

## Summary minutes

### 9th Round Table on the Advancement of Junior Scholars at TU Berlin, 15.11.2019

#### Topic: *Supervisory relationships/culture of supervision*

Together with TU-DOC – Office for Doctoral and Postdoctoral Services, the vice president for strategic development, junior scholars, and teacher education, Professor Dr. Angela Ittel, invited junior scholars to a total of three round tables during winter semester 2019/20. Each round table was dedicated to a specific topic.

The round tables are a continuation of the eight round tables held in winter semester 2018/19 and summer semester 2019 and which were part of the plans to implement [TU Berlin's Strategy for the Advancement of Junior Scholars](#), passed by the Academic Senate in July 2018. The tables served as an opportunity to speak with the junior scholar target groups and discuss target group-specific suggestions and ideas for measures in the area of the advancement of junior scholars.

The round tables during the 2019/20 winter semester accompanied the implementation of the *2019/20 Advancement of Junior Scholars Action Plan*, which is based on the Strategy for the Advancement of Junior Scholars and was passed by the Academic Senate in July 2019. It consists of measures to optimize support for junior scholars at TU Berlin which are to be implemented in 2019 – 2020.

The 9th round table on 15 November 2019 was held on the topic of: ***Supervisory relationships/culture of supervision***

During a lively discussion, participants contributed numerous ideas and input on the topic. These are summarized below:

- **Supervision agreement:** Only a small number of those present had concluded a supervision agreement with their supervisor. At TU Berlin, a supervision agreement is a provision of the [Doctoral Regulations \(Section 4\)](#); individual faculties require candidates to submit the agreement when registering for the doctoral procedure. Those in attendance who have concluded a supervision agreement report that there is often a discrepancy between what is agreed “on paper” and what is implemented in everyday university life. One example of this is the frequency with which doctoral candidates and supervisors meet. The participants agreed that general agreements cannot be concluded as the respective framework conditions and requirements vary greatly depending on the discipline and individual.
- **Elements of good supervision** During the discussion, it was clear that both the doctoral candidates present and supervisors present would find regular meetings and close supervision during the doctoral process helpful. There was additional agreement that it is important for expectations and framework conditions of the doctoral process to be clarified earlier on - possibly before commencement of the actual doctoral process - as well as for doctoral supervisors to provide an assessment early in the doctoral process whether doctoral studies are the correct career step for the candidate or whether other career options would be more suitable.
- **Handling conflict within the supervisory relationship:** Those in attendance welcomed the idea of a “third party” in addition to the doctoral candidates and supervisors to serve as a mediator or mentor. There was also positive discussion on the issue of more strongly or completely separating supervision and assessment during the doctoral phase and offering this as a solution to possible dependencies.

- **Other approaches for optimizing the culture of supervision**

- Welcome Week: Presentation of all the structures and offers at TU Berlin relevant to junior scholars, offered as part of a regularly occurring orientation week
- Motivating supervisors (not only new supervisors) to seek out continuing education in the area of supervision/mentorship
- Establishing university-wide supervision standards, e.g. a minimum number of meetings between candidates and supervisors
- Continuing education offers for new doctoral candidates: “Do’s and don’t’s of the supervisory relationship” and “Rights and obligations of the doctoral candidates”

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