



**Thesis Regulations  
for  
Dissertation Doctorates**

**Within the Joint  
International Double-Degree-Programme**

**Universidad Atzecca  
and  
UCN Universidad Central de Nicaragua**

2012

## **Professional Doctorate "Doctor" PhD Research Doctorate "Doctor en Filosofía "**

International University programme of Universidad Azteca and UCN Universidad Central de Nicaragua provided as joint Double-Degree-Programme

### **§ 1 Objective – Qualification**

- 1) Universidad Azteca (Chalco, Mexico) and UCN Universidad Central de Nicaragua (Managua, Nicaragua) – called „Universities“ – conduct, according to an academic collaboration agreement between both Universities, joint doctoral programmes for international students in distance learning mode equally shared by means of a joint admission-commission and an examining committee.
- 2) The examinations and defences of dissertations (theses) before the joint examining committee are conducted in compliance with the provisions of applicable Mexican and Nicaraguan study laws and with the study and examination regulations of the universities.
- 3) The examination and defence of the thesis are to prove, on the basis of his/her independent study and research in the given field of study, that the Applicant has gained a deeper insight in the wider basis of the discipline and is capable of acquiring latest theoretical and practical knowledge, s/he is also capable of creative and independent application of the gained knowledge and experiences in practice.
- 4) The examination and thesis defence are proceeded in the subject field for which the admission has been approved by the Universities subject to the double degree programme of the Universities in order to conduct examination and thesis defence.
- 5) The doctoral study programme is available to graduates of Master and postgraduate studies.
- 6) The distance learning study programme has asynchronic design aiming at the transfer and acquisition of knowledge at a high level of independent self-study and research. The opportunity of networking collaboration via the e-learning platform of the Universities provides practical integration for the participants of the programme, resulting in high-end theses.
- 7) The research findings gained in this programme qualify the alumni as specialists in their given study area.

### **§ 2 Universidad Azteca**

Universidad Azteca is a recognised Mexican private university, entitled due to its accreditation and study programmes to use the legally protected name „Universidad“, enjoys the right to offer state recognised as well as university own study programmes in distance learning mode and to award the respective academic degrees and titles in accordance with Articles 59 and 60 of the General Law of Education<sup>1</sup> (federal). Universidad Azteca offers numerous recognised study areas and is reputed for its approach to international co-operations with universities abroad and for its international study offers as one of the most innovative universities in Mexico.

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<sup>1</sup> **LEY GENERAL DE EDUCACIÓN** CÁMARA DE DIPUTADOS DEL H. CONGRESO DE LA UNIÓN  
Secretaría General Secretaría de Servicios Parlamentarios Centro de Documentación, Información y Análisis / *Última Reforma DOF 22-06-2009*

### **§ 3 UCN Universidad Central de Nicaragua**

Nicaraguan higher education law is embedded in the principle of freedom of instruction, guaranteeing in Article 125 of the Nicaraguan Political Constitution full autonomy being implemented by Law no. 89 about the Autonomy of the Institutions of Higher Education (No. 89<sup>2</sup>). The law 89<sup>3</sup> determines in Articles 7 and 9 that the institutions of higher education can award academic degrees. UCN is a fully autonomous accredited university with the unrestricted right to award certificates, diplomas, academic degrees and titles and to issue certificates of recognition and validation of studies on equivalent level, completed at other universities or centres of higher education, domestic or abroad, entitled to recognise academic degrees, titles and diplomas awarded by foreign universities, entitled to award professional rights, except for lawyers and notaries for whom, by law, the Supreme Court is in charge. Furthermore, UCN is entitled to establish relations with academic, scientific and cultural establishments located domestically or abroad. According to Article 82 of the Ley General de Educacion 2006<sup>4</sup> the explicitly mentioned „Doctorates“ count – literally quoted – to the „nationally and internationally fully recognised academic degrees“ in Nicaragua.

### **§ 4 Joint Examining Committee**

The Universities establish a joint examining committee for the evaluation and examination of doctoral candidates (theses). Detailed provisions are given in § 14.

### **§ 5 Study Areas**

The study areas include:

- Administration (Business Administration, Public Administration)
- Economic and Social Sciences
- Psychology
- Education
- Health Sciences
- International Relations and Political Sciences
- Environmental Sciences, Management and Biopolitics
- Law

### **§ 6 Doctorates**

The doctorates are differentiated as

- Professional Doctorates with the academic degree „Doctor en...“, abbreviated „Dr.“; and
- Research Doctorates with the academic degree „Doctor en Filosofía en...“, abbreviated „Dr.“ or „PhD“ in English.

