



SOUTH-WEST UNIVERSITY “NEOFIT RILSKI”

Faculty of Law and History

Department of Civil Law Sciences

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INFORMATION PACKAGE

OF THE DOCTORAL PROGRAM

FIELD OF SCIENCE: **3. SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND LEGAL SCIENCES**

PROFESSIONAL FIELD: **3.6. LAW**

DOCTORAL PROGRAM: **PRIVATE INTERNATIONAL LAW**

EDUCATIONAL AND SCIENTIFIC DEGREE: **DOCTOR (PhD)**

LEVEL ACCORDING TO THE NATIONAL **LEVEL 8**

QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (NQF):

PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION: **RESEARCHER**

DURATION OF STUDY: **3 /three/ or 4 /four/ years**

FORM OF STUDY: **FULL-TIME / INDEPENDENT/
PART-TIME**

SUMMARY:

The educational and scientific training of doctoral students in the field of Private International Law has as its primary objective the development of scholars capable of generating new theoretical knowledge, conducting in-depth analyses of legislative acts, assessing their practical application, and participating in the improvement of the implementation of the legal framework related to Private International Law.

One of the main tasks in the educational process is connected with the practical significance and application of the doctoral students' scientific research. The gradual development of skills among doctoral candidates to conduct analytical research on the subject matter requires thorough knowledge, proper orientation within current scientific information and judicial practice, as well as the ability to perform comparative legal analysis.

The training of doctoral students is carried out through the compulsory and elective academic disciplines stipulated in the curriculum of the doctoral program in "Private International Law," as well as those approved in the individual study plans. Each doctoral student, in coordination with his or her academic supervisor, prepares an individual study plan, which is discussed within the Department of "Civil Law Sciences." The individual study plan is developed on the basis of the curriculum of the doctoral program in Private International Law accredited by the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA), and is subsequently submitted for approval by the Faculty Council.

The doctoral students' curricula are aligned with the provisions of the **Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria** and its Implementing Regulations, the **Law on Higher Education**, the **Internal Rules for the Development of the Academic Staff at South-West University "Neofit Rilski" – Blagoevgrad**, the **Regulations on the Structure and Activities of South-West University "Neofit Rilski" – Blagoevgrad**, and the **Regulations on Educational Activities of South-West University "Neofit Rilski" – Blagoevgrad**.

The duration of study for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" depends on the form of doctoral training — full-time, part-time, or independent preparation. The minimum period of study for full-time doctoral training is **two years**; for part-time training — **three years**; and for independent preparation — **two years**. The duration of the doctoral program may be extended, for objective reasons, by up to one year by order of the Rector, following consultation with the academic supervisor and upon the proposal of the Faculty Council (pursuant to the Internal Rules for the Development of the Academic Staff at South-West University "Neofit Rilski" – Blagoevgrad).

The doctoral training includes the following activities:

- **Research activity**, including participation in scientific and research projects;
- **Attendance and participation in academic courses** (lectures, seminars, and other forms of instruction);
- **Teaching and expert activity**, as well as participation in scientific forums (national and/or international);

- **Participation in the administrative activities and academic life** of the respective academic unit;
- **Examinations** provided for in the individual study plan;
- **Preparation, development, and defense of a doctoral dissertation.**
- Develop **competence for an in-depth understanding of the techniques** applied in academic and scientific research;
- Acquire **skills in the use of scientific apparatus and research tools**;
- Develop abilities to **identify, extract, and analyze** scientific and practical problems;
- Build the capacity to **form informed judgments** on complex issues in the field of private international law and to **present ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively**, both to specialists and to non-specialists;
- Acquire the ability to **apply a scientific approach** and to use appropriate **research instruments and methodologies** in their scholarly work;
- Gain **knowledge of the methodology of teaching legal disciplines**;
- Develop **specialized skills in working with various sources of information** and acquire **advanced computer and language proficiency**, aimed at ensuring personal information awareness and facilitating professional communication with scholars from other countries;
- Obtain **specialized and systematized knowledge** for performing **critical analysis** and for **synthesizing new ideas**;
- Develop the ability to **expand and modify existing knowledge** in the field of **notarial law**, as well as to understand its **interrelations with other branches of legal science**.

SECTION I.

