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# Recommendations on the Postgraduate Phase of Qualification at Colleges of Art and Music

## Summary



## **INHALT**

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# Summary

Germany, in international comparison, has quite a diverse, first class artistic landscape, financed in part privately and funded in part publicly. Few countries – in relation to their population – maintain as many theatres, music venues, art galleries, and exhibition spaces, permanent performing groups and orchestras. The large number of colleges of art and music (“Kunst- und Musikhochschulen”) in Germany is quite appropriate in this context. In every category of the fine arts, these institutions bring forth highly qualified young artists who will be active in the German and international arts scenes, either occupied in ensembles, freelancing or teaching.

Following the graduate programme (Master or equivalent), some German colleges of art and music offer an additional postgraduate phase, which is supposed to lead outstanding graduates towards a more profound and independent scientific dissertation (doctorate) or artistic qualification (“Konzertexamen” or “Meisterschüler”). In addition, some institutions have, in the past years, offered the option to combine a scientific doctorate with a work of art or an artistic performance (academic-artistic doctorate), partly based on impulses from abroad. The combination of these factors could lead to consequences for different career paths to a professorship in the arts and also for the humanities and pedagogy with reference to art and music at colleges of art and music.

Therefore, the postgraduate phase at these institutions is subject to significant tension among new developments within the arts, high expectations, longstanding traditions and considerable changes in the European Higher Education Area with a strong pull effect. With the present paper the Wissenschaftsrat (WR, German Science and Humanities Council) responds to the request of the Kultusministerkonferenz (KMK, Standing Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs) to develop recommendations and guidelines for the strategic advancement of the postgraduate phase at state colleges of art and music. The paper aims at giving an overview of the field and encouraging a stronger consistency of developments to structurally support this particular type of higher education institution and to maintain its excellent international standing. The WR specifically focusses on the structural foundation of the postgraduate phase and on career paths at colleges of art and music against the background of a dynamically evolving European Higher Education Area.

The 51 state colleges of art and music, with about 38.000 students and of equal status to universities since 1976, form a small part of the German system of higher education. The number of students per institute ranges from three-digit to low four-digit figures. There is a differentiation between higher education institutes for visual arts and those for music. A further type of higher education institution offers both visual arts and music programmes. Moreover, certain institutions specialise in theatre, dance or film.

Within the colleges of art and music, distinct differences can be found between the sector of humanities and pedagogy with reference to arts and the arts themselves. In music, higher education mostly takes place as one-to-one teaching and in small group classes, whereas in the visual arts, classes of 15 to 20 students are common. The personal relationship and close cooperation between students and professors are fundamental to studies in the arts.

Professorships in the fields of humanities and pedagogy at colleges of art and music are generally comparable to those at universities with regard to their quality standards, career paths and the course design. For professorships in visual or performing arts and music, colleges appoint outstanding representatives of their artistic field, whose development within the arts took place mostly outside a higher education institution. A postgraduate degree or even a finished arts study programme are not mandatory.

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**POSTGRADUATE PHASE AT COLLEGES OF ART AND MUSIC**

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The WR estimates that, at this time, about 2,000 persons are attending a postgraduate phase at colleges of art and music and they are distributed among the various programmes within the humanities, arts and combined academic-artistic sectors.

In the majority of the *Länder*, colleges of art and music are authorised to award doctorate degrees in the offered subjects with respect to the humanities and pedagogy. Objective, implementation and modalities of supervision and support are comparable to those found at universities. Most institutions have only few professorships in humanities and pedagogy and correspondingly few doctoral candidates. Overarching structures such as research training groups or postgraduate programmes are not common.

In the arts, the postgraduate phase fulfils a different purpose than in the scientific fields. Its fundamental objective is to ensure access to a high-level career in the arts outside the colleges of art and music. In the visual arts, the so called "Meisterschüler" is available as a qualification after or in addition to a preceding degree. This title is quite commonly awarded by a professor as a particular

distinction and honorary degree without the recipient having completed any sort of postgraduate phase. In music, however, the “Konzertexamen” (respectively “Solistenexamen” or “Opernexamen”) always constitutes a postgraduate study phase. Access to this phase requires a Master’s degree with an excellent final grade of 1.3 or higher as well as the successful completion of a demanding artistic entrance examination given by a board of examiners.