### **§ 7 Workload and Structure of the Study Programme**

1) The volume of the study programme is determined by the workload, given in credits (in brackets: ECTS points).

2) The professional doctorate requires as thesis doctorate a workload of 150 credits (120 ECTS points), to be achieved in the event of Applicants with 375 credits (300 ECTS) on admission by thesis only; in the event of Applicants with 300 credits (240 ECTS) on admission to be achieved by thesis of 75 credits (60 ECTS points) and by transfer of credits from positively completed postgraduate

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<sup>2</sup> Ley de Autonomia de las Instituciones de Educación Superior, 89/1990, Kapitel II, Art. 7-9

<sup>3</sup> Ley de Autonomia de las Instituciones de Educación Superior, 89/1990

<sup>4</sup> Ley General de Educación, 382/2006, Art. 82

courses in the extent of 75 credits (60 ECTS points). This corresponds with a duration of 4 semesters. The accumulated minimum requirement for the professional doctorate is 450 credits (360 ECTS points).

3) The research doctorate requires a workload of 225 credits (180 ECTS points), to be achieved by thesis of 150 credits (120 ECTS points) and by transfer of credits from positively completed postgraduate courses in the extent of 75 credits (60 ECTS points). This corresponds with a duration of 6 semesters. The accumulated minimum requirement for the research doctorate is 600 credits (480 ECTS points).

## **§ 8 Admission**

1) Applicants can be admitted to the asynchronic distance education programme throughout the year.

2) Admission Requirements:

a) Persons meeting the following requirements can be admitted to the Professional Doctorate: Completed university or college study programme of at least 8 semesters with no less than 300 credits (240 ECTS points) from a diploma programme with a recognised university or college at level 2 (Licenciado, Magister, Master, Diplom) and entitling for admission to doctoral programmes in the country of origin of the awarding institution; and a postgraduate specialisation or master degree of at least 75 credits (60 ECTS points).

b) Persons meeting the following requirements can be admitted to the Research Doctorate: Completed university or college study programme of at least 10 semesters with no less than 375 credits (300 ECTS points) from a diploma programme with a recognised university or college at level 2 (Licenciado, Magister, Master, Diplom) and entitling for admission to doctoral programmes in the country of origin of the awarding institution; and a postgraduate specialisation or master degree of at least 75 credits (60 ECTS points).

3) The joint admission-commission of both universities rules on the grounds of the formal requirements and the application per single case and upon request of the Applicant according to available enrolments and tutoring capacities, as well as of the submitted research proposal for the thesis. The admission-commission can require an admission-test.

4) Application procedure and admission: Applications for admission to the respective doctoral programme must be submitted with the required documents (application form, curriculum vitae, proof of degrees earned and professional experiences gained, passport copy, passport photo). The admission-commission may require the submission of "original transcripts" directly from the awarding tertiary education institutions.

5) Persons who have been admitted to the programme and who have paid the programme tuitions and fees, will be admitted by the study department of both universities as international students.

## **§ 9 Application**

1) The Applicant submits his/her application to the admission-commission.

2) The application for the admission has to be submitted in a written form and the Applicant shall state in addition to his/her personal data the following:

a) the subject field in which s/he has obtained a university degree,

b) the subject field chosen for the thesis examination in line with these regulations,

c) the topic of the thesis,

d) the research project of the thesis.

- 3) The Applicant can choose the subject field in which s/he has completed university study or a related subject field.
- 4) The Applicant can suggest his/her own topic of the thesis.
- 5) The application for the thesis examination has to include the following enclosures:
  - a) the completely filled and signed application form,
  - b) copy of the Diploma and Diploma Supplement (transcript),
  - c) the graduate of a foreign university has to include the proof that the awarding institution is a recognised institution of higher education in the country of its origin, this requirement can be waived, however, if this fact is evident,
  - d) Curriculum Vitae of the Applicant,
  - e) copy of passport or identification document of the Applicant,
  - f) passport photo in colour.
- 6) The admission commission shall examine the application for the thesis examination and within 30 days from its delivery shall announce the decision to the Applicant in writing.
- 7) In the event the application complies with the requirements as stated in the Paragraphs 2, 3 and 5, the admission commission shall, according to available enrolments and tutoring capacities, confirm its acceptance in writing. The admission commission shall simultaneously notify the Applicant of the subjects which shall become part of the postgraduate specialisation as the wider basis of the discipline in the chosen subject field.
- 8) In the event the application does not comply with the requirements as stated in the Paragraphs 2, 3 and 5, the admission commission shall ask the Applicant to complete the missing data before the stated deadline.