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

(THEORETICAL TRAINING OF DOCTORAL STUDENTS IN PRIVATE INTERNATIONAL LAW)

I. Compulsory Academic Courses

Doctoral students are required to undertake in-depth study of one compulsory course, depending on the chosen topic within their scientific specialization: Private International Law, Civil Law – General Part, Family and Inheritance Law, or Bulgarian Civil Procedural Law. Also compulsory are the courses Methodology and Methods of Legal Research, Project Preparation and Management, and English Language. The doctoral training includes independent study, attendance at lectures and seminars, and other activities.

Completion of the training is assessed through an examination before a committee including the doctoral supervisor, in accordance with the individual study plan. The examination grade is reported to the Council of the Department of Civil Law Sciences and is included in the official documentation recording the fulfillment of the doctoral student's individual study plan.

II. Elective Courses

*Doctoral students, during the course of their studies, may choose one of the following disciplines: **Obligation Law, Comparative Civil and Commercial Law, European Union Law, or Ethics of Scientific Research.***

The preparation of doctoral students includes independent study, attendance at lectures and seminars, and other academic activities. Completion of the course is assessed through an examination before a committee, including the participation of the scientific supervisor, in accordance with the individual study plan. The examination grade is reported to the Department Council of Civil Law Studies and is included in the official records documenting the fulfillment of the doctoral student's individual study plan.

Teaching Methods, Assessment, and Language of Instruction:

The training is fully in compliance with the applicable legislation and the Internal Rules for the Development of Academic Staff at Southwest University "Neofit Rilski." Instruction is conducted through lectures and independent study by the doctoral students. The lecturer provides explanations to the doctoral students regarding the subject matter of the discipline, the relevant legislation, the literature required for preparation, and any questions that arise during independent study related to the course content.

The language of instruction is **Bulgarian**.

SECTION II.

SCIENTIFIC ACTIVITY

(PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES OF DOCTORAL STUDENTS IN THE PREPARATION OF THEIR DISSERTATION AND ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE SCIENTIFIC DEVELOPMENT OF DOCTORAL STUDENTS)

During their scientific training and the preparation of the dissertation, doctoral students in "Private International Law":

1. Participate in seminar sessions and discussions on didactic and methodological issues.
2. Prepare reports (both related to the dissertation topic and other areas within the doctoral program) for scientific events, discussions, conferences, and round tables.
3. Take part in the development and implementation of research projects.
4. Attend meetings of the Department of Civil Law Sciences to discuss theoretical and practical issues.
5. Conduct research work in the preparation of the dissertation.
6. Familiarize themselves with new trends and amendments in European Union law, the dynamics of changes in domestic legislation, as well as the case law of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Supreme Court of Cassation of the Republic of Bulgaria.
7. Analyze the necessity and possibilities for amendments to domestic legislation.

The main research activities forming part of the dissertation preparation include:

- Formulation of the research problem and development and presentation of a scientific thesis.
- Conducting bibliographic research and systematization of sources.
- Description and systematization of prior studies in the field of the dissertation topic.
- Setting the objectives and tasks of the research, selecting the approach and methodology to be used.
- Developing justification for the chosen methods and methodologies.
- Preparing a conceptual draft of the dissertation.
- Discussion of the dissertation draft in two stages.
- Presentation of the research concept and toolkit.
- Conducting research activities, including preparation and publication of studies, articles, or scientific communications.
- Participation in research projects.

Additional activities:

2. Doctoral students in “Private International Law” may also engage in teaching, methodological, and pedagogical activities.
3. The final stage of scientific training involves familiarization with the procedures for dissertation defense before a scientific jury and preparation for the defense itself.

Private International Law

ECTS credits: 10

Assessment: Exam

Exam type: Written

Hours: 45 lectures / 255 self-study

Status: Compulsory

Methodological Guidance:

Department: Civil Law Sciences

Faculty: Faculty of Law and History

Lecturer: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Anna Dzumalieva

Annotation:

The course “Private International Law” is established in the curriculum for doctoral students in the “Law” program at South-West University “Neofit Rilski”. The subject of the course is the study of Private International Law (PIL) as an independent branch of law, representing part of the international sector of the Bulgarian national legal system. According to the tripartite system adopted by Bulgarian legislation in the Code of Private International Law, the branch covers three main areas from a positive law perspective: international jurisdiction (and proceedings in international civil cases), applicable law to private legal relations with an international element, and recognition and enforcement of foreign judicial and other acts. The practical importance of these relations continues to grow in accordance with the increasing significance of international business exchange in the context of regional integration (Internal Market) and globalization. This underlines the practical relevance of the knowledge and skills acquired by doctoral students.

