

The Doctoral Programme at SFU

Course Aims

The aim of the Doctoral Programme at Sigmund Freud University Vienna is to provide students with the experience and resources to pursue individual scientific research in the field of psychotherapy science. Successful candidates will conduct a research project in a topic of their own choice and write a doctoral thesis. Completion of the Doctoral Programme does not lead to a license allowing for the practice as psychotherapist.

Methodology Profile

(1) Topics for research and doctoral theses should fall within the wide spectrum of psychotherapy science. As the first university to offer study programmes in psychotherapy science, SFU has developed a methodology profile to serve as a basis for course contents and theses. Emphasis will be placed on:

- empirical research using qualitative methods;
- empirical-statistical research using quantitative methods;
- theoretical research aimed at providing answers to questions related to theory formation in psychotherapy science;
- historical research examining developments within psychotherapy science;
- critiquing research in relation to research institutions, research methods and schools of psychotherapy.

(2) SFU gives students considerable freedom to choose a methodology. Applicants wishing to use other methodology for their doctoral theses than mentioned in the Methodology Profile, in particular experimental methods, may present their proposals to the Doctoral Committee in an initial meeting, who will decide on the feasibility of the project.

(3) The coursework of the Doctoral Programme reflects the Methodology Profile described above. Focus will be brought on the following qualitative research methods:

- **biography research**
- **narrative analysis**
- **discourse analysis**
- **metaphor analysis**
- **other qualitative research methods**

As qualitative research methods comprise a number of techniques such as biography research, narrative analysis, metaphor analysis (cognitive theory and cognitive linguistics), discourse analysis, the documentary method and text analysis, they open up a wide range of possibilities for inter- and transdisciplinary research. Applicants will explore interfaces between psychotherapy science and sociology, the science of history, the humanities, ethnology, linguistics and literature, for instance by looking at life event research, disaster research, oral history, psychohistory, ethnopschoanalysis and narratology.

(4) Candidates may also write theses using quantitative and experimental methods or epidemiological research. Focus will be brought on the following quantitative research methods:

- **computer-assisted text analysis;**
- **system theoretical and mathematical modeling applications in psychotherapy**
- **quantitative analysis in the psychotherapeutic process (understanding, resistance, therapeutic interventions, etc.)**
- **efficacy studies of psychotherapy methods**
- **comparative psychotherapy research**
- **examination of factors relevant for the efficacy of psychotherapy methods**
- **relations and interplay between psychopathological phenomena**
- **other quantitative research methods**

Academic Title

(1) On successful completion of the Doctoral Programme at SFU students will be awarded a Doctoral Degree in Psychotherapy Science (Dr.sci.pth., Latin: “Doctor scientiae psychotherapiae”).

(2) On satisfactory completion of the doctoral thesis students will be awarded a certificate.

Course Duration and Course Contents

The Doctoral Programme at SFU is a four semester course including the time required to write a doctoral thesis. Course duration may, however, be extended, in case applicants are unable to complete their theses within the projected time. SFU does not charge any continuation fees.

Course Contents comprise:

(a) Research Theory and Research Methods I – IV

Lectures and seminars are designed to deepen applicants’ knowledge in scientific theory and research methodology. Candidates will become acquainted with the qualitative and quantitative research methods mentioned above. Students will investigate their epistemology and historical roots, in particular philosophical phenomenology and hermeneutics. In addition, the beginnings and the development of psychotherapeutic theories and treatment modalities should be considered from a cultural-historical and scientific-historical point of view, and the special position of the psychotherapy science within the scope of the contemporary science system should be made plausible.

The students will also be provided with insights into the present use of qualitative methods in language and discourse analysis as well as in cognitive science.

(b) Research Workshops I – IV

In the research workshops candidates will acquire hands-on research experience, for instance through the examination of discourse and text analysis. They will gather data such as extensive transcripts of spoken material or regularly perform relevant statistical calculations and analysis.

(c) Doctoral Seminars I – IV

Once their proposal has been accepted, candidates are invited to present their research project in a 40-minute talk and discuss it with the other students. This serves to encourage students to take a critical stance towards their own research proposal. They are required to hand in the discussion minutes to the Doctoral Programme Director including any suggestions made by other students and comments as to how these suggestions might or might not be relevant or feasible in relation to their research project.