## **§ 10 Transfer Credits**

- 1) The evaluation of degrees and transfer-credits Universidad Azteca is subject to the provisions of Article 61 of the General Law of Education<sup>5</sup>. In the international evaluation of credits Universidad Azteca applies the recommendations of the „*Sistema de Asignación y Transferencia de Créditos Académicos (SATCA)*“<sup>6</sup> and its transfer-factors on the credits of Universidad Azteca according to the ministerial decree in force<sup>7</sup>.
- 2) Total autonomous UCN Universidad Central de Nicaragua validates the joint doctoral programme with Universidad Azteca according to Nicaraguan study law. In evaluating degrees and transfer-credits UCN applies the standards of Universidad Azteca in compliance with Article 9 Paragraph 2 of the Law no. 89 on the Autonomy of the Institutions of Higher Education<sup>8</sup>.
- 3) 75 credits (60 ECTS points) earned in postgraduate specialisations or Master programmes must be transferred by Applicants with 300 credits (240 ECTS) on admission into the curriculum of the Professional Doctorate, as far as they match the research topic of the chosen specialisation.

<sup>5</sup> **LEY GENERAL DE EDUCACIÓN** CÁMARA DE DIPUTADOS DEL H. CONGRESO DE LA UNIÓN Secretaría General Secretaría de Servicios Parlamentarios Centro de Documentación, Información y Análisis / *Última Reforma DOF 22-06-2009*

<sup>6</sup> SISTEMA DE ASIGNACIÓN Y TRANSFERENCIA DE CRÉDITOS ACADÉMICOS DOCUMENTO APROBADO EN LO GENERAL POR LA XXXVIII SESIÓN ORDINARIA DE LA ASAMBLEA GENERAL DE LA ANUIES, 30 de Octubre de 2007. (SATCA 2007) ANUIES & SEP

<sup>7</sup> DIARIO OFICIAL Lunes 10 de julio de 2000 SECRETARIA DE EDUCACION PUBLICA ACUERDO número 279 por el que se establecen los trámites y procedimientos relacionados con el reconocimiento de validez oficial de estudios del tipo superior.

<sup>8</sup> Ley de Autonomía de las Instituciones de Educación Superior, 89/1990

4) 75 credits (60 ECTS points) earned in postgraduate specialisations or Master programmes must be transferred into the curriculum of the Research Doctorate, as far as they match the research topic of the chosen specialisation.

5) Credits can be accepted from coursework taken with recognised institutions of higher education, recognised degree programmes, or programmes validated by the Universities, or from course-work taken with either of the Universities at the postgraduate level, according to a study plan matching the chosen specialisation.

### **§ 11 Doctorate by Publication**

A doctorate for scientific publications is possible in compliance with the exclusion clause of § 13 Paragraph 4, as far as this procedure is provided in the particular plans and programmes of study and the conditions thereof are regulated by these plans and programmes.

### **§ 12 Duration of Programme**

1) The thesis examination programme starts with the confirmed acceptance of the application form by the admission-commission of the Universities and is becoming effective upon the payment of the non-refundable study-tuitions by the Applicant with the receipt of the payment by the Universities.

2) The thesis examination programme ends:

a) by the act of granting and awarding the academic title by the universities,

b) by the decision of the examining committee that the Applicant did not meet the requirements including the retake options,

c) by delivering the written request to the examining committee to terminate the thesis examination,

d) by failing to complete thesis examination programme within the allowed retake options in compliance with the Letter b.

### **§ 13 Dissertation Thesis**

1) The range of themes for theses, their extent and particulars, as well as the requirements for theses are announced by the Universities based on the proposals examining committee for the thesis examination.

2) A doctoral thesis is a monothematic work which brings about new findings, it is not a compilation of literature, as a rule it presents personal original research pursued by the Applicant.

