“Like an elephant, a supervision is easy to recognise but difficult to define”

Frank King, Notes on supervising Computer Science, 1995
Good supervision culture (Gute Betreuung)

project funded by the Berlin University Alliance

Goals:

• Foster and establish a discussion on the supervision process at all BUA institutions.

• Doctoral candidates and the supervisors will have the opportunity to discuss the topic, both within each target group and also across the groups. → different formats at all BUA institutions throughout 2024.

• Basis for discussions: empirical data from different surveys that were/ are carried out in all BUA universities, targeting both PhD-candidates and the supervisors and feedback from participants.

• Today: we are very excited to continue our discussion about supervision – today’s topic:

DOCTORAL AGREEMENT / PROMOTIONSVEREINBARUNG
Germany has one of the highest number of the doctoral graduates.

Doctoral supervision might impact a future generation of scientist (or professionals) and is therefore extremely important – this is a big responsibility!

Goal: to speak about improving the quality of the doctoral supervision in an open-minded atmosphere.
Summary from last event:

• The freedom individual doctorate offers can be an advantage but sometimes it makes harder to connect with peers or to find help in case of problems.

• Almost all participants reported lack of doctoral agreement or not appropriate overview of this document.

• Workload can make it hard for professors (and other faculty members) to give proper supervision.

• Onboarding offers often do not reach target groups or are "discovered" too late.

• The size of faculties and chairs present their own challenges. In big chairs, supervision is often delegated (e.g., to postdocs) - which might be an advantage (second supervisor). In small chairs, a well-structured supervision might be missing.

• The needs for supervision may change with individual preferences and throughout the doctorate.

• Doctoral candidates wish to have more access to further educations.
What is the doctoral agreement?

The doctoral agreement is a document designed to establish a transparent relationship between the doctoral candidate and the doctoral supervisor with respect to contents and time.

It is therefore important that supervisors and doctoral researchers jointly discuss the contents of the doctoral agreement.
What is the doctoral agreement?

1. Regular meetings to discuss progress of the dissertation and frequent proactive reports by the doctoral candidate
2. Creating adequate conditions for independent research work during the dissertation (e.g. publications)
3. Participation of the candidate in (international) workshops and conferences
4. Access to technical or artistic infrastructure
5. Further issues, e.g. regular colloquia for doctoral candidates, possibility to participate in further education courses (see p. 2)

a) Frequency of progress reviews of the dissertation, at least every
   - three months
   - six months
   - more frequently
   give details:

b) Obligations of the doctoral candidate
   - Submission of progress reports
   - Further obligations
   give details:

c) Obligations of the supervisor
   - Commenting on the progress reports
   - Further obligations
   give details:

It is recommended to complete and frequently update the appendix to this agreement.
Empirical Data I: „WM-Studie 2022“

- Initiative of TU Berlin
- Since 2002, every 5 years
- This time conducted by Kooperationsstelle Wissenschaft und Arbeitswelt @ ZEWK
- Targeted group: Scientific staff, including people that are not (anymore) doing a PhD or are Post-Docs
- Response Rate: 621 of 2.503 (17.11.22) → 25%
- N for today: 361 who self-reported to do a PhD/doctorate

- Study report can be downloaded [here](#).
Empirical Data II: Nacaps-Study

• The National Academics Panel Study - is a longitudinal study of doctoral candidates and doctorate holders in Germany.

• Survey at regular intervals on the study conditions for their doctorates, career aims and professional development, as well as on their general life situation.

• First and second year of the doctorate.

• Questions were asked between 27.02.2023 – 20.04.2023.

• 15,760 participants from over 60 HEIs (response rate: 36,6%).

All BUA institutions are involved in nacaps.
Nacaps@ TU Berlin

- TU Berlin took part in the nacaps-study in 2023 for the first time.

- All persons who registered their intention to do a doctorate at the faculty.

- Not only TU employees (35.5%), but also people employed at other universities/research institutes (33%) or with other ways of financing (31.5%).

- Missing is the scientific staff, who have not declared their intention to do a doctorate but are doing so anyway (in the almost parallel WM-Study, 43% stated this).

- 416 participants (response rate – 45.6%)

- 394 persons are still doing doctorate – basis for the figures today
Do you have a doctoral agreement?

**nacaps**

- 28.8%
- 25.7%
- 45.5%

- yes, voluntary
- yes, mandatory
- no

**WM-Studie**

N= 393
We noticed some differences in how people felt about their supervision. Those who had these marked aspects were more satisfied than those who didn't.
Does a doctoral agreement make sense?

Over many years, TU-Berlin has been collecting data from doctoral candidates who had completed their studies.

The participants were asked about their experiences with doctoral agreements.

Results are not representative, but we could identify some topics that were mentioned often:

- the doctoral agreement helps to give a structure
- it has helped to create a sense of commitment (Verbindlichkeit)
- getting feedback during the regular meetings was helpful
Supporting factors
(that are normally not included but do play a role)

Question was, whether someone in the scientific environment gives support in one of the areas (Scale from 1 to 5)

Professional support
Emotional support
Networking
Support in career planning

Those three factors influence satisfaction with supervision.
Conclusion

Signing doctoral agreement can have positive impact on the conduct of your research.

It is not too late to ask for the agreement.

We have some questions:

− Do you have this agreement?
− What do you want to include in the agreement?
− Does the doctoral agreement impact your work?

What is your opinion?
Open questions.

Thank you for your attention.