Few colleges of art and music offer an academic-artistic doctorate degree (“wissenschaftlich-künstlerische Promotion”) – combining achievements in humanities or sciences with work or performance in arts – as an additional option. Those doctorates were made possible by special provisions to higher education law and require a written doctoral thesis as well as an artistic piece of work. Colleges can allocate different weight to each of those two exam components individually.

### **POSTGRADUATE PHASE AND ARTISTIC RESEARCH**

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For years, so called artistic research as a specific form of knowledge generation within the arts has been subject to intense discussion in Germany and internationally. Generally speaking, the term artistic research is used to describe a critical reflection of artistic and societal processes, anchored in artistic practice and based on a concrete problem or specific question. Artistic researchers claim to systematically and verifiably generate new knowledge. This knowledge is supposed to help towards developing new artistic means of expression and to extend innovative impulses into other knowledge areas and societal sectors.

Artistic researchers see themselves as members of a research community participating in a specialist discourse that can assume all kinds of pertinent artistic means of expression and that contributes to the generation of new findings. They regard specific funding options and an institutionalisation at colleges of art and music as vital also for the postgraduate phase.

In the wake of the Bologna reforms, artistic research in Europe has gained momentum. The three “cycles” (Bachelor, Master and Doctorate) characterising the Bologna reforms were applied to colleges of art and music, which in their majority, up to that point, had not been offering a postgraduate phase of studies. The third Bologna cycle, within the arts, including artistic research, was rated as a phase during which graduates were supposed to conduct research, in close analogy with the doctorate phase in the sciences and humanities. The term research, in this context, has since the establishment of the “Dublin Descriptors” of the European Union (EU) in 2005 been understood in a broad and comprehensive (not exclusively scientific) way.

In Germany, on the other hand, research is typically understood as a process within the sciences and humanities. Artistic research does not conform to that concept of research, as it aligns itself more closely with the arts. Nevertheless,

8 artistic research reaches out to other sectors of society including academic disciplines.

The growing integration of the European Higher Education Area has become a relevant argument in the ongoing discussion around the academic-artistic doctorate and artistic research in Germany as well. Some members of German colleges of art and music are concerned their graduates might experience competitive disadvantages abroad without a Ph.D. or doctorate degree, e. g. when applying for a professorship in the arts. Moreover, they fear that their attractiveness for foreign students might decrease if they cannot award those degrees. However, in Germany these degrees are not meant to become prerequisites for a professorship in the arts or for an application for funding.

### **CHALLENGES FACING THE POSTGRADUATE PHASE**

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The WR identifies a number of challenges that the colleges of art and music have to overcome in the configuration of their postgraduate phase:

Firstly, tension arises between the strong attachment to traditional academic education and the dynamic international developments in this field. As a result, the structural framework shaping the postgraduate phase as well as the pertinent standards and requirements differ greatly among the colleges of art and music. This is especially true for the "Meisterschüler" in the visual arts and for the academic-artistic doctorate.

Secondly, due to the mostly small size of the colleges of art and music with their few postgraduates, these institutions often lack the "critical mass" to provide an inspiring artistic and academic environment.

Thirdly, it is often difficult for the colleges of art and music to receive sufficient funding and the necessary infrastructures and personnel capacities for the postgraduate phase. For graduate students and their projects, a sufficient amount of studio-space or practice time will not necessarily be available, supporting and supervising graduates is often not factored into the teaching staff's time quota, and a distinct postgraduate course offering remains the exception. Compensating this via third-party funding is difficult, because colleges of art and music, due to their small administration units, have difficulties acquiring and administering research and other third-party funded projects. For graduates, funding their own livelihood is a challenge, since most scholarships for artistic projects are not geared towards the specific requirements of a postgraduate phase in the arts.



With regard to these challenges, the WR recommends to advance the development of the postgraduate phase and to improve its structural integration within the colleges of art and music, on the basis of an elementary understanding of its role and functionalities (for graduates, for the higher education system as well as for the arts and academia overall). The WR leaves it to the discretion of the institutions whether they would (on their own or in cooperation) like to offer a postgraduate phase at all. Their international reputation at this point does not depend on it. If they decide to offer a postgraduate phase of any kind, it should be adequately equipped as to personnel and structure.

In its recommendations, the WR differentiates between three different types of postgraduate phases: artistic, academic and hybrid. The term “hybrid” refers to approaches that aim at bridging the gap between artistic and scientific perspectives, thus creating something new that cannot entirely and explicitly be attributed either to the arts or the academic disciplines alone.