Candidates will be asked to distribute the minutes (in print or electronically) to the Seminar Directors and other students in good time. They will give a second 40-minute talk, which provides them with the opportunity to present research progress they have made. In a short overview based on the minutes of their first presentation, students will demonstrate their research experience by stating which suggestions they have used, adapted or discarded. Progress is to be assessed in terms of the extent to which research informs and contributes to one or more aspects in psychotherapy science.

Student Participation, Scheduling and Study Support

(1) Doctoral candidates are required to participate in the above mentioned lectures, seminars and workshops.

(2) Scheduling of coursework strives to accommodate both full time and part time students.

(3) Students have the opportunity to participate in lectures that are related to their chosen research topic in terms of contents and/or methodology. For successful completion, they will earn credit towards their doctoral certificate.

(4) Teaching staff at SFU provide assistance for students with individual help and professional advice. The University assists students to select relevant literature, provides computer programmes and other supportive resources and facilities. In return, candidates should be prepared to actively engage in lectures, seminars and workshops, present their research efforts and experience as well as to discuss other students' research projects within the Doctoral Seminar. In addition, candidates have the option of participating in lectures and seminars held at partner organisations of SFU.

Entry Qualifications

(1) Applicants should have completed

- an Austrian *Diplomstudium* (diploma programme) or
- a Master's level programme in a related subject area;

(2) Programme participants:

SFU graduates with degrees in psychotherapy science and degree holders of related subject areas. Completed psychotherapy training and some professional experience is desirable but no prerequisite. Doctoral students will be encouraged to deepen acquired knowledge and develop their competences by establishing a connection with psychotherapy science.

(3) Selection process:

Doctoral candidates will be invited to an initial meeting with a member of the Doctoral Committee, in which they should provide an up-to-date C.V. (including any scientific papers published). This meeting is intended to clarify mutual expectations and interests as well as a candidate's capacity to pursue individual scientific research. Applicants will be asked to define their research interests and

project ideas. On successful completion of the interview (more meetings might prove necessary to establish the feasibility of a research project), candidates will submit their written proposal to the Doctoral Committee. Proposals will be presented to the Committee by the Committee member who has interviewed the candidate.

(4) Candidates should write their research proposals after consulting their tutors. Successful applicants will receive written acceptance by the Committee by the end of the first semester at the latest.

(5) In their research proposal candidates should:

- give their full names and choose a working title for their research project;
- formulate a clear and focused research question as to which problem in psychotherapy science or practical psychotherapy they will use as a basis for research. Apart from constructing traditional research questions, candidates may also define original questions within the fields of philosophy and literature, linguistics, the social sciences and neuroscience;
- include a comprehensive review of the literature and, to facilitate the thesis process, state which literature they are planning to review and in what timeframe they intend to do so;
- choose a methodology and strive to give reasons why they regard their method of choice as the most suitable;
- give details on the data, its collection and extent (random samples, textual material etc.) if they have decided to use empirical research methods;
- give details on the material to be used (literature, sources, documents such as video recordings etc.) if they have decided to pursue theoretical, historical or critiquing research;
- outline expected patterns of scientific results and in what way they will be presented, e.g. as an extension of theory, as comparative research, in the form of statistics or as improvements in methods applied in psychotherapy;
- identify potential publication opportunities (which part(s) of the thesis and in what scientific publications may results be published; what significance may research results have for other sciences etc.).

(6) Candidates will discuss their proposal in detail with a member of the Doctoral Committee, who is entitled to set conditions for approval, e.g. attendance and successful completion of seminars and lectures that are part of the Master's Degree Programme at SFU. Once the Committee has approved a proposal, candidates may continue their studies.

Evaluation of Thesis

(1) Submitted theses will be assessed by two university professors, with at least one of them being a member of SFU's permanent teaching staff. Both of them will provide separate extensive reviews of candidates' research projects, the applied methodological approach and the scientific results achieved. Assessment will primarily be based on the implications and the significance of the scientific results gained and the evidence of students' independent research competence.

(2) If students require funds or material resources from SFU to prepare their thesis, the Rectorate has to approve of a given research project in advance. The Rectorate may pass on the right of approval to the Doctoral Committee. Usage of the University's Library does not require any prior approval.

(3) The Dean responsible for the Doctoral Programme will appoint two assessors, after having considered students' suggestions.

