

Shaping a Doctorate Together

**Guidelines for
Supervisors**



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Edited by Qualitätszirkel Promotion, www.qz-promotion.de, info@qz-promotion.de

Typeset by Christian Krämer, Marburg University Research Academy

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Shaping a Doctorate Together

Guidelines for Supervisors and Doctoral Candidates

The conditions for doctoral candidates at many universities in Germany and Europe have improved considerably as a result of the development of a broad spectrum of measures related to supervision, support and qualifications, within the framework of structured doctoral training. The goal of structured training is the formation of an extremely attractive research environment for young researchers. This has been accompanied by changes in academic cultures and in the understanding of management within universities. The burdens of doctoral training are shared by offering new support programmes and involving new actors, such as the managing directors of graduate schools, professional trainers and mentors. Young researchers are provided with special support, particularly in the field of professional qualifications and management competence, and this makes it easier for them, together with their supervisors, to concentrate on the research itself.

The focal point of the whole process of pursuing a dissertation remains the candidate's research performance and the supervisory relationship between supervisor and candidate. In some respects this has become even more important, because supervisors who have been relieved of some advisory duties can now concentrate more exclusively on the key responsibilities of supervision and support of the candidates' research and also on the specialist qualifications their candidates are acquiring. The transparency of this supervisory relationship makes a decisive contribution to the success of the doctorate.

These guidelines are intended to help to make doctoral supervision even more efficient. They provide a kind of supervisory biography of the course of a doctorate, offering suggestions for the preparatory, research and completion phases and giving all those involved a clearer idea of the organizational questions, problems, technical details and support measures that come into play during the different phases. The goal of doctoral supervision is to provide young researchers with the best possible advice as they prepare to become highly qualified colleagues who are fully integrated into the academic community. This process will work best if its require-

ments are equally transparent and comprehensible for both sides, if both sides define, communicate and document their reciprocal expectations and if they understand the doctorate as a project to be developed and fine tuned together.

This English translation of the guidelines aims at two purposes: Firstly, we want to help those international students considering coming to Germany or already pursuing their doctoral degree at a German institution. Secondly, at the international level we intend to contribute to the discussions and, even more important, to the progress on how to improve standards and transparency for doctoral supervision and careers. As our remarks and suggestions have been made from the point of view of the German system, at the international level adjustments may be necessary to meet the specific requirements.

Qualitätszirkel Promotion

This paper is the result of a joint project set up by the *Qualitätszirkel Promotion* (Quality Circle for the Doctorate), a German network involving 11 graduate schools and institutions responsible for quality assurance and support for young researchers, belonging to 10 different universities from different federal *Länder*. The project sees itself as a forum for the discussion and further development of guidelines and materials, and so ultimately of quality standards for good doctoral supervision at the universities involved and elsewhere. We are aware that our guidelines must be adapted to the different universities and to the current situation of their specialist cultures. They therefore cannot be a patent remedy that will apply everywhere; rather, they are intended to provide food for thought, proposals and the hope and expectation that further discussions and joint measures will follow.

We are circulating our guidelines internationally, in both German and English, and we would be pleased to see as many people as possible using them for the optimization of doctoral supervision in their own institutions. We would also be happy to receive feedback, reports of your own experiences and suggestions for revision. We will be glad to circulate this new knowledge via the national and international networks.

The following members of the network *Qualitätszirkel Promotion* have jointly developed this brochure.

Barzantny, Anke - former member (previously: Heidelberger Graduiertenschule für Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften (HGGG), Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg)

Brentel, Helmut - former member (previously: Internationales Promotions-Colleg Gesellschaftswissenschaften (IPC), Goethe Universität Frankfurt a. M.)

Chmura, Nadine - Bonner Graduiertenzentrum, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn (previously: University of Bayreuth Graduate School, Universität Bayreuth)

📧 www.graduiertenzentrum.uni-bonn.de

Jäger, Theo - Graduiertenprogramm der Universität des Saarlandes (GradUS)

📧 www.uni-saarland.de/gradus

Jooß-Mayer, Sigrid - former member (previously: Stabsstelle Studium und Lehre, Universität Mannheim)

Kämper, Ute - former member (previously: Marburg University Research Academy, Philipps-Universität Marburg)

Küster, Sybille - Goethe Research Academy for Early Career Researchers (GRADE), Goethe Universität Frankfurt a. M.

