a longer period of time, so that a presence is de facto not possible, the disputation must be cancelled, as not all commission members would be present, which would result in an invalid disputation. The decision on this will be made by the chairperson of the commission after a reasonable waiting period.

The above measures / information apply until further notice. We ask for your understanding that some decisions have to be adjusted in such a dynamic situation, but we still try to find the best possible solution.

We will of course inform you as soon as possible when the regular operation of the university has been resumed and also assure you that you will not suffer any disadvantages in the procedure as a result of the above measures.

Stay healthy and take care of yourself and your fellow human beings.

With kind regards

Your PhD office team  
(Status 04.05.2020)

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