An important function of the artistic postgraduate phase (including artistic research) for the individual is to strengthen an independent artistic position. A closely related function is to advance professional competences in management and organisation, writing and communications, reflection and pedagogics. Hereby, the art and cultural sector will be able to meet its demand for working artists, and colleges of art and music can enhance their reputation and attractiveness with graduates who are successful in their respective artistic fields. The pivotal function of the postgraduate phase, however, is to further develop and advance the artistic field through innovative objectives, methodological development and formation of programmes.

In analogy to the arts, the postgraduate phase in humanities and pedagogy at colleges of art and music represents a time for graduates to deepen their scientific autonomy and to contribute to the advancement of their field with their doctoral thesis. The doctorate will prepare them for any profession requiring the ability to independently address newly arising problems, be it in the cultural or the academic sector. Unlike the arts, the academic postgraduate phase definitely also serves as preparation for an academic career.

So far, the functions of a hybrid postgraduate phase, with their scope and development currently not yet predictable, are linked to the artistic and academic postgraduate phase. However, they cannot be determined by a mere addition of those functions, nor do they create a dual qualification.

The WR encourages granting the hybrid type, as a young field, opportunities for development. It is necessary to ensure high quality of hybrid theses via shared standards and common assessment criteria.

The development of independence within a hybrid type of a postgraduate phase is about establishing an individual position in line with the requirements and standards of the relevant academic disciplines and artistic fields. Hybrid approaches contribute to further developing the respective fields as they enable beneficial transitions and connections between sciences or humanities and arts. Graduates with a hybrid qualification can pursue a career outside academia. Opportunities for an academic career path aimed at a professorship can, at this time, not quite be assessed due to the few degrees awarded so far. Abroad, however, they are clearly on the rise.

#### **FRAMEWORK CONDITIONS FOR THE POSTGRADUATE PHASE**

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The WR recommends the following supportive framework conditions for postgraduate programmes at colleges of art and music so that they fulfil their functions on multiple levels:

Clearly stated subject-specific (artistic or academic) criteria for the admission of applicants that stand out considerably among the majority of graduates are required in any case. Applicants should be selected by a committee. The WR recommends to lay down expectations and objectives, privileges and duties of graduates and supervisors in supervisory agreements. The graduates should develop their artistic or scientific field by pursuing a specific project, and in the end, they should receive a corresponding academic, artistic or hybrid degree. The quality of those contributions (e. g. as a dissertation, an exhibition, a performance or a concert) must be examined and graded according to recognised, transparent standards of the subject or art. The final certificate should detail, in English and German, the specific achievements and competences acquired.

Postgraduate programmes require an appropriate number of faculty for teaching and supervision and supporting staff as well as an adequate edificial and technical infrastructure. Professors should have a sufficient time quota at their disposal for the supervision of graduates.

In all types of a graduate programmes, a “critical mass“ of researchers or respectively artists is essential for the exchange with the graduates. The WR thus recommends the colleges of art and music to establish overarching structures: firstly, graduate classes, where graduates belonging to one scientific discipline or field of art can present and discuss their progress and results, and secondly institution-wide (or inter-institutional) graduate schools that include content-related platforms as well as advisory services. Graduates employed by the institution should be involved in teaching.

Colleges of art and music will need appropriate funds to develop the postgraduate phase according to the recommendations given by the WR. The funding should enable graduates to dedicate the greater part of their time and attention

to their qualification project. The WR recommends to provide grants to cover graduates' cost of living. The *Länder* should examine how they can adapt financial support for graduates to the needs of the arts (or implement such support) without negatively affecting the existing funding opportunities for academic doctorates and undergraduate programmes in the arts. Foundations can offer funding opportunities as well. In addition, the WR recommends to establish additional qualification positions at the colleges of art and music. The WR appeals to the *Länder* to support the colleges of art and music in strengthening their postgraduate phase. To this effect, a select number of sites should establish graduate schools by means of initial funding and maintain well-proven structures in the long run.

The WR recommends the colleges of art and music to increase their cooperations for the postgraduate phase, among each other as well as with universities, to concentrate programmes, avoid duplication of structures, create "critical masses", and to develop a supportive environment. In particular, the joint establishment of graduate classes and graduate schools is an important area of action.