📧 www.grade.uni-frankfurt.de

Meyer, Frank - former member (previously: Internationales Graduiertenzentrum, Universität Trier)

Ruhl, Kathrin - Interdisziplinäres Promotionszentrum (IPZ), Universität Koblenz-Landau

☞ www.uni-koblenz-landau.de/ipz/

Schmid, Thomas - Graduiertenschule für die Geisteswissenschaften (GSH),

Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg

☞ www.graduateschools.uni-wuerzburg.de/humanities

Sicks, Kai - former member (previously: Bonner Graduiertenzentrum, Rheinische
Friedrich-Wilhelms Universität Bonn)

Qualitätszirkel Promotion, <http://www.qz-promotion.de>

Contact: info@qz-promotion.de

Before Beginning a Doctorate

“Should I do a PhD?” Deciding whether to start work on a doctorate is not easy. Writing a PhD thesis takes up a large chunk of one’s life and requires a good deal of energy. Doctoral candidates should therefore be clear in their own minds at the start of the process about their expectations, and should ask themselves certain fundamental questions. However, agreeing to supervise a PhD thesis is not an easy decision to make either. It requires supervisors to commit themselves to a candidate’s research project and to allot resources to that project over a period of time, without any guarantee that the project will be brought to a successful conclusion. In our view, therefore, both *candidates* and *supervisors* should consider these questions.

Candidates should examine their motivation, since the decision to start work on a doctorate will have an effect on their professional and personal development and on what happens to them in the next few years. They should remember that if they want to write a PhD thesis, they are taking a decision about a period of several years during which the focus of their life will take on a new shape or even change completely. One cannot write a thesis in one’s spare time! It is also important to consider at an early stage the question of one’s possible professional development after completion of the doctorate.

Supervisors have the advantage of being in a better position to assess the perspectives and prospects of an academic career that may be open to their doctoral students. They should be clear in their own minds about why the prospective candidate wants to take a doctorate, and should expect the candidate to be clear about this too. Sometimes it can be helpful for both sides for a doctoral project application to be rejected, as long as the rejection is based on sound arguments.

The following recommendations are addressed to supervisors. They consist of a check

list in the form of questions designed to help in reaching a decision, and which can be used as a kind of self-assessment. In order to establish a shared basis for the discussion, we have divided prospective doctoral candidates into possible types. This is not intended to be in any way exclusive or final, but should simply be understood as a way of using ideal types to get an idea of the range of motivations involved on the part of candidates.

1. Why does the potential candidate want to take a doctorate?

Imagining a certain “PhD type” (see the details below) can have a decisive influence on the decision to accept or reject a supervision application. The implications of this are significant for both supervisors and doctoral candidates. Seeing this issue in terms of types suggests possible effects on the supervisory relationship: depending on the type to which a potential candidate is considered to belong, supervisors will deal differently with their own resources and the way they may make these available to be used by the candidates. This way of thinking about the issue also means that specific demands will be made of the areas in which the candidate will pursue further training while working on their doctorate. It may be useful to incorporate these considerations into a personal development plan (a supervision agreement, or something similar). This may cover:

- financial resources
- time
- interest in the individual
- contacts and networks

We would like to distinguish between the following considerations in relation to candidate types:

- a. **intrinsic interest in the research topic**
- b. **academic career**

- c. **non-academic career**
- d. professional goals in **science and research management**
- e. **lack of direction**
- f. **the offer of a post**

a. Intrinsic interest in the research topic: Someone is fascinated by the discipline or by a particular topic.