3) In general, the thesis is written in Spanish language. An Applicant of different nationality or a foreign Applicant shall ask the admission commission for a possibility to write the thesis in a foreign language. In case of available language capacity the admission commission shall approve the request. A thesis written in a language other than Spanish or English shall include a summary written in Spanish or English language in extent of up to 10 pages.

According to available enrolments and tutoring capacities particularly the following study languages are approved: Spanish, English, German, French, Italian, Greek.

4) The use of Master-theses or doctoral theses having already been used for the award of an academic degree is not allowed. The Applicant cannot submit as a rigorous thesis his/her diploma thesis or any other qualification thesis, neither the work of a compilation character.

5) The Applicant submits to the examining committee the thesis. The thesis has to be written in text editor, printed and bound in hard cover. Upon request of the Applicant or order recommendation of the examination committee the submission of an electronic version is permitted.

- 6) To evaluate a thesis the examining committee nominates at least one staff member possessing the "assistant professor" or "professor" title or the academic title PhD., Dr. or an equivalent degree at doctoral level. The evaluator/s are appointed by the examining committee.
- 7) The evaluator first evaluates the methodological aspect of the thesis. In the event of the positive evaluation, the thesis shall be evaluated from a specialized, subject-specific perspective. Positive evaluations of the thesis are necessary preconditions for the invitation of the Applicant to the thesis defence and examination.
- 8) The nominated evaluator shall submit to the examining committee within 60 days from the delivery of the thesis to the evaluator the evaluation of the thesis in which s/he shall state if the thesis does or does not meet the requirements determined by the examining committee and this given study plan. In the evaluation the evaluator shall also present comments on the content of the thesis and, in conclusion of the evaluation, state if s/he does or does not recommend the thesis for the oral defence, or if s/he recommends to rewrite the thesis.
- 9) In the event that the evaluator does not recommend the thesis for the defence, the Applicant can rewrite the thesis and resubmit it for evaluation on the next deadline for theses submission as determined by the examining committee. If s/he fails to submit the thesis on the given deadline s/he shall be excluded from the registration of Applicants for examinations and thesis defences. The Applicant can ask the examining committee in writing for the extension of the thesis submission deadline not more than twice.
- 10) Within the six months from the thesis submission before the thesis examination the examining committee shall notify the Applicant in writing of the place, date and time of the online-examination and at the same time notify him/her the result of the evaluation of the thesis.
- 11) Precondition of the invitation to the thesis defence and examination is the positive evaluator evaluation.

#### **§ 14 Examining Committee**

- 1) The examination and thesis defence take place in front of the examining committee.
- 2) The right to act as examiners is granted only to university teachers occupying the posts of professors or assistant professors or other experts possessing at least the academic title PhD., Dr. or comparable qualification at doctoral level, approved by the Universities.
- 3) The committee is appointed by the Universities, the nominees are selected from the eligible staff members as stated in Paragraph 2.
- 4) The committee consists of a chairman and a minimum of two other members.
- 5) As a general rule, the committee is appointed for a period until dismissal.

#### **§ 15 Examination and Defence of Thesis**

- 1) The examination can take place only when a chairman and a minimum of two other members are present online. The procedure of the examination is delivered by means of electronic tele-communications media (video-conference).
- 2) The examination is generally conducted in the language of the thesis.
- 3) The examination consists of two parts. It starts with the thesis presentation and defence and continues immediately by the oral examination by the examining committee. In defence of thesis the Applicant responds to the comments and answers the questions of the committee members.

4) The committee members vote upon the result of the examination in the non public part of the session on the day of the rigorous examination. The examination result is expressed in words as "passed" or "failed".

5) The examination procedure is recorded in writing. All documents including the notation and the evaluation are kept in the Archive in compliance with the valid regulations.

### **§ 16 Retaking Examinations**

1) In the event the Applicant cannot take the online-examination on the given date and gives a written apology for his/her absence within seven days thereafter, the examining committee shall provide on the basis of Applicant's request and consultation with the committee chairman a substitute date for taking the examination.

2) In the event the Applicant fails to appear in the stipulated time for the online-examination without giving a written apology within seven days thereafter, s/he shall be evaluated as if s/he had "failed" in the examination.

3) In the event the Applicant failed in the defence of the thesis or in the oral examination, the examination can be repeated on the next date announced for the examinations; the examining committee shall determine the date of the repeated examination. The examining committee can permit two further repetitions of the examination.