In the artistic postgraduate phase, the WR recommends to better combine the strengthening of graduates' individual competences with the development of the artistic field in the future, for instance within a well-defined project pursuing a distinct problem or question. The WR considers two years an adequate minimum timeframe for such an artistic project, while extending that timeframe should be possible for particularly challenging projects. A supervisory tandem or a supervisory body should carry out the graduate selection process and supervision as well as the final assessment of their achievements or performance along the lines of clearly stated and comprehensible standards.

For an academic doctorate at the colleges of art and music, a sufficiently dense research environment offering opportunities for academic exchange is important as well, but, due to their smaller size, this is not always given for the humanities and pedagogy. Inter-institutional partnerships with universities are quite valuable in this context.

Colleges of art and music should be given sufficient scope (e. g. via experimentation clauses) and minimal constraints in implementing a hybrid postgraduate phase. Institutions should make sure to install favourable subject-related and structural framework conditions, supported by their responsible ministry. Graduates must be able to acquire or deepen the required knowledge and skills in the relevant academic and artistic fields. The results of a hybrid postgraduate project should be communicable, verifiable inter-subjectively, documentable and archivable. The teaching body as well as the relevant academic associations should further refine quality standards for such projects and communicate them to the graduates. The standards should also be stated on the final degree certificate.

For the colleges of art and music, creating the necessary conditions for a hybrid postgraduate phase, proves to be a major challenge. Stronger cooperations and closer coordination among institutions, but also with universities, are vital in this process. Colleges of art and music with each other, e.g. in Rectors' Conferences, and with the ministries of the *Länder* should agree upon sites where hybrid postgraduate programmes will be tested and monitored during their experimental stage.

#### ACADEMIC AND ARTISTIC DEGREES

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The WR does not see any need for change concerning the doctorate as a final degree in the academic postgraduate phase at the colleges of art and music (by way of a doctoral thesis).

In the artistic and hybrid areas, there is a contentious debate about appropriate degree titles for the postgraduate phase, since these are quite commonly associated with disadvantages or challenges. The WR calls on the *Länder* to bring about a decision that is coordinated throughout Germany and to stipulate specific degrees for the postgraduate phase. The WR recommends the *Länder* to award standardised degrees throughout Germany that can be clearly distinguished from other titles and degrees. The recognition and future viability of postgraduate degrees in Germany and abroad will depend on this and on consistent grading standards. For related decisions, the following considerations provide a basis to evaluate advantages and disadvantages of various options and they will discuss already existing titles as well as potential new degrees.

The "Meisterschüler" is a German title of renown, steeped in tradition, but for the most part it does not comply with the requirements of a postgraduate phase as presented in these recommendations. The WR therefore recommends the higher education institutions for the visual arts to award a different degree title for the postgraduate phase and suggests the term "Laureat".

Should the institutions prefer to maintain the tradition of the "Meisterschüler" they should treat it as a distinction and honorary title and find a gender-appropriate title in keeping up with the times.

The "Konzertexamen" already meets the requirements of a postgraduate phase in many aspects. It is well suited to further the development of individual artistic skills and competences. The WR advocates its further development by involving graduates with a specified qualification project, which should connect personal artistic development with an advancement of the artistic field at large and, at the same time, incorporate reflective elements to a greater extent.

The titles of "Laureat" and of "Konzertexamen" are intended for projects in artistic research as well, since this type of research is largely attributed to the artistic field.

The academic-artistic doctorate is currently closely related to the academic doctorate; thus, graduates will often face a twofold challenge and requirement: an academic dissertation and in addition a related work of art. This twofold requirement should be awarded with a double degree. The hybrid area differs in that as it claims to bridge the gap between artistic and academic perspectives in a new and exciting manner with a piece of work that is important for a special artistic and academic field. To be able to assess this combination and interrelation, the WR deems it necessary to harmonise pertinent quality standards. Currently, the hybrid type is undergoing exploration and testing within the scope of the academic-artistic doctorate. If it continues to expand, it too should receive its own degree title. This title should express the novel interrelation between academic disciplines and art and certify a research outcome that must be substantial in both its academic and artistic parts. It will be imperative that joint quality standards consistently be acceptable to both academic disciplines and arts. Support and supervision would have to be allocated to at least a tandem or a committee of experts from both arts and academic disciplines – and in future also to experts with hybrid competences and experiences. Institutionalised cooperations with other institutions may be required.