- Will my chair or institute provide this PhD candidate with the best possible environment for the research she or he wants to undertake?
- Is a graduate school or doctoral programme an option?
- Does the topic this individual wants to investigate add something to the existing research focus of my chair or research institute?
- Are there suitable networks in existence that this individual can be integrated into?
- Am I prepared to devote a considerable amount of time to academic interaction with this individual, and also to invest time in their personal development?

b. Academic career: This individual wants to pursue an academic career.

Will my chair or institute provide this PhD candidate with the best possible environment for the research she or he wants to undertake?

- Is a graduate school or doctoral programme an option?
- Does the topic this individual wants to investigate add something to the existing research focus of my chair or research institute?
- Are there suitable networks in existence that this individual can be integrated into?

- Will the prospective candidate benefit from contributing to teaching?
- Does the planned research topic indicate that high-quality publications can be expected?
- Does the prospective candidate have the necessary personal prerequisites?
- Will the prospective candidate fit into the scientific community?
- Am I prepared to devote a considerable amount of time to academic interaction with this individual, and also to invest time in her or his personal development?

c. Non-academic career: The potential candidate needs the academic qualification in order to pursue professional success outside the university, e.g. in industry.

- Am I prepared to accept this motivation on the part of a doctoral candidate, or do I prefer to supervise those with a purely academic interest?
- Will my capacities meet with the necessary and pragmatic effort regarding time and resources?
- Will the pragmatic approach satisfy my academic standards?
- Despite the pragmatic considerations, does the proposed topic fit into my research focus?

d. Professional goals in science and research management

- Am I prepared to accept this motivation on the part of a doctoral candidate, or do I prefer to supervise those with a purely academic interest?
- Will my capacities meet with the necessary and pragmatic effort regarding time and resources?
- Will the pragmatic approach satisfy my academic standards?
- Despite the pragmatic considerations, does the proposed topic fit into my research focus?

e. **A lack of direction:** Someone wants to write a thesis as a stopgap or for want of any other goals.

- Given these conditions, am I interested in supervising this thesis?
- Is there a danger that both the candidate and I will waste our time, and that the thesis will not be completed?
- Are there any (professional) alternatives to writing a thesis?
- At what point would I, together with the candidate, decide that the time had come to halt the project?
- Where appropriate, refer the potential candidate to the advisory service.

f. **The offer of a post** attached to my chair, to enable the candidate to qualify.

- Does this candidate's professional perspective fit in with my own goals?
- Setting out the duties to be taken on by the candidate, in addition to work on the thesis: teaching, administration and the time to be spent on these tasks.

2. Does the potential candidate meet the necessary formal requirements?

Where appropriate, refer to the checklist: Which subject, at which university? Doctoral regulations or the recognition of the formal equivalence of foreign degrees; is matriculation helpful or necessary? The German *Wissenschaftszeitvertragsgesetz* (Law on Fixed-Term Contracts); what kind of defence (viva voce examination)?

3. How will the doctoral research be funded?

- Does the candidate need my support? (A post attached to my chair, or as part of a research project; support for an application for a scholarship?)
- What effect may the candidate's employment have on her or his personal schedule for completion of the doctorate?

4. What are the candidate's personal and social circumstances?

Relevant considerations include: life planning and planning for the candidate's family, time management and self-management, the role of hobbies, holidays, leisure activities, money and delay in attaining a higher status.

5. What kind of doctoral qualification procedure do I favour?

- The traditional procedure, with publication of the thesis after successful completion of the doctorate.
- The cumulative procedure, with the stipulation that the progress of the work should be documented during the process via the publication of parts of the findings.

6. Choice of second examiner

- At what point should the second examiner be selected?
- What procedures should be in place for the second examiner's participation in supervision of the thesis?

In our view, it would be ideal if the candidate and supervisor could clarify their reciprocal expectations at the start of the supervisory relationship, and even better if they could put this understanding in writing, for example in the form of a supervision agreement. (🔗 www.dfg.de/formulare/1_90/index.jsp)

This will result in the specification of requirements in those areas where the doctoral candidate is expected to pursue further training while writing her or his thesis. It may be a good idea to incorporate these considerations into a personal development plan (a supervision agreement or something similar).

