Social Sciences

Degree conferred
Rerum Socialium Doctor / Doctor of Philosophy in Communication (PhD)

Commencement of studies
An application for admission may be submitted at any time.

Regulation
http://studies.unifr.ch/go/lX6Q7 *(French and German only)*

Application procedure
Candidates with Swiss qualifications
https://studies.unifr.ch/go/Ui3b4
Candidates with foreign qualifications
https://studies.unifr.ch/go/2KPbe

Fribourg profile

You have successfully completed your master and you enjoy research. You would like to find out more about media, communication and the public. You want to go deeper into a subject and carry out your own research project. A doctorate in communication science is the right challenge for you.

The Department of Communication and Media Research DCM at the University of Fribourg/Switzerland offers the possibility to pursue a doctoral degree of Social sciences in Communication Studies. Communication Studies at the University of Fribourg is firmly rooted in the tradition of the social sciences and is devoted to the analysis of public communication in modern societies, looking at both legacy and new media (e.g. online platforms). Central topics are the general framework, systems, processes, contents and effects of communication. Research at the DCM focuses on different actors of communication, media content, media use, exposure and effects, media and news organisations as well as on media systems, including economic, political and cultural influences (e.g. media politics and media economics).

Doctoral theses can be written in the following research fields, among others:

- Journalism studies (e.g., current developments of journalism, quality in journalism)
- Theory and history of communication and journalism
- Political communication (e.g., digital democracy, analysis of political debates, opinion formation)
- Media use, exposure, and effects (e.g., persuasion, parasocial relationships, health communication, media exposure)
- Organisational communication (e.g. reputation and issues management, corporate social responsibility, communication strategies)
- Comparative communication research
- Media systems and media organisations
- Media policy and media regulation (e.g., public service media, policy-making processes and power, governance)
- Analysis of new media and new forms of communication

A doctoral programme of 30 ECTS credits must be followed for successful completion of the doctorate. The core part of the doctoral programme is the DCM Colloquium. It is held at regular intervals and offers doctoral students the possibility to present and discuss the current state of their projects. ECTS credits can also be acquired by participating in academic courses at the University of Fribourg or elsewhere (e.g. summer or winter schools) in areas such as theory, methodology, didactics or academic writing and presentation skills, by giving presentations at scientific conferences, by publishing articles in scientific journals or books (first author or co-author), by writing reviews or helping with the organisation of conferences, or by undertaking other academic tasks at the Department.
For detailed information about the doctoral programme, see https://www3.unifr.ch/dcm/fr/assets/public/files/handouts/dr-richtlinien2015.pdf

Professors who are eligible to supervise theses

- **Prof. Sina Blassnig**

Areas of specialisation:
– Journalism Studies: digital journalism, journalism and new technology (e.g. news recommender systems, AI), media innovation, news use, media logic(s)
– Political communication: (digital) communication of political actors, social media, political news coverage, populism, hate speech/ incivility
– News use and the role of audiences: news use and information behavior in digital news environments, user comments, news sharing, user perceptions of new technology
– International comparative media research, international comparison of media systems

Supervision of theses in German and English.

- **Prof. Andreas Fahr**

Areas of specialisation:
– Media selection, media use, media effects
– Emotional & cognitive processing of media exposure
– Mediated social communication
– Parasocial relationships, health communication, entertainment

Supervision of theses in German and English.

- **Prof. Alexandra Feddersen**

Areas of specialisation:
– Political communication
– Media and public opinion
– Media and democracy

Supervision of theses in English, French and German.

- **Prof. Regula Hänggli**

Areas of specialisation:
– Political communication
– Public debates
– Challenges to democracy based on commercialisation and digitalisation
– Relation between media and democracy

Supervision of theses in German and English.

- **Prof. Laura Illia**

Areas of specialisation:
– Emerging forms of organisation, audiences and social media
– E-audiences and their influence on business and society
– Legitimacy, reputation, identity, stigma and new media
– Corporate social responsibility (CSR) and communication
– Communication in social impact and business in the circular economy
– Crisis, communication, stakeholder management
– Artificial Intelligence (AI) text agents and their implications for business and society

Supervision of theses in French and English.

- **Prof. Diana Ingenhoff**

Areas of specialisation:
– Strategic communication, organisational communication, communication management
– International public relations research, public diplomacy and country images
– Corporate social responsibility (CSR), social advocacy, and media quality
– Reputation management and crisis communication in the digital age

Supervision of theses in German and English.

- **Prof. Manuel Puppis**

Areas of specialisation:
– International comparison of media systems & Swiss media system
– Media policy, media regulation and media governance
– Media organisations
– Critical communication research

Supervision of theses in German and English.

- **Prof. Tobias Rohrbach**

Areas of specialisation:
– (Digital) Journalism
– Gender/Minorities and Media
– Dissemination (and Prevention) of Misinformation
– Algorithmic Curation of Communication Processes

Supervision of theses in English, French and German.

- **Prof. Thilo von Pape**

Areas of specialisation:
– Communication in digital contexts: uses and effects
– Social construction and appropriation of media innovations
– Mobile media and communication
– Privacy, sustainability, accessibility in digital communication

Supervision of theses in German, French and English.

Studies organisation

Structure of studies

30 ECTS credits can be earned.

Doctoral school

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Admission

In order to be admitted to a doctorate the candidate must have been awarded an academic **bachelor's and master's degree** or an equivalent qualification from a university recognised by the University of Fribourg.

Before applying for a doctorate the candidate must contact **a professor** who would be willing to supervise the thesis work.

There is **no general right** to be admitted to a doctorate.

The respective conditions of admission for each doctoral study programme are reserved.

Contact

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http://studies.unifr.ch/go/en-communicationmedia

Doc- Postdoc-portal

http://www.unifr.ch/phd