Civil Law – General Part

ECTS credits: 10

Assessment: Exam

Exam type: Written

Hours: 45 lectures / 255 self-study

Status: Compulsory

Methodological Guidance:

Department: Civil Law Sciences

Faculty: Faculty of Law and History

Lecturer: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Asen Vodenicharov

Annotation:

The course “Civil Law – General Part” covers the general provisions applicable to various types of civil legal relations in the broadest sense. The training aims to provide general knowledge of civil law norms and their practical application. Doctoral students also become familiar with the conceptual apparatus developed by civil law scholarship, the theoretical justification of statutory legal norms, and the rules for their interpretation and application.

The knowledge acquired in this course is of methodological significance for all other private law disciplines. It studies general legal categories and civil law norms, which apply not only across all branches of civil law but also in other private law sectors that have evolved from civil law, such as property law, commercial law, family and inheritance law, labor law, social security law, patent law, and others.

The course is structured around the following areas: the concept and characteristics of civil law; sources and interpretation; general theory of civil legal relations; civil law subjects; objects of civil legal relations; legal facts; legal transactions and invalidity; representation; and limitation of actions. The discipline has a pronounced methodological character, providing foundational knowledge for mastering all other private law subjects.

Family and Inheritance Law

ECTS credits: 10

Assessment: Exam

Exam type: Written

Hours: 45 lectures / 255 self-study

Status: Compulsory

Methodological Guidance:

Department: Civil Law Sciences

Faculty: Faculty of Law and History

Lecturer: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Alexander Ivanov

Annotation:

The course “Family and Inheritance Law” is a compulsory subject in the doctoral program “Private International Law,” depending on the student’s chosen dissertation topic. The course covers norms and institutions governing social relations arising from marriage, kinship, and adoption (family law), as well as the transfer of property from deceased persons to their heirs (inheritance law).

Through in-depth study, doctoral students gain a detailed understanding of personal and property relations between spouses, dissolution of marriage, parent-child relationships, adoption, and other related matters. The course also allows detailed study of inheritance under law and by testament, acceptance and renunciation of inheritance, guardianship, and division of inheritance. By studying this discipline, doctoral students can perform comparative analyses of family and inheritance law institutions and their applicability, forming foundational knowledge in this field, given its scope and close connection to Private International Law.

Bulgarian Civil Procedure Law

ECTS credits: 10

Assessment: Exam

Exam type: Written

Hours: 45 lectures / 255 self-study

Status: Compulsory

Methodological Guidance:

Department: Civil Law Sciences

Faculty: Faculty of Law and History

Lecturers: Prof. Dr. Valentina Popova, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Petar Bonchovski

Annotation:

The course “Bulgarian Civil Procedure Law” is a compulsory subject in the doctoral program “Private International Law.” Bulgarian Civil Procedure Law (CPL) addresses the protection of violated or threatened civil material subjective rights and the enforcement of such rights.

The course covers general civil proceedings and special civil procedures, including security and enforcement proceedings, as well as so-called “protective measures.” Protection of infringed civil rights through an effective civil process encompasses a system of rules within claim, enforcement, and security procedures, applicable both nationally and within the European Union. Civil proceedings also safeguard personal and property rights through judicial and extrajudicial procedures, ensuring legality across a broad spectrum of private law relations, including the creation of legally binding evidence.

Methodology and Methods of Legal Research

ECTS credits: 5

Assessment: Exam

Exam type: Written

Hours: 45 lectures / 105 self-study

Status: Compulsory

Methodological Guidance:

Department: Civil Law Sciences

Faculty: Faculty of Law and History

Lecturer: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Manol Stanin

Annotation:

This course introduces the foundations of research methodology and methods in legal studies, as well as information support for legal research. Its aim is to provide doctoral students with the opportunity to conduct in-depth, focused, and well-structured research. The course

presents stages of scientific research and supports the efficient organization of the research process.