The WR primarily discusses two suggestions for hybrid degrees, since they are already being explored: “Dr. artis” and “Ph.D. in Arts”. Both are somewhat controversial. These titles with their origins in the humanities should not solely reshape the artistic qualification projects.

For graduates wishing to continue on a career path in the arts, a “Dr. artis” or “Ph.D. in Arts” would most likely not be necessary. Such a degree should not be a prerequisite for funding of artistic projects following the postgraduate degree. A hybrid title would be of greater importance to persons who pursue an occupation with a more evident scientific orientation (e. g. a curator of an exhibition or in a museum) or in arts management.

The “Dr. artis” and the “Ph.D. in Arts” differ in their adaptability to international developments in artistic research. In the medium-term, the tendency towards conversion, overarching recognition and comparability of degrees in the European Higher Education Area will grow. The colleges of art and music in many EU member states increasingly favour the Ph.D. as degree for the postgraduate phase in arts, especially in artistic research. This is also true for the bilateral agreements of equivalence with non-EU countries for the recognition of (postgraduate) degrees. Abroad, however, the Ph.D. is normally understood as an academic degree awarded for completing a postgraduate study programme characterised by its curriculum and by modularisation, a predetermined number of ECTS credits as well as course-related examinations. This is in contrast to the traditional German understanding of the postgraduate phase, as codified by the KMK, which stands for an independently and responsibly conducted

research-project with only a final assessment of the doctoral thesis. To this end, the WR advocates the German understanding of a doctorate.

### **CAREER PATHS**

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For professorships in the humanities and pedagogy, career paths closely follow standards associated with university professorships. Permeabilities between these types of higher education institutions already exist in both directions and should be maintained.

The WR deems the current primary career path to an artistic professorship via a successful career in the arts appropriate for this particular type of higher education institution.

Appointees to artistic professorships coming directly from a career in the arts outside the colleges of art and music frequently enter their professorship quite abruptly and may not have been able to sufficiently reflect on and be conscious of their transition into this new role. The higher education institutions may not always be able to properly assess whether an eminent artist will also excel in teaching, academic self-governance and organisational responsibilities.

The artistic postgraduate phase generally has the potential to be useful for recruiting early career teaching personnel and for the further development of the colleges of art and music. Outstanding young artists with an inclination towards teaching at these institutions could gain relevant competences and first teaching experiences.

The *Länder* and colleges of art and music should think about establishing a new category of academic positions and this could be the junior professorship with tenure track. Particular care should be taken that specific exigencies of the arts will be considered and that an appointment to a tenure-track professorship should be possible for practicing artists. Moreover, the colleges of art and music could develop distinct profiles for “entrance”-positions, e. g. along the lines of already existing formats of “guest professorship” or a longer-term commitment to an “artist in residence” position.

As an additional career perspective, the WR suggests establishing positions for artistic faculty members with an appropriate time frame for individual development and further qualification. Such positions are meant for persons with knowledge and competences in domains relevant to the functioning of the colleges of art and music. They are not required to present the same artistic excellence as is required for a professorship but they can take on other permanent responsibilities besides teaching, such as assistance in academic self-governance or in support and co-supervision of graduates.

The present recommendations are given independently of the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, the most recent experiences show that colleges of art and music have seen grave challenges as a consequence of the pandemic. They were particularly affected because most of their teaching programmes can hardly be translated into digital formats. Artists and musicians also depend on exhibitions or performances with an audience and had potentially been living in precarious circumstances even before the pandemic. The cultural and arts sector is heavily affected as a whole, its institutions will be restricted in their capacity to act for quite some time.

Thus, the colleges of art and music will have to meet particular challenges in the future, especially since the cultivation and practice of the arts in public is part of their responsibilities stipulated by law. The postgraduate phase might see a growing demand due to the rising tendency to spend more time at higher education institutions, thus escaping the demands of the art and job markets. Infrastructures of the colleges of art and music for the production, presentation and distribution of visual and performing arts and music may be in particular demand. The colleges will have to contribute to the creation of sustainable structural and financial framework conditions for artists and should be able to do so.

The WR understands the funding challenges which will impact on all areas of the society. Yet the WR appeals to the responsible government departments to consider the vital role of their colleges of art and music in maintaining and developing the internationally acclaimed German arts and cultural sector when determining their funding in the years to come.