Research Phase

Before work starts on the thesis, it is advisable to think about some of the important intermediate steps involved. In particular, there are a number of practical questions that need to be borne in mind.

- Firstly, doctoral candidates should be informed about the administrative steps they need to take along the way, e.g. the procedures involved in registering and submitting their thesis.
- Secondly, one needs to think about how, and at what point in time, a second examiner should be identified and integrated into the work and the supervision process.
- Thirdly, in some faculties the important question arises of whether the thesis should or can be written cumulatively; in this case, one needs to consider the advantages and disadvantages for the candidate of this way of proceeding, from the point of view of the most efficient way of working and the candidate's professional aspirations.
- Fourthly, the question of the expenditure that will be required in the course of writing the thesis should be discussed at an early stage; the cost of publishing the thesis should also be mentioned.
- In cases where the thesis is being written in a bi-national framework, the partner university and the administrative department responsible should be contacted at an early stage so that a Cotutelle de Thèse agreement can be negotiated.

After the supervisory relationship has been established and the formal questions emerging from the preparatory phase have been settled, work on the thesis can begin. This phase has four dimensions that are relevant for the contribution of the supervisor:

1. **instruments**
2. **the framework**
3. **work on the research topic**
4. **the personal relationship**

1. Supervision instruments during the research phase

There are two instruments that have proved their value in the supervision of doctoral candidates. The main instrument is the individual supervision meeting, which should take place at least once every semester. In addition, it is advisable to integrate the candidates into a doctoral colloquium, which should meet regularly and where candidates report to their supervisor and their fellow candidates on the progress they are making on their projects. The colloquium enables candidates to discuss with each other academic questions and problems related to their work, and also to talk about personal problems, and so takes some of the load off the supervisor. In addition, the candidates learn how to provide each other with academic feedback in a protected circle. It has been found to be beneficial if the supervision meeting follows as soon as possible after the colloquium. This makes it possible for the supervisor to add to things that have been said in the group discussion, and both parties will be up to date on the current state of the project.

Apart from the question of instruments, there is a need to ensure that agreements reached between candidates and supervisors are transparent. If this is done, misunderstandings can be avoided from the start. It is important to clarify at the beginning of the research phase

- how often meetings should take place,
- what is expected of the candidate in these meetings,
- what form the supervisor's feedback will take – what standard is expected of draft chapters handed in beforehand, how comprehensive the text segments handed

in should be, whether written comments on the work handed in will be provided, and to what extent the candidate's data-gathering strategies will be discussed and regularly subjected to critical examination.

Because the relationship between supervisor and candidate is an asymmetrical one, one cannot necessarily expect candidates to articulate their own requirements clearly in relation to these questions. It therefore seems to be a good idea for the supervisor to take the initiative in beginning a discussion on these lines. The following measures are suitable:

Supervision agreement: The points on which agreement has been reached can be put in writing in a supervision agreement; this is already established practice in numerous graduate schools and centres.

Keeping a written record: In addition to the measures taken to ensure transparency in the supervisory relationship it is advisable to keep a record of all points agreed upon and in this way to document progress made in the jointly undertaken work. This can be done in one of two ways: either the supervisor makes a brief note immediately after the meeting of what emerged from the discussion, or the candidate makes a note of what he or she sees as the main points to have emerged and gives this to the supervisor to check. This will ensure that any misunderstandings arising in communication during the supervision can be cleared up, and it also places both parties under a stronger obligation to keep to the commitments entered into.

The criteria of transparency and keeping a written record are of great importance in the supervision of international candidates. Misunderstandings at different levels are very likely in intercultural academic dialogue, and this means that it is very important to find instruments to ensure that both sides have the same understanding of the communication that has taken place. One also needs to bear in mind that advising international candidates is very time-consuming because of language and cultural differences.