(4) Theses may be supervised and assessed by university professors and retired university professors. Candidates are entitled to suggest supervisors who are members of the SFU's permanent teaching staff or external supervisors. The Doctoral Committee will strive to accommodate students' wishes.

(5) Candidates may change supervisors before submitting their thesis to the Dean subject to the written approval of the Doctoral Committee.

Assessment Practice and Timescale

(1) The Dean will ask two university professors, one of them being the thesis supervisor, to assess the thesis within four months. In case the Dean decides to appoint other professors than the supervisors for assessment, he/she has to give reasons for their choice by means of a written statement to be submitted to the Doctoral Committee.

(2) In case assessments differ, a third assessor has to be appointed, whose opinion will be decisive.

(3) Theses and their reviews will be made accessible, physically or virtually, to teaching staff and students of SFU within the University for two weeks. Before concluding the assessment process, theses and reviews may also be viewed by the general public on prior application and approval by the Dean.

Doctoral Thesis and Academic Integrity

(1) The Doctoral Programme requires students to write and present a thesis that demonstrates their competence in conducting research and contains innovative research results.

(2) Candidates are encouraged to submit a research topic of their own choosing. However, a research proposal may also be made by supervisors.

(3) A cumulative thesis comprising several papers on related research areas and/or methodology may be approved by the Dean after consulting the Doctoral Committee. During their doctoral studies candidates will be required to publish at least two more papers with the agreement of their supervisors. Together with the other submitted papers they will form the basis for overall assessment.

(4) Doctoral theses shall be written in German and should be of publishable quality. SFU provides support in finding suitable scientific journals for publication.

(5) Candidates are required to submit abstracts in German and English with their theses and to pledge that they have used no other resources for writing their thesis than listed in the bibliography. Quotations must be clearly marked, and relevant oral suggestions or any other assistance by third parties expressly stated.

Doctoral Examination

(1) The doctoral examination is divided into two parts. The first part requires successful completion of the coursework as mentioned under **Course Duration and Course Contents**. Successful completion of lectures, seminars and workshops offered by partner organisations of the University may be acknowledged subject to the approval of the Doctoral Committee.

(2) Satisfactory completion of the first part of the doctoral examination and positive evaluation of the thesis by the assessors are the prerequisites for entry to the second part of the doctoral examination. The Doctoral Committee will conduct an oral examination, which is to be held no later than six months after submission of the thesis. Candidates present the main results of their research work, the methodology applied as well as the points made in the reviews. In an open discussion between the Committee and the candidate, applicants will be examined on their thesis, their specific research area and research related coursework. Permission to undertake the examination in English depends on the approval of the Board of Examiners. Candidates wishing to undertake the examination in any other language than German or English are required to file a request.

(3) The Board of Examiners consists of three members. SFU appoints two examiners on the basis of their special areas of expertise in relation to the research topic of the thesis and proposes the thesis supervisor as the third Board Member. Candidates' wishes concerning the composition of the examining board and the examining date will be taken into consideration. In case the Dean decides otherwise, he/she is required to give reasons for his/her decision.

(4) The Board of Examiners will have a closed discussion on a candidate's evaluation. They will consider the reviews of the thesis, the candidate's thesis presentation and the final oral examination. Based on this overall evaluation, a final evaluation report with a grade is submitted to the Faculty. Grades are divided into three categories: "Distinction", "Pass" and "Fail".

(5) Candidates will be informed of their grades immediately upon the decision of the Board. If the Board grades a candidate's work as a "Fail", members are required to give reasons for their decision and list the title and details of the thesis evaluation in the doctoral certificate. With the agreement of the Board, candidates may be permitted to retake the doctoral examination. In case the Board finds any academic misconduct, the doctoral examination will be graded as a "Fail".

Doctoral Programme Director

Univ.-Prof. Mag. Dr. Dr. Bernd Rieken (bernd.rieken@sfu.ac.at)

Doctoral Programme Staff

Ass.-Prof. Mag. Dr. Omar Gelo (omar.gelo@sfu.ac.at)

Ass.-Prof. Mag. Dr. Diana Braakmann

Tuition fees: 5250 Euro each Semester (Payment by instalments – from 350 Euro monthly – is possible). Fares reduction is possible on request.

Admission fee € 250,- (initial interview and administration)