

The SFU Doctoral Programme

Course Aims

The aim of the doctoral programme at Sigmund Freud University Vienna is to provide students with the resources to pursue individual scientific research in the field of psychotherapy science. Graduating from the doctoral programme is proof of such ability. The doctoral programme aims at fostering and equipping the next generation of scientists in the field of psychotherapy science. However, completing the doctoral programme does not automatically authorize graduates to practise as psychotherapists.

SFU Doctoral Programme: profile

- (1) Being the first university to offer study programmes in psychotherapy science, Sigmund Freud University has developed a methodology profile with an emphasis on the following:
 - empirical research using qualitative methods
 - theoretical research aimed at answering questions related to theory formation in psychotherapy science
 - historical research examining developments in the field of psychotherapy science
 - critical discussions of various fields of research, research methods and psychotherapy schools
 - interdisciplinary research in relation to the humanities, i.e. literary studies, ethnology, sociology, history, philosophy.

- (2) This methodological profile also includes graduations in the fields of quantitative and experimental research or in the field of epidemiological healthcare research. This includes:
 - computer-assisted text analysis
 - system-theoretical and mathematical modelling of the psychotherapeutic process
 - quantitative analysis of the therapeutic process (understanding, resistance, therapeutic interventions, etc.)
 - efficacy studies on psychotherapeutic methods
 - comparative therapy research
 - examination of impact factors across various psychotherapeutic schools relevant for the efficacy of psychotherapy
 - relations and interplay of psychopathological phenomena

- (3) In principle, topics are optional; students may, however, also choose a topic from existing research projects. If students begin the doctoral studies and the method-specific training at the same time, it is recommended not to choose a dissertation topic that requires practical knowledge in the psychotherapy method.

Academic degree

(1) Upon successful completion of the SFU doctoral programme, students are awarded a Doctoral Degree in Psychotherapy Science (“Doktorin der Psychotherapiewissenschaft” bzw. “Doktor der Psychotherapiewissenschaft”, Dr.scient.pth., - Latin: “doctor scientiae psychotherapiae”). This degree is equivalent to an international Ph.D.

(2) Upon successful graduation, students will receive a SFU graduation certificate.

Course Duration and Content

The SFU doctoral programme is a six-semester course including the time required to write a dissertation. Course duration may, however, be extended in case applicants are unable to complete their dissertation within the projected time. This may increase the total of tuition and/or enrolment fees.

1	Module Generic Competencies	unit(s)	ECTS
Contents	SE Research Proposal	2	4
	SE Citation-, Reception-, and Discourse Research	1	2
	SE Academic Didactics	1	2
	SE Opportunities and Limitations of the Transfer between Profession and Science	1	2
	Total		10
Course Aim	Upon successful completion of this module, students possess theoretical and practical knowledge, skills, and competencies that will enable them to carry out independent scientific activities, and help them prove themselves in their future field. Therefore this module focuses on the expansion of knowledge, knowledge transfer, the ability to analyse and form syntheses, and the presentation of knowledge.		

2	Module Historical Knowledge	unit(s)	ECTS
Contents	SE Prehistory and History of Psychotherapy Based On Selected Examples	1	2
	SE History of Science and its Relevance for Psychotherapy Science	1	2
	SE Historical Development of Concepts of Identity (Individual and Society) and their Impact on Psychotherapy Schools	1	2
	SE History of Psychotherapy Research	1	2
	Total		8

Course Aim	Upon successful completion of this module, students possess the advanced knowledge, skills, and competences to integrate psychotherapy and its science in the frame of its historical development. Historical thinking is essential for scientific work in order to understand the present; it enables us to establish distance to academic positions and thus promotes independent thinking.		
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3	Module Theoretical Knowledge	unit(s)	ECTS
Contents	SE Philosophy of Science	1	2
	SE Psychotherapy as a Profession and Science I	1	2
	SE Psychotherapy as a Profession and Science II	1	2
	SE Process- and Outcome Research	2	4
	SE Integrative Psychotherapy, Dynamical Systems Theory	1	2
	Total		12
Course Aim	Upon successful completion of this module, students are familiar with the specific position of psychotherapy science within the canon of sciences as well as with its major theoretical positions, and they will be able to assess them critically, incorporate them into their own research, and provide independent contributions.		