2. Creating a framework

We use the term “framework” to cover all those activities and responsibilities of the supervisor which contribute to the creation of the best possible preconditions to enable the candidate to complete her or his doctorate as quickly as possible. These are:

Help with funding: Funding issues should be resolved during the preparatory phase, but new problems may arise as the work proceeds. If this happens, supervisors should offer assistance by

- thinking, together with the candidate, about whether external funding might be obtained, and if so how,
- supporting an application for a scholarship to fund the doctorate,
- making sure the candidate is aware of any official sources of advice available within the institution, or putting him or her in touch with, for example, a career services office.

Finding the necessary resources: If it is foreseeable that considerable costs to the candidate will arise in carrying out the research (travel costs, research materials, printing costs for questionnaires, etc.), supervisors need to discuss in advance possible sources of funding and the steps that will need to be taken to obtain the funding.

Respecting the candidate’s autonomy: In cases where the supervisor is also the candidate’s superior it is important for both sides to be aware of the dual roles involved in their relationship with one another. In addition, candidates need to have enough space of their own to be able to carry out and complete their doctoral research project. It is certainly a good idea to address this dual relationship in the framework of supervision meetings, to identify possible problems, and to develop strategies for solving them.

The need for further training and opportunities: Supervisors should encourage candi-

dates to undergo further training while working on their thesis, in order to expand their areas of expertise (specialist skills, key competences, etc.). They can be advised to make use of services offered by existing structures at the university (e.g. programmes offering support for young scholars, women's offices, facilities for training in university teaching). The qualification strategy accompanying the doctoral research project should be discussed regularly with the candidate and should be documented in the written record of supervision meetings. In connection with this, candidates should be encouraged to reflect on a regular basis, as their work proceeds, on what they consider to be the goal of their doctorate.

3. Work on the thesis topic: Discussing substantive issues

In addition to organizational support, the supervisory relationship should provide a forum for regular dialogue about the contents of the work in progress. It goes without saying that the supervisor will not always be an expert on the particular field within which the thesis is located, and it is advisable to make this point clear. The function of the supervisor can equally well consist of offering a competent external perspective on the project. One can distinguish the following substantive areas on which advice should be provided:

The research schedule: The supervisor needs to keep a close watch on the timetable that has been established for the doctoral research project, and needs to do this both in the preparatory phase and throughout the whole process. In particular, the supervisor needs to ensure that each component of the schedule is realistic and that it is structured by clearly defined intermediate goals (milestones). If this is done, it will be easier to keep a check on the progress being made at each stage. Overall, it seems to be advisable to leave open the possibility of making any necessary modifications, while only making drastic departures from the agreed schedule in exceptional circumstances.

Monitoring the progress of the project: In every scholarly project, the question under investigation, structure and hypotheses must be constantly revised in order to bring them into line with the progress being made, the findings emerging from the research and unforeseen developments. Supervisors should therefore regularly address the question of the basic shape of the project and should discuss any ongoing shifts of perspective or fine tuning. It is important to ensure that candidates keep up to date with the latest developments in research findings and specialist publications even after they have started work on their own projects, and that they take advantage of the support offered by programmes for young scholars, for example advice on managing projects and organizing one's time and workshops on writing skills. In this way, it will be possible to keep a constant check on and to improve the academic quality of the research project.

Widening horizons and integrating doctoral candidates into the scientific community: Contacts with other scholars and productive discussion networks are important preconditions for the successful completion of a doctorate. In order to promote these contacts in an active way, other scholars can be brought into the doctoral project at an early stage – as second examiners, or as members of supervisory panels or committees. It is also a good idea to encourage candidates to give lectures and to publish their work, in both national and international forums, since this both provides substantive stimulation and will be beneficial to their academic career. Supervisors should encourage their doctoral candidates to present their evolving research concepts and findings in specialized national and international forums. This will provide them with external feedback and enable them to gain experience of different academic cultures. Depending on the professional goals of the candidates, supervisors should consider how far it is possible, within the framework of their own networks, to establish valuable contacts in the scientific community and, where appropriate, outside it.

Encourage candidates' self-reflection as researchers: Among the important responsibilities of supervisors is the task of encouraging candidates to reflect on their own positions and activities as researchers. The young scholars should be able to form a clear idea of where they are positioned in their research field and what specific tasks they see themselves as carrying out within that field, especially in view of the defence (viva voce examination), in which they will be expected to present themselves as autonomous researchers.

