

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: HABILITATION**| What is a „Habilitation“ all about?**

In Germany, an academic career leading to being a full professor at a chair comprises two steps of different qualification levels. The first one is a PhD program, either at a graduate school or at a chair of a university awarding doctoral titles.

The second step can be a junior professorship, ideally on a tenure track position, leading into a full professorship after a positive evaluation process.

As an alternative and more traditional way of an advanced academic qualification in Germany, post-doctoral researchers can spend up to 6 years on their habilitation process. This does not go along with holding a chair like junior professors do. Usually, young academics hold contracts at a chair, supporting its professor in teaching and research matters.

There are advantages and disadvantages to either way of the second qualification step. Whereas post-doctoral candidates often criticize their alleged dependence on the holders of their chair, junior professorships have not been established with a tenure track position too often since the introduction of this academic concept in Germany.

On the other hand, especially the concept of the Habilitation stands for a solid advanced academic degree in Germany, setting itself apart from the growing number of doctoral titles being awarded every year. It opens the door to holding a chair in Germany, but also gives room for alternatives, be it a position in think tanks, in research institutes, or consulting activities for politics and society.

| What needs to be done in order to go through the examination process of a Habilitation?

The examination as such consists of two parts. The most important one is the written achievement. It can be a monograph or a cumulative work. The latter one explains the overall research connection of different papers that have been published during the years after the doctoral examination. The first one is the traditional book presenting own theories and ideas emerging from your research areas of interest. There is no rule as to what way you are to choose. It is part of your own decision, or part of the overall research tradition in your subject or at your chair.

Once the written habilitation achievement is handed in, your professional mentoring group will write expertises on it. It is then laid out to the public at Zeppelin University. You will have to defend it during a public lecture that is given at Zeppelin University in the presence of at least 50 per cent of its full professors.

| What are the requirements?

For the admission to the process of the Habilitation, a doctoral degree from a German university must be possessed that received a minimum score of “very good | magna cum laude” or a comparable grade. An equivalent quality of a foreign university needs to be proved beforehand.

Furthermore, candidates must demonstrate several years of experience in scientific research (publications, grants) and teaching prior to the application process.

| Who are the examiners?

The process of the Habilitation is guided by the so-called Habilitation Committee. It consists of all full professors at Zeppelin University. The committee makes decisions as to the application of the candidate, the professional mentoring group of the candidate, the result of the interim evaluation and the final examination process including the final result of the Habilitation.

The program director of the Zeppelin University Graduate School manages the day-to-day business of the Committee. This is why you are in good hands at the ZUGS when it comes to counseling or the handing in of any documents.

There are no deadlines for committee meetings. Whenever a candidate is ready for the next step in the process, the ZUGS program director will give notice to the Committee’s chairman who then calls a meeting.

There are four examiners to the Habilitation. A candidate can choose up to 2 full professors of Zeppelin University for being his or her professional mentor. At least one member of this so-called professional mentoring group (out of 3 members) must come from a university in Germany or abroad that is not Zeppelin University. Later in the process, when it comes to reviewing the written achievement of the Habilitation, a fourth examiner must hand in an expertise, too.

| What is the outcome of a Habilitation?

The overall result of a Habilitation can either be “passed” or “failed” – there are no grades. When passing the Habilitation, the Habilitation Committee awards the postdoctoral teaching qualification for the candidate’s subject (“venia legendi”). It is certified by a corresponding document. Along with the awarding of the teaching qualification goes the right to use the title “lecturer” (“Privatdozent”).

Lecturers must hold seminars in their subject or subject area of at least 2 hours per semester week at Zeppelin University. This lectureship duty and the teaching qualification are terminated for instance by appointment as a professor at another university.

| Where can I get more detailed information?

The Habilitation Regulations of Zeppelin University offer any piece of information needed. This is their table of contents:

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V Awarding of the teaching certification

Section 20: Awarding of the teaching certification; certificate

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Do not hesitate and contact the Graduate School for any other questions and doubts.