

# PhD Proposal at CSBME

Before the end of the first year: **PhD Proposal**

- You submit a **proposal document** (2 weeks before your proposal defense), showing that you have demonstrated all skills necessary for conducting a PhD
- You **present and defend** your proposal publicly before your **advisory committee**, which you select together with your supervisor
- After the proposal you and your supervisor can sign the **Educational Agreement**

## Your PhD Proposal

You submit your PhD proposal **within 12 months** after you start as a PhD student, taking the time limits for the educational agreement into account. The proposal consists of a document, presentation, and defense before an advisory committee.

### Prerequisites for the Proposal

In the first year, you are expected to **demonstrate all skills necessary for conducting a PhD** according to your supervisor's requirements. You should typically have **worked partly independently** on your own project topic defined together with the supervisor. This includes **writing** (e.g., submitted paper) and **speaking** (e.g., conference or seminar talk about your work) about your results. A student typically bases the proposal on a **submitted or accepted paper** or a mature paper draft, typically towards the end of the first year. Your supervisor will tell you in more detail what they expect for a PhD student in their group to achieve during the first year.

### Advisory Committee

Your advisory committee will advise you throughout your PhD where needed to ensure you reach your goals. The advisory committee has 3 members, fulfilling the same criteria as laid out for the Rigorosum (see §11 of the statutes of the Doctoral School Computer Science).

### Submission

You submit the proposal via the form provided by the Dean's office who will send it to the committee members (with the head of the doctoral school, the dean of studies, and the student representative in copy). The form contains:

- A list of **3 advisory committee** members
- A **date** for the proposal defense, determined and agreed on in direct communication between the committee members and the candidate

- A short **proposal document** (at least 10 pages) containing
  - An introduction to the research field and main research questions of your PhD
  - A summary of your research work of the first year
  - Concrete next steps and a mid-term outlook on the PhD, including tentative target venues for the respective work aligned with the advisor
  - State the courses (typically 2-3) that you have taken as part of the PhD (or will take, if not done in year 1; for specifications on instructional classes please refer to the curriculum and statutes)
  - Evidence of the writing qualification, e.g., in form of a submitted or accepted paper, or other format as defined by the PhD advisor
  - An optional appendix summarizing contributions and activities related to the PhD, such as teaching, student supervision, project work, ...
- A draft **Educational Agreement** with working title and abstract (research field, research questions, methodology) for your thesis project

## **Presentation & Defense**

You give a public presentation of 30 minutes covering the work of the first year and your planned thesis topic, followed by a 30-minute question session by the advisory committee.

After the defense, the committee members will retreat to decide on the result of the defense based on the skills demonstrated as a PhD student, report, presentation, and answers. They will inform you about their decision and may give additional recommendations and feedback.

## **Possible Outcomes**

The Doctoral Proposal Committee decides by majority vote whether the Doctoral Proposal is successful. Three outcomes are possible. A positive decision confirms satisfactory progress and recommends that the supervisor and doctoral candidate continue the project as planned and conclude the Educational Agreement. A positive decision with conditions indicates that improvements are required and recommends concluding the Educational Agreement subject to clearly defined, measurable, and time-bound objectives, which must be fulfilled and demonstrated to the committee within six months. A negative decision indicates serious problems that jeopardize the dissertation project. In this case, continuation is not recommended unless the problems are resolved. The supervisor and doctoral candidate are advised to consult the coordination team and the responsible academic authority to discuss rights, obligations, and possible next steps, including options under § 4 of the curriculum such as modifying the Educational Agreement, changing the supervisor or dissertation topic, or terminating the project.

## **Educational Agreement**

The Educational Agreement is specified in the Curriculum (§ 4 (1)) and finalizes your acceptance as a doctoral student. It contains a brief description and working title of the proposed doctoral project and is uploaded in TUGRAZonline (login as student - “My doctoral project” / “Mein Doktorat” - “Phase 1 Educational Agreement” / “Ausbildungsvereinbarung”). You can find the form at  
<https://tu4u.tugraz.at/en/students/forms-downloads/>