### **§ 17 Academic Degree**

1) In compliance with the provisions of the Ley General de Educación, applicable to Universidad Azteca in Mexico, as well as in compliance with the Ley de Autonomía de las Instituciones de Educación Superior, applicable to UCN in Nicaragua, after passing the examination of the thesis the following academic degrees are conferred:

- Professional Doctorate: **Doctor**, abbreviated „Dr.“

- Research Doctorate: **Doctor en Filosofía**, abbreviated „Dr.“ or „PhD.“

2) The doctoral degree of Universidad Azteca is either a legally awarded university own academic degree in accordance with Article 59 of Ley General de Educación (Mexico) or a degree awarded with RVOE according to Article 60 of the law. The degrees are validated and accredited by UCN in accordance with Article 9 Paragraph 2 of the Nicaraguan Law on the Autonomy of Institutions of Higher Education.

3) The doctoral degree of the fully autonomous UCN Universidad Central de Nicaragua, validating and accrediting the programme, is a fully recognised doctoral degree in the sense of Article 82 of the Ley General de Educación (Nicaragua) and legally awarded in compliance with Articles 7 and 9 of the Law on Autonomy of the Institutions of Higher Education (Nicaragua).

4) The Universities exclude any responsibility for the lawful use of the academic degrees or recognition of the studies acc. to Paragraphs 2 and 3 outside of Mexico and Nicaragua, being regulated by national provisions in third countries, however, the Universities generally expect the application of multilateral and bilateral agreements and recommendations of UNESCO.

### **§ 18 Distance Learning Mode**

1) Notification: the International Doctoral Programme – Double Degree Programme is a distance education programme only to be completed by means of electronic media of tele-communications and e-learning directly on the Universities in Mexico and Nicaragua, and that no elements of the study programme are conducted in third countries.



- 2) The Applicants are enrolled simultaneously with both Universities in Mexico and Nicaragua and not in a third country.
- 3) As far as professors and evaluators are applied outside of Mexico or Nicaragua, they are operating via e-learning and tele-communications directly from the autonomous territories of the Universities and their internet-platforms and not in or from a third country.
- 4) Mexican study law applies to Universidad Azteca. Place of delivery and court jurisdiction is Mexico City, Mexico.
- 5) Nicaraguan study law applies to UCN Universidad Central de Nicaragua. Place of delivery and court jurisdiction is Managua, Nicaragua.

### **§ 19 Quality Assurance**

- 1) Universidad Azteca is a member of ANUIES and subject to supervision and control of national programmes of study by the federal Secretary of Public Education – Subsecretary of Higher Education (SEP/SES). Universidad Azteca periodically conducts an auto-evaluation of international distance study programmes according to the standards of ODLQC (British) Open and Distance Learning Quality Council. Additionally Universidad Azteca aims to pursue a certification according to ISO 19796-1 and ISO 29990. Universidad Azteca is an accredited member of EQAC.
- 2) Universidad Central de Nicaragua is a fully autonomous university participating in the deliberate programme of auto-evaluation of the association of Nicaraguan universities. All professional titles and academic degrees are recognised by the professional associations and public services; UCN in 2010 is again among the best universities in Central America and has been awarded by the Central American Coalition USA as „Exemplary Central American University 2010“ in the United States of America.
- 3) Written Assignments will be checked with a plagiarism-analysis-programme for authenticity.
- 4) Online-examinations are standardised „Computer-Marked-Assignments“.
- 5) Written assignments and course-papers are „Tutor Marked Assignments“.
- 6) Scientific articles and publications are subject to a „peer-review“.

### **§ 20 Administration, Accreditation, Validation**

- 1) The administration of the programme is conducted by Universidad Azteca on behalf of the Universities.
- 2) The multidisciplinary PhD awarded by Universidad Azteca is a university own degree according to Article 59 of the General Law of Education.
- 3) The professional and research doctorates subject to these thesis guidelines are validated and accredited as distance-education programmes of study by UCN Universidad Central de Nicaragua, and, therefore, all academic degrees and titles awarded by UCN are fully recognised in compliance with Articles 7 and 9 of the Nicaraguan Law 89 on the Autonomy of Institutions of Higher Education in the sense of Article 82 of the Nicaraguan General Law of Education.