4	Module Methodology and Methods of Psychotherapy Science	unit(s)	ECTS
Contents	SE Methodology and Methods of Psychotherapy Science I	1	2
	SE Methodology and Methods of Psychotherapy Science II	1	2
	SE Methodology and Methods of Psychotherapy Science III	1	2
	SE Methodology and Methods of Psychotherapy Science IV	1	2
	Total		8
Course Aim	Upon successful completion of this module, students possess in-depth knowledge on the theoretical reflection of scientific methods (qualitative, quantitative, and combined) and are able to critically reflect on their potential, limitations, and possible synergies - both within the framework of psychotherapy science and interdisciplinary research. In addition, students acquire a sound understanding of characteristic research methods and are able to apply them to solve important problems in research and/or practice.		

5	Module Interdisciplinary Networking for Doctoral Candidates	unit(s)	ECTS
Contents	KO (Interactive Course) Interdisciplinary Networking for Doctoral Candidates Students will present their dissertation project in an interactive course to participants from various fields of study.	2	4
	Total	2	4
Course Aim	Students master the art of presenting research projects and results, and are able to competently answer questions from an interdisciplinary perspective.		

6	Module Research Reflection	unit(s)	ECTS
Contents	Students are required to write a detailed description (research proposal) of their planned dissertation. This proposal must include the research problem, methodology, objectives, literature, and a project timeline.	-	5
	Total		5
Course Aim	The ability to plan research projects, including the written presentation; reflected knowledge and disposition of the student's own dissertation.		

7	Module Active Participation in Scientific Discourse	unit(s)	ECTS
Contents	Presenting own research results as scientific papers in recognized national or international journals, in anthologies of recognized publishing houses - as sole, first or last author - or as monographs with recognized publishing houses. The minimum requirement is one (= 1) essay. With cumulative dissertations, the essay may not be part of the dissertation (and the supervisor must agree to the publication).	-	8
	Total		8
Course Aim	Students master the art of presenting research results on national and international platforms, and are able to analyse and critically assess own competences and those of others. They have gained teaching skills enabling them to present their research results both to laymen and experts, and to convey complex correlations competently and comprehensibly.		

8	Module Writing the Dissertation	unit(s)	ECTS
Contents	Writing a dissertation on an academic level and in close cooperation with a supervisor.	–	120
	Total		120

9	Module Defending the Dissertation (“Rigorosum”)	unit(s)	ECTS
Contents	Comprehensive oral defence of the dissertation in front of the examination committee - which serves as a graduation examination and includes discussing a non-thematically related field of psychotherapy science.	-	5
	Total		5
Course Aim	Upon successful completion of this module, students have mastered presenting, reflecting and analysing their dissertation results in the overall context of the doctoral programme. The main focus will be on abstracting and presenting the dissertation’s results, demonstrating how the dissertation adds insights to the discipline and benefits society, on the evaluation and methodological competence, and on the presentation. In addition, students are familiar with a non-thematically related field of psychotherapy science and are able to discuss it with the examination committee on a highly professional level.		

	Total ECTS Points for the Doctoral Programme		180
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Courses, Structure, and Scheduling

- (1) Doctoral candidates are required to participate in all of the above-mentioned courses.
- (2) The scheduling of the courses aims at accommodating also part-time students.
- (3) Each student of the doctoral programme will receive the necessary support from the SFU faculty. This refers in particular to discussing content-related issues. Students should make extensive use of the discourse possibilities of the doctoral seminar.

Admission Criteria

- (1) Prerequisites for admission to the doctoral programme are
 - a relevant diploma programme or Master's degree programme, lasting at least 8 semesters or
 - a BA degree with 180 ECTS credits AND a MA degree with 120 ECTS credits or
 - an equivalent, relevant academic degree from a recognized domestic or foreign study

programme. A Master's degree will only be accepted if it was preceded by a corresponding BA programme. A Master's degree without a BA degree (so-called BA equivalents) is not accepted.

