JOHANNES KEPLER UNIVERSITÄT LINZ

Universität für angewandte Kunst Wien
University of Applied Arts Vienna

Transformation Studies. Art x Science

Curriculum

Joint PhD programme
Duration: 6 semesters
Programme number: 794 815

Version: winter semester 2025/26

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§ 1 Point of departure

We live in a world characterised by volatility, uncertainty, ambiguity, and an increasingly high degree of complexity. The manifold and interrelated areas of global challenges — such as global conflicts, pandemics, aging societies, climate crises, democratic backlash, migration, economic inequality and poverty, as well as the ongoing digitisation of social life and human labour, and the impact of technologies such as AI — require new ways of identifying, understanding and tackling problems at the interface of the arts, humanities, and sciences.

Given the immense ongoing transformation of societies, the PhD program **Transformation Studies. Art x Science** seeks to equip upcoming scholars with the transdisciplinary knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to face current and future challenges. Studying transformation and its effect on the political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal spheres is thus at the heart of the program, which builds new bridges between the arts, humanities, and sciences.

The **Art x Science School for Transformation** is an inter-university endeavour, intertwining the strengths and expertise of the Johannes Kepler University Linz and the University of Applied Arts Vienna. Its goal is to develop, share, and teach transdisciplinary knowledge at the intersection of the arts, humanities, and sciences, yielding new forms of creativity, invention, innovation, collaboration, and learning. Based on a comprehensive understanding of the transformative potential of both artistic and scientific approaches, the program focuses on the political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal dimensions of transformations. In cooperation with practice partners from outside the university – including artists, entrepreneurs, (non-)governmental organisations, activists, and other stakeholders – students of the PhD program in **Transformation Studies. Art x Science** will develop their own research projects and, thereby, contribute to both academic discourse and society.

§ 2 Principles

The inter-university PhD programme **Transformation Studies. Art x Science** focuses on transdisciplinary knowledge production. Based on the student's interest, the dissertation/thesis will yield innovative research at the intersection of the arts and sciences. Embedded in a vibrant intellectual setting, bridging the competencies between Johannes Kepler University in Linz and the University of Applied Arts Vienna, the programme will make significant contributions to the development of both artistic and scientific knowledge base, and especially their interface.

The programme focuses on identifying and researching the transformative potentials, problems, and implications of ongoing as well as future political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal change. To this end, it is essential to include relevant stakeholders driving and/or being affected by transformation.

Central to the programme is the development of student-led scientific and artistic projects as well as a free practice of transdisciplinarity. Integrated into the research is a reflective examination of the methods and knowledge production processes within the respective scientific and/or artistic field.

§ 3 Legal basis and academic degree

(1) The PhD programme Transformation Studies. Art x Science is a jointly offered study programme offered by the Johannes Kepler University Linz (JKU) and the University of Applied Arts Vienna, pursuant to § 51 para. 2 subpara. 27, Universities Act 2002.

(2) The programme is assigned to the group of "Interdisciplinary Studies" pursuant to § 54 para. 1, Austrian Universities Act 2002 (3) The certificate about the academic degree is issued in German with an English translation.

(3) Upon successful completion of the programme, the student is awarded the academic degree "Doctor of Philosophy" (abbreviated "PhD"), pursuant to § 51 para. 2 subpara. 14, Austrian Universities Act 2002.

(4) The certificate for the academic degree is issued in German with an English translation.

§ 4 Duration and scope

The PhD programme Transformation Studies. Art x Science consists of 180 ECTS, which equals a period of six semesters to complete the degree.

§ 5 Qualification profile

The PhD programme in Transformation Studies. Art x Science serves to further develop the student's ability to conduct independent, innovative transdisciplinary research and to put their research into practice in co-creative settings together with different stakeholders. The PhD programme thus also serves the advancement of early scholars and supports their ability to initiate and support transformation processes at the interface between academia and society.

The PhD programme in Transformation Studies. Art x Science will enable graduates to achieve the following learning outcomes:

- to understand and critically reflect transdisciplinarity at the intersection of Art x Science
- to conduct transdisciplinary research by combining forms of knowledge and practice from the arts, sciences and humanities,
- to generate knowledge in relation to multi-dimensional transformation dynamics,
- to set up and initiate processes of transdisciplinary collaboration and mutual learning and mediate the exchange between different sets of knowledge and expertise,
- to develop new formats of dissemination across academic and non-academic fields.

§ 6 Language

The programme is taught in English. Students submit all written works in English.