4. The personal relationship needs to be taken into consideration

The responsibilities of supervisors are not confined to the provision of specialist advice in relation to work on the doctoral research project. They should also keep an eye on the candidate as a person, i.e. supervision should be oriented towards the needs and individual situations of the candidates (see the list of types in phase 1).

Motivation: Work on a doctorate frequently involves setbacks. It is therefore important to encourage and motivate candidates. Conveying positive thinking can make a significant contribution to the success of a doctoral project!

Establishing trust: In addition, supervisors should make an effort to establish a relationship of trust with candidates. Supervisors should be reliable providers of advice who keep to agreements that have been reached and show interest in the work of candidates. A supervisory relationship characterized by trust makes it possible for candidates to respond to advice and criticism in a productive manner, and also to formulate (critical) questions and requirements in their dealings with the supervisor.

Imparting good scientific practice: It is also important to make sure that candidates become familiar with the basic principles of good scientific practice, and to set an example in one's own work. As a rule, doctoral candidates have not concerned themselves

in any detail with the question of good academic standards while studying for their undergraduate degree; this applies both to international candidates, some of whom come from other academic contexts, and to those who have studied in the supervisor's own university. Imparting these standards should be part of supervising a thesis.

Completing the Doctorate

1. The start of the completion phase

The completion phase starts with a discussion between supervisor (or supervisory committee) and candidate, in which agreement is reached on a realistic submission date for the thesis and, if possible, on the specification of a period within which the defence (viva voce examination) should take place; the length of this period will, in turn, be affected by

- the period agreed for any corrections that may be necessary,
- the preparation and submission of the necessary examiners' reports,
- the dates for the meetings of the doctoral committee,
- the period in which the thesis will be made available for consultation and the need to agree on a date when all members of the examination board are available.

The basic requirement here is that any questions not dealt with during the phase of work on the thesis should now be addressed; the points and questions mentioned in this section should be raised, and they should be settled to the satisfaction of both sides as far as possible.

- There should be an assessment of whether the findings of the project so far are sufficient for a successful thesis, or whether the investment of additional time and effort might be worthwhile in order to improve the quality of the thesis.
- At this point at the latest, a decision should be taken on the language in which the thesis will be written. In particular, in cases of candidates writing in a language other than their mother tongue, there is a need to establish what standard is

required in terms of expression and style, and whether professional assistance may be needed in order to polish the language of the thesis.

- In addition, the following questions should be settled:
 - ☐ By what dates must the individual parts of the thesis be completed?
 - ☐ Will individual chapters be handed in to the supervisor for correction, or will this only be done when the whole thesis is complete?
 - ☐ What is the timeframe for the supervisor to make corrections?
 - ☐ If some parts are revised after correction by the supervisor, will they be handed in once again for further correction?

2. The final version of the thesis

Once these issues have been resolved, the final revisions can be made. Supervisor and candidate should now, each from their own perspective, conduct a final review of the thesis before it is submitted. The most important points to be clarified are the following:

- The supervisor in particular should once again ask, in a critical spirit, whether the research questions examined in the thesis have been investigated competently, using the appropriate methods.
- Has the thesis been put together in a way that makes sense; is the structure adequate and clear?
- Do the structure of the text and the contents of the argument cohere?
- Have the findings been presented and discussed convincingly?
- Have the individual chapters been written in a way that makes their significance for the thesis as a whole sufficiently clear?
- Does the thesis make a significant contribution to scientific knowledge, e.g. a contribution to the development of the theory or methods of this particular field?

- Has the candidate made a substantial original scientific contribution of her or his own?

3. Preparing for the defence (viva voce examination)

There is a need for transparency with regard to the procedure for the defence (viva voce examination) and the demands it will place on the candidate. The following suggestions may help, and it will be useful to mention these points at an early stage:

- The candidate should be reminded (repeatedly if necessary) that preparatory workshops can be helpful.
- Candidates should be advised to attend other examinations of this kind in order to familiarize themselves with the procedure.