## § 21 Structure of the Programmes

### Professional Doctorate

	Award of Professional Doctorate Dr. Thesis 120 420 ECTS A7 525 credits
Award of Professional Doctorate Dr. Thesis 60 Course work 60 360 ECTS A6 450 credits	Admission with A5 Master Licenciado 300 ECTS
Admission with A4 Level 2 Diploma Licenciado A4 240 ECTS	Admission with A4 Master /PGDip Diploma A4 240 ECTS
	A3 Bachelor 180 ECTS

### Research Doctorate

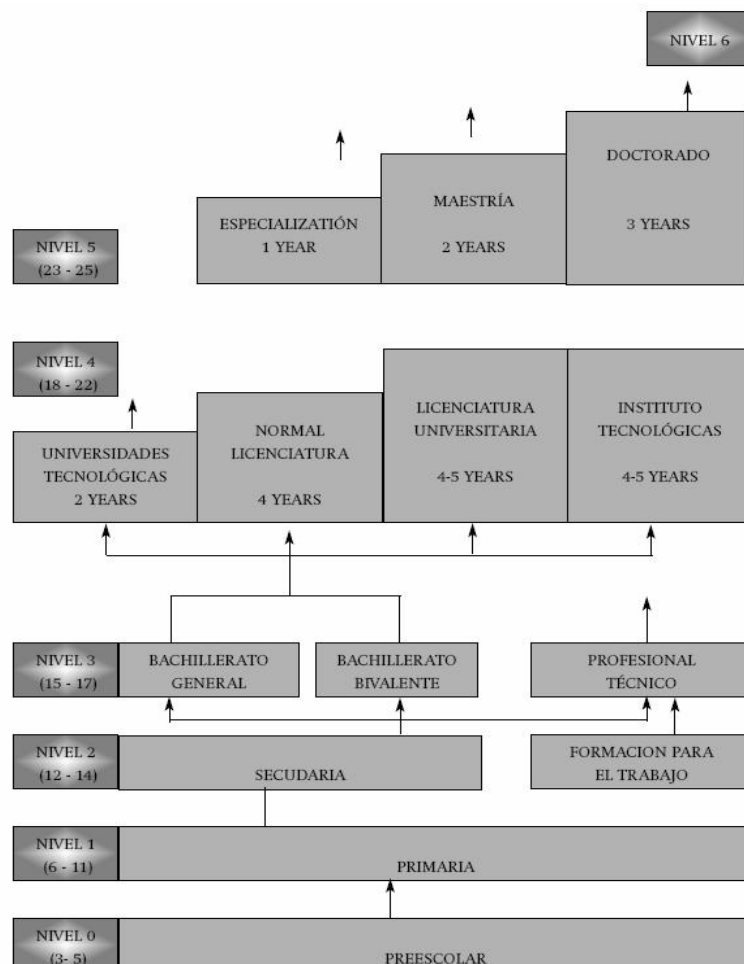
Award of Research Doctorate PhD. Thesis 120 480 ECTS A8 600 credits	Award of Research Doctorate PhD. Thesis 120 480 ECTS A8 600 credits
Admission with A6 360 ECTS Specialisation Postgraduate	Admission with A6 360 ECTS Specialisation Postgraduate
Completion of A5 Diploma studies Licenciado A5 300 ECTS	Completion of A5 Master studies 300 ECTS
Completion of A4 Diploma studies Licenciado A4 240 ECTS	Completion of A4 Diploma studies Licenciado A4 240 ECTS
	A3 Bachelor 180 ECTS

## Matching the Bologna system

According to the match-list of e.g. NARIC Austria<sup>9</sup> the Universities apply the following equivalent levels of the degrees with the Bologna-system:

Level	Mexico	Bologna	ECTS	years
1	Tec.-Sup.-Univ.	Bachelor	180	3
2	Licenciado	M2 Master or traditional M1 Magister Diploma	270-330	4,5-5,5
2/3	Maestría	D1-D2 Professional or Rigorosum Doctorate like Dr. Austrian UniStG 1997	360-420	6-7
3	Doctor	D3 PhD Research Doctorate	480	8

The structure of the Mexican system is in compliance with the Nicaraguan system and has been used for both Universities.



Mexican education system<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup>BMWF 2011, *Eintragungsrichtlinien und Führungsempfehlungen*, S. 84

<sup>10</sup>Source: NUFFIC-NARIC NL