Project Preparation and Management

ECTS credits: 5

Hours: 15 lectures / 135 self-study

Assessment: Exam

Status: Compulsory

Exam type: Written

Methodological Guidance:

Department: Civil Law Sciences

Faculty: Faculty of Law and History

Lecturer: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ivan Todorov

Faculty: Faculty of Economics

Annotation:

The course introduces doctoral students to the main aspects of project development, which form the basis for project organization and management when applying for European Union programs.

English Language

ECTS credits: 5

Hours: 60 lectures / 90 self-study

Assessment: Exam

Status: Compulsory

Exam type: Written

Methodological Guidance:

Department: Civil Law Sciences

Faculty: Faculty of Law and History

Lecturers:

Assoc. Prof. Dafina Kostadinova, PhD

Assoc. Prof. Ivanka Sakareva, PhD

Assoc. Prof. Yana Chankova, PhD

Department: Department of Germanic and Romance Studies

Faculty: Faculty of Philology

Annotation:

The course provides practical training in English, focusing on vocabulary and grammar at lower levels and developing and expanding proficiency at higher levels. The teaching is integrative, developing reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. Emphasis is placed on oral and listening skills, academic writing, and preparation of presentations, CVs, abstracts, and articles in English. Specialized legal vocabulary and translation exercises may also be included.

Law of Obligations

ECTS credits: 4

Hours: 45 lectures / 75 self-study

Assessment: Exam

Status: Elective

Methodological Guidance:

Department: Civil Law Sciences

Faculty: Faculty of Law and History

Lecturer: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Alexander Ivanov

Annotation:

The course covers general theory of obligations and special obligations. The general part examines principles of objective and subjective obligations, obligation relations, sources, contracts, performance, liability for non-performance, and securities. The special part studies specific contracts and obligation relations arising from torts, unjust enrichment, and management of affairs. The course aims to reveal market economy mechanisms through civil law and examine liability, contractual issues, and obligations under law and, where applicable, under Article 9 of the Obligations and Contracts Act.

Comparative Civil and Commercial Law

ECTS credits: 4

Assessment: Exam

Exam type: Written

Hours: 45 lectures / 75 self-study

Status: Elective

Methodological Guidance:

Department: Civil Law Sciences

Faculty: Faculty of Law and History

Lecturers:

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Aleksandar Ivanov

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Raya Ilieva

Annotation:

The course covers the Roman, German, Anglo-American, and Scandinavian legal systems and the main civil law institutions they regulate. It introduces comparative legal methods and principles of European civil and commercial law, including foreign terminology, theoretical justification, and rules of interpretation and application. It is designed for doctoral students with a particular interest in comparative law analysis.

European Union Law

ECTS credits: 4

Assessment: Exam

Exam type: Written

Hours: 45 in-class / 75 self-study

Status: Elective

Methodological Guidance:

Department: Civil Law Sciences

Faculty: Faculty of Law and History

Lecturer: Prof. Dr. Gabriela Belova

Department: International Law and International Relations

Faculty: Faculty of Law and History

Annotation:

The course “European Union Law” is established in the curriculum for the “Law” program at SWU “Neofit Rilski.” EU law differs significantly from both international law and the domestic law of member states. It constitutes an autonomous legal order, raising specific theoretical and practical issues, closely interacting with national legal systems. EU law is directly applicable in Bulgaria from its accession date (01.01.2007), with its hierarchy of norms and supremacy considered over all domestic laws, including constitutional provisions.

Ethics of Scientific Research

ECTS credits: 4

Assessment: Exam

Exam type: Written

Hours: 45 lectures / 75 self-study

Status: Compulsory

Methodological Guidance:

Department: Civil Law Sciences

Faculty: Faculty of Law and History

Lecturer: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Manol Stanin

Annotation:

This course addresses ethical issues in accordance with the development of scientific research in contemporary society. It emphasizes the importance of ethical standards in research, highlighting the contribution of scientific inquiry to societal development.

The aim of the course is to ensure that doctoral students recognize the significance of ethical norms in conducting scientific research, analyze and explore methods for resolving practical problems using both scientific and ethical approaches. The course also focuses on the ethical elements embedded in current national and supranational legal frameworks.