(2) Programme participants:

SFU graduates with a psychotherapy science degree and degree holders of related fields (e.g. medicine, psychology, educational science, philosophy, literary studies, history, and ethnology). A completed psychotherapy training and some professional experience are desirable, but no prerequisites. They aim at encouraging doctoral students to expand their acquired knowledge and develop their competences, or connect them with psychotherapy science. This will be beneficial in terms of mutual intellectual stimulation. Candidates who are not psychotherapists or psychotherapists in training must provide proof of 60 hours of individual psychotherapeutic self-awareness with a registered psychotherapist. Out of these 60 hours, at least 30 must be done as individual self-awareness sessions; the other 30 may be collected in self-awareness groups. It is of course possible to complete all 60 hours in the frame of individual self-awareness sessions.

Exception to the 60-hour rule: 50 hours are sufficient if the self-awareness sessions are done as part of the propaedeutic training in psychotherapy (Propädeutikum). In such cases, the propaedeutic course certificate must be provided.

Proof of the self-awareness hours can be provided during the studies; at the latest when submitting the dissertation. However, it is recommended to provide the respective certificate earlier than that.

(3) Doctoral Committee

The doctoral committee consists of the head of the doctoral programme, his/her deputy, and at least two to three habilitated lecturers of the doctoral programme. In addition, at least two to three further members are chosen by a simple majority by the doctoral team. All procedural matters concerning the graduation are decided on democratically by the committee. If no agreement can be reached, the simple majority will decide. The committee's Terms and Conditions are attached at the end of this document.

(4) Admission process:

Applicants for the doctoral programme submit their documents (academic degrees, psychotherapy training and/or psychotherapeutic skills, curriculum vitae, publications if applicable, research proposal/draft) to the doctoral committee. The committee uses formal and content criteria to decide whether a candidate is accepted or not. These include a review of the preliminary studies (diploma, Magister, BA plus MA programme with a total of 300 ECTS credits), any previous scientific publications, psychotherapy training and/or psychotherapeutic skills, the quality of the research proposal and/or the draft of the doctoral project as well as how closely the topic corresponds with the research priorities of the psychotherapy science departments and potential supervisors. In addition, the doctoral committee will decide on the recognition of qualifications and degrees earned with external programmes.

In particular cases, an interview may be required as an additional requirement.

(5) The research proposal must include:

- author's full name and working title;
- a clearly defined research question, explaining which problem in psychotherapy science or practical psychotherapy will be researched. As an alternative to research questions using traditional literature, candidates may also take on original questions from within the fields of philosophy and literature, linguistics, the social sciences, and neuroscience;
- a comprehensive review of literature. In order to facilitate the process, it will be helpful to list the literature the candidate is planning to review and to provide an approximate timeframe;
- a chosen methodology. Deciding on a methodology requires the exclusion of other methodologies, a decision the candidate must be able to justify;
- With empirical papers, the candidate must include details on the data, its collection and scope (random samples, text material etc.);
- With theoretical, historical, or critiquing papers, the candidate is also required to provide details on the used material (literature, sources, documents such as video recordings etc.) and outline possible ways to approach the problem;
- an outline of expected results and how they will be presented, i.e. as an extension of theory, as comparative research, as statistics, or as improving methods applied in psychotherapy;
- an identification of potential publication opportunities (which part(s) of the dissertation can be published and where? Are the results relevant for other academic field?).

(6) Cumulative dissertation

It is possible to write a cumulative dissertation instead of a monograph. Applications for a cumulative dissertation must be submitted to the head of the programme. A three-member commission set up for this purpose decides whether the application is accepted or not.

The following rules apply:

1. Topic

The topic of all contributions to the dissertation must be related to psychotherapy science. The submitted elements must cover a coherent research topic: the dissertation should not consist of thematically unrelated publications that are merely strung together.

2. Content

The scientific contributions to the dissertation must mostly be compiled on one's own. The cumulative dissertation must include at least two scientific articles as first author and one scientific article in co-authorship.

However, complex research topics can often only be tackled within larger research groups and in cooperation with others. Therefore co-authorships are generally possible. They are evaluated depending on the main authorship and other co-authorships. For joint publications, a declaration by all authors must be attached, explaining the contribution of all parties involved.

The introduction must include a theoretical part, including methodology and a methodological presentation of the research topic. In addition, transitions and connections must be created between the various publications. The dissertation must conclude with a reflection, discussion and summary.

3. Suitable Publications

Articles in recognized national or international peer-reviewed journals are suitable. Not suitable are articles in SFU journals (SFU Research Bulletin, Journal of Free Psychoanalytic Research and Individual Psychology).

