

PEP – Programm Entwurfsbasierte Promotion

Summary Information and Application Procedure

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Organization and Implementation:

Prof. Ralf Pasel, TU Berlin
Prof. Jürgen Weidinger, TU Berlin
Prof. Dr. Ignacio Borrego, TU Berlin
Prof. Dr. Matthias Ballestrem, TU Dortmund
Prof. Johanna Meyer-Grohbrügge, TU Darmstadt
Prof. Elke Reichel, TU Darmstadt
Prof. Felix Waechter, TU Darmstadt
Prof. Wolfgang Lorch, TU Darmstadt

Speaker:

Prof. Ralf Pasel, Prof. Jürgen Weidinger, Prof. Johanna Meyer-Grohbrügge, Prof. Dr. Matthias Ballestrem

1. Aim and Target Group

The design disciplines of architecture and landscape architecture at universities have a long academic tradition, including doctorates. Today, the proportion of design-relevant topics and design-based methods in the total number of doctoral theses is low. Engineering, historical or social science topics and methods are dominating.

For this reason, PEP (Programm Entwurfsbasierte Promotion – program for design-based doctorate) aims to promote design within the framework of research in architecture and landscape architecture. This is implemented as an innovative form of doctoral supervision that incorporates design results and uses design as an epistemic tool to develop relevant knowledge contributions for the design disciplines. PEP offers suitable research methods and criteria for *Design-Based Research* within the framework of doctoral studies.

PEP is suitable for candidates of design disciplines who have developed very good skills in design and have already found and worked on new topics through their individual design activities. PEP understands design as a process that produces spatial solutions. Spatial solutions represent complex and indissoluble penetrations of aesthetic, ethical, social and technical aspects as a holistic spatial presence and therefore cannot be adequately described by text and numerical values.

Problem-solving procedures without spatial and design-based deepening, such as area planning or management and moderation processes, are not suitable for participation in PEP. In PEP, projects are an indispensable part of design-based scientific work.

2. Involved professors

PEP is an initiative of professors and not of universities. They form the core scientific group. PEP was founded at TU Berlin in 2016 by the professors Prof. Ralf Pasel, Prof. Jürgen Weidinger, Prof. Dr. Ignacio Borrego, Prof. Dr. Matthias Ballestrem, and Prof. Donatella Fioretti. Since 2024, PEP has been offered in cooperation with the TU Darmstadt, where it is run by Prof. Johanna Meyer-Grohbrügge, Prof. Elke Reichel, Prof. Felix Waechter, and Prof. Wolfgang Lorch. Since his appointment to TU Dortmund University in 2024, Prof. Dr. Matthias Ballestrem has been conducting design-based doctoral programs there as part of the PEP.

3. Methodological framework for design-based research in the PEP

Design-Based Research serves to tap new areas of knowledge of the design disciplines and to qualify this knowledge also through inter- and transdisciplinary scientific discourses. To this end, design itself is applied as a research method and the design results are understood and described as scientific findings.

Design-Based Research is about developing and lifting new knowledge from one's own design results. The knowledge contained in the projects is made explicit and accessible through critical examination. This takes place through an iterative process of designing, reflecting on the design results, explaining and re-integrating the results of the research into new designs. By comparing their own contribution to the discourse with related and relevant knowledge of the design disciplines, doctoral candidates position their own contribution in the discourse, make the newly acquired knowledge available to their own discipline and at the same time create connecting points to other disciplines.

Doctoral candidates must have already produced a body of work, i.e. a sufficient number of very good designs or very good realized projects. A design-based doctoral project within the framework of PEP consists of two intertwined and interdependent parts, i.e. a design part and a written part. The design components of the design part are not only illustrative, but represent independent research results.

4. Structure of the supervision of the doctoral project in the PEP

All requirements for a doctorate are regulated in the respective doctoral regulations.

For *Design-Based Research*, the PEP has formulated a procedure that makes the extraction of knowledge from design practice structured, comprehensible, and assessable.

Doctoral candidates must complete the following stages, i.e., presentations with specific objectives:

- **Application letter**, including portfolio, resume, and exposé
- **PEP 0:** Presentation for admission to the PEP
- **PEP 1:** Draft work, main interest, outline of the research topic and associated methodological approach
- **PEP 2:** Highlighting the research question through old and new design projects
- **PEP 3:** Clarification of the argumentation through old and new design projects and initial comparison of the findings on the research topic with existing knowledge -

- contextualization of the design research
- **PEP 4:** Further clarification of the argumentation through old and new design projects and in-depth comparisons of the findings on the research topic with existing knowledge, draft of a structured presentation of the entire study
- **PEP 5:** Presentation of the entire study as a milestone presentation
- **PEP 6:** Completion of the doctoral thesis and trial exhibition
- **Submission of the dissertation**
- **Scientific discussion or defense and exhibition**

After successful presentation for PEP 0 and admission to the PEP, at least six further PEP presentations will take place in the context of joint colloquia held every six months for all participants.

The objectives of the presentations for PEP stages 1-6 build on each other and provide a methodological framework. Doctoral candidates are required to present artifacts of their design work at the PEP colloquia.

After each PEP presentation, doctoral candidates receive feedback and criticism on the status of their doctoral project. A PEP presentation can only be repeated once per stage.

To ensure consistency in the work and supervision, a maximum of one presentation may be suspended. In consultation with the supervisors, it is possible to extend the processing time in individual cases after the presentation for PEP 5. The colloquia are held in English and German.

5. Application and admission procedure

Letter of application

The letter of application should include:

1. Project portfolio as a description of own practice, i.e., presentation and sorting of own design work as preliminary work (for projects and designs developed by a group of authors, your own contribution to the design must be demonstrated)
2. Abstract as an outline of the doctoral project (500 words)
 - Leading interest (lines in the work) and research question
 - Expected results
 - Planned methodological approach
3. A representative illustration of your own that summarizes the project
4. Curriculum vitae: academic and professional background

Points 2 and 3 should each be presented on one DIN A4 page.

The cover letter should explain the connection between your own practice and the outlined doctoral project. The PEP core group will evaluate the applications and invite the best candidates to a presentation for PEP 0.

PEP 0: Presentation for admission to the PEP

Applicants will give a 20-minute presentation outlining their doctoral project. After questions and discussion, a decision will be made on whether to confirm participation in the PEP, request a repeat presentation for PEP 0, or reject the application. The presentation for PEP 0 can only be repeated once.

PEP proposes a first supervisor to each doctoral candidate who confirms the supervision of the

doctoral thesis. If Prof. Ralf Pasel, Prof. Jürgen Weidinger or Prof. Dr. Ignacio Borrego are recommended as the first supervisor for the doctoral procedure, the doctoral procedure will be registered at the TU Berlin. If Prof. Dr. Matthias Ballestrem is recommended as the first supervisor, the doctoral procedure will be registered at TU Dortmund. If Prof. Johanna Meyer-Grohbrügge, Prof. Elke Reichel, Prof. Felix Waechter or Prof. Wolfgang Lorch is recommended as the first supervisor, the doctoral procedure will be registered at TU Darmstadt.

Depending on the assignment, the doctoral regulations of the respective university apply.

Please send inquiries regarding participation to:

r.pasel@code.tu-berlin.de