§ 7 Programme structure and courses

(1) To successfully complete the PhD programme **Transformation Studies. Art x Science** and gain the competences and knowledge listed in the qualification profile, the following modules must be completed:

Understanding Transdisciplinarity & Transformations	9 ECTS
This module conveys an understanding of the potential of combining different knowledge cultures for analysing and shaping transformation processes. Students are introduced to contemporary topics and positions in transformation discourses and learn to evaluate them across contexts and professional settings. By doing so, students can contextualise their research, position themselves in their respective fields, and develop their own transdisciplinary research designs.	
Individual Focus	21 ECTS
This module gives students the opportunity to choose specific courses relevant to their transdisciplinary dissertation topic and research interest. It offers the flexibility to select from a wide range of courses, provided by both universities, giving the students the chance to deepen their knowledge and expertise in their specific field of research. Students have the freedom to choose between theoretical or practical courses, depending on their preferences and research needs. Individual courses are to be defined in consultation with the team of supervisors.	
Communicating & Facilitating Transformations	15 ECTS
This module enables students to set up and guide processes of transdisciplinary collaboration and mutual learning as well as to mediate the exchange between different sets of knowledge and expertise. Students are introduced to different forms of dissemination in the academic and non-academic fields, and are guided in developing their own dissemination formats depending on their research project.	
Dissertation Colloquium/Evaluation	3 ECTS
Dissertation/Thesis incl. defense of Dissertation/Thesis	132 ECTS
Total	180 ECTS

(2) The recommended ideal course of study is given in "APPENDIX: Global Map of Programme Modules and Courses". The study programme is designed for full-time study, including persons employed at research institutions and/or whose professional activities can be coordinated with the dissertation / thesis project. Attendance is required for most courses. Working students with appropriate scheduling flexibility may complete the degree programme but must expect a longer duration of the study

(3) The study programme takes place at the Johannes Kepler University Linz and the University of Applied Arts Vienna, as well as at the Art x Science. School for Transformation's premises in Vienna. The assignment of the individual courses to the respective universities is shown in the recommended ideal course of study given in the APPENDIX.

(4) The names and types of all courses taught at the Johannes Kepler University Linz, as well as their ECTS credits, their duration in hours per week, their codes, their registration requirements, and their admission procedures (in case of limited availability of places) are described in the "Studienhandbuch der JKU Linz" (https://studienhandbuch.jku.at) as well as the examination regulations for individual subjects and the standards for the course examinations. The types of courses offered and the examination regulations to be applied are described in §§ 13 and 14 of the "Satzung der JKU Linz – Satzungsteil Studienrecht" (JKU statute – "Studienrecht").

(6) The rules and regulations of courses as well as the examination regulations for courses taught at the University of Applied Arts Vienna are described in §§ 5 and 7-9 of the "Satzung der Universität für angewandte Kunst Wien – II. Teil: Studienrecht" (Angewandte statute – "Studienrecht").

§ 8 Admission

(1) In addition to the general requirements stated in § 64 para. 4, Austrian Universities Act 2002, applicants for the PhD in **Transformation Studies. Art x Science** need a positive assessment concerning the suitability for the study programme in accordance with the dissertation/thesis subject conforming paras. 3-4 (= qualitative admission requirement conforming § 63a para. 7 Austrian Universities Act).

(2) The admission to the PhD programme requires evidence of English language proficiency at level B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

(3) For the suitability assessment the following criteria must be considered:

1. adequate knowledge concerning the planned dissertation/thesis, in particular with regard to the intended subject area and the subject of the dissertation/thesis;
2. methodological knowledge and skills and/or practice-based aptitude with regard to the planned dissertation/thesis;
3. scientific and/or artistic potential and transdisciplinary motivation for the realisation of the planned dissertation/thesis;
4. feasibility of the planned dissertation/thesis.

(4) In order to prove their suitability, the candidates have to submit the following documents:

- a short biography, in which the applicants provide a written overview of their qualifications and (professional) experience;
- a short PhD proposal, in which the applicants describe their intended research project and how it creates transdisciplinary connections of artistic and scientific knowledge fields, and how it will contribute to transformation processes in society;
- a recommendation letter.

(5) The suitability of the applicant to complete a dissertation/thesis in the intended dissertation/thesis subject is deemed to be proven if the applicant has a provisional confirmation for the supervision of the dissertation/thesis from the supervisory team consisting of one supervisor from the University of Applied Arts Vienna and one from the Johannes Kepler University Linz. The provisional confirmation for the supervision of the dissertation/thesis has to be approved by the Art x Science. School for Transformation.

(6) If no provisional confirmation of supervision is submitted, an admission committee has to determine the suitability. The admission committee is appointed by the officer to administrate matters concerning the enforcement of study law of the university to which admission was applied for in consultation with the officer to administrate matters concerning the enforcement of study law of the other university. The admission committee consists of at least three members from both universities with relevant qualifications.

(7) Admission is granted at the student's choice at one of the two universities at which the degree programme is offered. In accordance with § 54e para. 4 UG the student also becomes a member of the other university upon admission.

§ 9 Dissertation/Thesis agreement

(1) Prior to the conclusion of the dissertation/thesis agreement, students have to complete the dissertation colloquium, in which they have to present their PhD project. Ideally, the dissertation colloquium is completed in the first year of study. The dissertation colloquium constitutes an oral examination worth 3 ECTS, which is to be taken before an examination committee. This presentation must, in any case, include the project's objective, a review of the current state of the art in the relevant field, the planned methodology, the financial or material resources required to realise the dissertation/thesis, and a proposed timeline. The dissertation colloquium is generally open to the public. However, the public may be excluded on relevant economic, legal or other grounds brought forth by the student and/or the supervisors of the dissertation project.