They must be major articles; research notes, reviews, conference abstracts or the like are not suitable.

Such articles may already be published or must have been accepted for publication.

4. Reviewers' tasks

The appointed reviewers evaluate the complete dissertation. In their review, they are in no way bound by an already published article or by a publication commitment for an article.

Co-authors of submitted publications cannot be reviewers.

5. Excluded publications

It is not allowed to submit publications that have already been used for obtaining another academic degree. A respective affidavit must be enclosed.

Supervision and review of the dissertation

Each student may individually choose his/her supervisor. The supervisor does not have to be habilitated, but he/she must have specialized expertise, or least a doctoral degree. Changing the supervisor is possible upon prior approval by the head of the programme. Supervisors cannot write reviewers' reports, but may act as first examiners if they are habilitated. If the supervisor is not habilitated, one of the reviewers acts as the first examiner.

The submitted dissertation must be reviewed by habilitated university lecturers or university professors. One reviewer can be from another university, but at least one of them must be a SFU faculty member.

At the defence of the dissertation ("Rigorosum"), the chairman may be chosen from the permanent SFU faculty. The chairman may not act as a supervisor or reviewer, however. One of the two reviewers may act as second examiner, provided that the supervisor is habilitated.

The following persons take part in the dissertation defence ("Rigorosum"):

- 1.) supervisor, 2.) reviewer a and/or b, 3.) chairman

habilitated supervisor	not-habilitated supervisor
supervisor acts as first examiner*	reviewer a or b act as first examiner
reviewer a or b act as second examiner	reviewer b or a act as second examiner
chairman: is habilitated or a professor of the SFU faculty, is neither supervisor nor reviewer	chairman: is habilitated or a professor of the SFU faculty, is neither supervisor nor reviewer

* If the supervisor is not available, reviewer B or reviewer A will act as a first examiner. If one of the reviewers is also not available, the head of the programme or his deputy may act as the first examiner.

The supervisor shall primarily support the search for suitable reviewers. In exceptional cases, the head or the deputy head of the doctoral programme may also assist.

Assessment of the dissertation and degree

(1) The submitted dissertation must be assessed by two habilitated university lecturers or university professors; at least one of them must be a SFU faculty member. Both independently prepare comprehensive reports, covering the dissertation's aim, its methodological implementation, the results, and the concluding assessment of the entire dissertation. The assessment should especially focus on the extent to which the author has detected and filled a knowledge gap within the chosen academic field.

(2) If the chosen topic requires financial or material funding by the Sigmund Freud University Vienna, this must first be approved by the SFU Rectorate. The Rectorate may delegate this task to the doctoral committee.

Timeframe and reviewing process

(1) After the dissertation is submitted, it must be reviewed within four months.

(2) For assessing the dissertation, the examination regulations apply (see regulations).

Dissertation and affidavit

(1) In order to complete the doctoral programme, a dissertation must be written, proving the ability to independently tackle scientific questions. A dissertation must contain innovative scientific results.

(2) Candidates may suggest a research topic of his/her choice. This is explicitly recommended as students should have a personal interest in the dissertation topic. Topics may also be suggested by the supervisors.

(3) In principle, finalised dissertations should be ready for publication. The SFU offers support regarding suitable publication tools and media.

(4) The following documents must be attached to the dissertation: an abstract in German and English, and an affidavit, confirming that the dissertation was written using only the indicated sources (bibliography), that citations were indicated, and relevant verbal suggestions or other third-party support were identified as such.

Examination Regulations (“Rigorosum” – defence of the dissertation)

(1) In order to defend the dissertation, all curriculum courses and modules must be completed, and a payment confirmation by the SFU accounting department for all tuition fees must be provided. In addition, the completed dissertation must pass the plagiarism check.

(2) A positive assessment of the dissertation by two reviewers must be available in writing (comprehensive report).

(3) The defence of the dissertation (Rigorosum) is a public examination conducted by the examining committee. It usually takes place within six months after submitting the dissertation and includes:

1. a talk with the candidate, discussing the research approach and the core results of the dissertation. During this talk, the reviewers’ reports should also be discussed.
2. a topic from the field of psychotherapy science, which should not overlap with the dissertation topic. This topic must be agreed upon with the second examiner who mainly examines it, while the supervisor, respectively the reviewer (in case the supervisor is not habilitated) focusses on the dissertation itself. The chairman of the examining committee is entitled to ask questions. At the candidate’s request, and with the approval of the examining committee, the defence of the dissertation may be held in English, provided the grading is warranted. Other foreign languages must be approved by the doctoral committee beforehand.