4. The publication phase

Since publication is a central feature of a completed doctorate, candidates must be informed about the publication framework in good time and the different options need to be considered.

- If parts of the thesis have not already been published as contributions to a cumulative doctorate, it may be necessary to revise the text, especially if it has been written in a language other than the author's mother tongue.
- Where should the thesis be published?
- What kind of layout is specified, for example by the doctoral regulations or the publisher you want to approach?
- What format is required for any tables or for visual or graphic appendices?
- Is there a need to prepare new visual or graphic material? (Don't forget to clear up any questions relating to costs and, if necessary, copyright.)

- Does it make sense to publish the thesis online?
- Might it be possible to publish parts of the thesis as journal articles, contributions to collections or other articles, regardless of where and how the whole thesis is published?
- How are the presses, series or journals that might be worth considering to be evaluated?
- What are the likely printing costs?
- From what sources could the printing costs be met, and would these require applications supported by letters of recommendation?

5. Clarifying the candidate's professional options

In many cases, a doctorate is the first step in a career in universities or in research institutes outside academia. But, doctoral candidates often hope to pursue careers in other fields related to academic work. Because there are so many professional options in a wide range of fields, and because these all need to be approached in different ways, candidates need to start thinking about their future career during the research phase of their thesis. They will benefit from support provided by their supervisor, and can participate in relevant workshops, coaching sessions or consultations offered by, for example, graduate schools or career advice services. If this has not been done earlier, discussions and the provision of advice on what needs to be done should begin during the completion phase.

- Supervisors should support candidates in their search for and acquisition of suitable new research desiderata.
- It can often be helpful for candidates to take advantage of the supervisor's contacts with other researchers or institutions when she or he is looking for ways to add further options to her or his academic qualifications (posts, scholarships, publication options, etc.).

- Candidates will also often need help from their supervisors when they apply for postdoctoral scholarships, posts or research trips abroad; where appropriate, this can be done in cooperation with the graduate school office (if there is one) or the university's office for research funding.

Conflict Situations and How to Resolve Them

One reason why we have drawn up these guidelines is that we hope they may contribute to the avoidance of conflicts. Even so, it is possible that fundamental difficulties may arise between candidate and supervisor. These may relate either to the substance of the doctorate – the contents of the research, the approaches used, misunderstandings, a failure to adhere to agreements or organizational questions – or to personal relations between the two parties.

If this happens, both sides should do their best to bring problems out into the open as early as possible, and to deal with the situation in as professional and unemotional a manner as they are able. If this is done, it should be possible for interaction between the two parties to continue and for a way out of the situation to be found. Both parties should seek assistance and advice from uninvolved third parties who can act as mediators; in many cases, their perspective from the outside will enable them to identify constructive ways out of the crisis.

These uninvolved parties will usually be your colleagues. For example, junior colleagues with a completed doctorate will occupy a neutral position and have a good understanding of the hierarchy involved and so will be able to assess the positions of and gain acceptance by both sides.

However, there will be occasions when no other course of action is open than to consider ending the supervisory relationship. For example, it may be that a research project develops in a direction that takes it too far away from your field of interest. It is easier to realize in good time that this is happening and to react to the situation if both sides reach agreement at an early stage on the direction the thesis is to take, meet as regularly as possible and define the intermediate goals (milestones). If it is impossible to avoid a change of supervisor, both sides should do everything they can to find a solution that

is acceptable to all involved.

A conflict of interest can also arise if a supervisor moves to a new post at a university some distance away. This may mean that it is no longer possible to guarantee sufficiently close contact between supervisor and candidate, and a change of supervisor may be necessary. In such cases, it is very important to inform the candidates affected as soon as possible and to search together for solutions.

Finally, we would like to recommend that all candidates should, if at all possible, register with the university's doctoral committee right at the start of their work on their thesis. The advantage of this for you as supervisor is that if conflicts or problems arise, you can expect help from colleagues in your department or faculty and candidates will have undertaken commitments they will be expected to keep to.

Further reading

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