(2) The examination committee for the dissertation colloquium, which consists of a minimum of three members, is appointed by the officer administrating matters concerning compliance with study law at the university which admitted the student to the degree programme, in consultation with the officer administrating matters concerning compliance with study law at the other university. The members of the examination committee must be authorised to supervise and assess dissertations/theses in accordance with § 37 para. 2 JKU statute – "Studienrecht" and § 11 para. 1 and 2 Angewandte statute – "Studienrecht" and hold a teaching authorisation relevant to the topic of the dissertation/thesis. If a supervisor or the supervisory team has already been confirmed, the prospective supervisor(s) must be appointed as a member (or members) of the examination committee.

(3) After successfully passing the dissertation colloquium, a dissertation/thesis agreement between the student and the supervisors must be concluded.

(4) After the dissertation/thesis agreement has been signed by the supervisory team and the PhD candidate, it must be submitted for approval to the officer to administrate matters concerning compliance with study law at the university which granted admission to the degree programme. The respective officer at the other university will be consulted for consent by the approving officer.

§ 10 Dissertation/Thesis and defense

(1) The dissertation/thesis has to be conducted in the field of "Transformation Studies. Art x Science". According to its transdisciplinary character, two supervisors have to be appointed, one from each university, who are qualified in the respective suitable fields as represented at the two universities. The supervisor who is member of the admitting university is formally understood as the first supervisor.

(2) Together, the two supervisors act as the supervising team; supervision of the dissertation/thesis is the shared responsibility of the two supervisors.

(3) Submission of the dissertation/thesis is permitted only after the completion of all mandatory and elective courses.

(4) The dissertation/thesis can be submitted as a written monograph or selection from a collection of thematically related publications; as individual contributions intended for publication (cumulative dissertation); as an artistic research project related to the research topics complemented by a documentation in written form according to academic standards, which may consist of one or several (cumulative) projects. The dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the university at which the student was admitted. The format of the dissertation/thesis must be defined in consultation with both supervisors.

(5) After discussing the dissertation/thesis from their different areas of expertise and regarding the transformative potential of the outcomes, each supervisor has to assess the dissertation/thesis independently, regarding the specific requirements of his*her*their own subject area, and submit a written statement that proposes a grade and includes a reflection of the transdisciplinary contribution.

(6) The defense requires the PhD candidate to publicly present their research process including their strategies for linking subjects from art and science, as well as main outcomes and their specific relevance for the transformation of society.

(7) The defense committee is appointed by the officer to administrate matters concerning compliance with study law at the university at which the dissertation agreement was submitted for approval, in consultation with the officer administrating matters concerning compliance with study law of the other university, based on the proposal by the Art x Science School for Transformation. The defense committee consists of five persons, one of whom must be an external expert from outside academia in order to account for the transformational potential of the dissertation/thesis for society.

(8) Grading with an emphasis on the transdisciplinary aspects of the dissertation/thesis is done by the defense committee, based on the assessments of the supervisors and an external academic reviewer, as well as the assessment during the defense.

§ 11 Entry into force

The revised version of the curriculum enters into force on October 1, 2025.

§ 12 Transitional provisions

Successfully completed courses in the curriculum version winter semester 2024/25 count as courses in the curriculum version winter semester 2025/26 according to the following table:

Version: winter semester 2024/25	Version: winter semester 2025/26
SE Contemporary Debates on Transformation (ANG)	Individual Focus
VL Knowledge Cultures 1: Lecture Series (ANG)	SE Knowledge Cultures and Contemporary Debates on Transformation (ANG)
SE Knowledge Cultures 2: Research Seminar (JKU)	Individual Focus

APPENDIX: Global map of programme modules and courses – version: winter semester 2025/26

Understanding Transdisciplinarity & Transformations	Individual Focus	Communicating & Facilitating Transformations

Semester 1

Course	ECTS
SE Introduction to Transdisciplinarity, Art x Science JKU	1,5
SE Introduction to Transdisciplinarity, Art x Science ANG	1,5
IK Gender & Diversity JKU	3
SE Dissertation Seminar I JKU	1,5
SE Dissertation Seminar I ANG	1,5
Dissertation/Thesis	21
Total	**30**

Semester 2

Course	ECTS
SE Knowledge Cultures and Contemporary Debates on Transformation ANG	3
Individual Focus	9
Dissertation Colloquium/Evaluation	3
Dissertation/Thesis	15
Total	**30**

Semester 3

Course	ECTS
Individual Focus	6
SE Ethics & Practices of Collaboration ANG	3
SE Dissertation Seminar II JKU	1,5
SE Dissertation Seminar II ANG	1,5
Dissertation/Thesis	18
Total	**30**

Semester 4

Course	ECTS
SE Dissemination Methods JKU	3
Individual Focus	3
Dissertation/Thesis	24
Total	**30**

Semester 5

Course	ECTS
Individual Focus	3
SE Dissertation Seminar III JKU	1,5
SE Dissertation Seminar III ANG	1,5
Dissertation/Thesis	24
Total	**30**

Semester 6

Course	ECTS
Dissertation/Thesis	30
Total	**30**