(4) The examining committee consists of three members.

1.) supervisor, 2.) reviewer a and/or b, 3.) chairman:

habilitated supervisor	not-habilitated supervisor
supervisor acts as first examiner	reviewer a or b act as first examiner
reviewer a or b act as second examiner	reviewer b or a act as second examiner
chairman: is habilitated or a professor of the SFU faculty, is neither supervisor nor reviewer	chairman: is habilitated or a professor of the SFU faculty, is neither supervisor nor reviewer

(5) The grading is discussed by the examining committee in private.

a) The final grading of the dissertation results from the grades in the two reports. In case of decimal figures of 0.5, the grade is rounded down.

b) The oral examination consists of 2 parts, resulting in 2 grades. The final grade is then calculated as indicated under a)

c) Overall grading:

α) passed with distinction

Overall grade point average ≤ 1.40

For calculating the grade point average, all exams must have exclusively been graded 1 (“excellent”) and 2 (“good”). Key factors are the grading of the dissertation and of the dissertation defence, whereby the dissertation earns 120 ECTS points and the dissertation’s defence 5 ECTS credits. Candidates only pass with distinction if the dissertation was graded 1 (“excellent”) and the defence of the dissertation was graded at least 2 (“good”).

β) passed

all courses, exams and theses are passed.

(6) The candidate must be informed on the result immediately after the decision-making. If

the grade is a 5 (“insufficient”), relevant reasons must be provided; the title and grade of the dissertation must be indicated on the doctorate certificate and – if necessary – a timeframe for repeating the exam must be set. If the affidavit is violated, the entire exam will automatically be considered "failed" and the conferral of the doctorate will be cancelled.

(7) Final degree

Graduates are awarded a “Doctor of Psychotherapy Science” (Dr.scient.pth.) which is equivalent to a PhD degree.

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Doctoral Committee Terms and Conditions

Based on the currently valid doctoral regulations, the doctoral committee is in charge of a proper implementation of the doctoral programme. The chairman manages the tasks of the doctoral committee and prepares the meetings. Routine decisions are assigned to the chairman, who regularly reports to the doctoral committee. Decisions on disputes, contradictions, doubts relating to the doctoral regulations must, however, always be taken by a majority vote by the doctoral committee and must first be discussed in the team meetings of the doctoral programme staff.

The doctoral committee selects applicants based on formal and content criteria. They include reviewing previously finished study programmes (Diploma, Magister, BA plus MA programme with a total of 300 ECTS credits), previously published scientific articles, training in psychotherapy or psychotherapeutic education, and the quality of the research proposal or the draft of the dissertation project, and its connection to the main research areas of the department or relevant supervisors.

The doctoral committee determines the number of students per year based on recommendations by the Accreditation Council, and by considering economic factors.

The doctoral committee may recommend supervisors based on their professional expertise.

The doctoral committee decides on measures in case the planned study period of six semesters is exceeded. This may include a leave of absence due to clearly defined reasons, or charging additional tuition fees which are to be defined together with the Chancellor of the University.

The doctoral committee may release supervisors from their duty to supervise if the supervised students have not been in touch with their supervisor for more than six months and have not, upon request, submitted any written information on the status or progress of their dissertation. The students may then be granted a leave of absence by the doctoral committee. The duration of the leave must be agreed on by the commission, the supervisor and the student.

If the student does not provide any feedback despite being requested to do so, he / she can be sent on a leave by the doctoral committee without approval. At the student's request, the commission may, after consulting the supervisor, end the leave of absence at the beginning of the next semester.

The doctoral committee acts as a complaints office for students of the doctoral programme in psychotherapy science. If the complaint relates to a member of the doctoral committee, the respective member is to be replaced by another habilitated member of the programme - in exceptional cases by another habilitated member of the psychotherapy science faculty. The student may choose this new member.

The meetings of the doctoral committee are held in private. Its members are bound to secrecy also after the term of office ends.

If a member leaves, the doctoral team selects another habilitated member by majority vote. If the head of the programme leaves, the deputy takes over until a new head is appointed.