

We work for
tomorrow



INFORMATION & OPPORTUNITIES FOR DOCTORAL CANDIDATES

at the University of Graz



**Research
Careers
Campus**

University of Graz

research-careers-campus.uni-graz.at

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The Path Through Doctoral Studies



ORIENTATION AND DECISION

1. Setting the framework

Before you start your doctoral journey, strategic considerations are crucial. These include:

- Reflecting on your own motivation:
Why do I want to pursue a doctorate?
What can I expect?
What skills will I need?
- Finding a research topic
- Choosing a supervisor (only faculty members who have completed a habilitation and assistant professors or, in exceptional cases, following a review of the requirements by the Director of Studies may supervise dissertations.) and signing a supervision agreement
- Planning and securing funding

2. Getting started with the research topic

Once you decide to pursue a doctorate, the in-depth exploration of the topic begins:

- Reviewing the current state of research
- Narrowing down the topic and formulating research questions that can be addressed
- Developing theoretical foundations and selecting suitable methods
- Clarifying the research context with your supervisor

Creativity, extensive knowledge in the research area, and a suitable approach to the topic are just as important as a good match between you, the topic, and the supervising person.



GOAL:

Enrolment



TIP:

During this phase, the supervisor can provide valuable support, particularly in narrowing down the topic and formulating the research question. Additionally, use this phase to seek out opportunities for further training in areas such as good scientific practice, project management, goal and strategy development. Take advantage of counselling, coaching, and mentoring services.

**CHECKLIST:**

- ✓ Finalise supervision agreement
- ✓ Create a work and time plan
- ✓ Explore support options: What skills do I need, and what am I still missing to successfully carry out my research project?
- ✓ Build a network: colleagues, PIs, writing groups, coaches, mentors
- ✓ Gather information about offerings from the doctoral school, doctoral forums (doctoral programs), and the Research Careers Campus

**NOTE ON SUPERVISION:**

A key factor in the success of your doctoral studies is the quality of communication with your supervisor. Open dialogue is particularly important, especially regarding your experience of the working relationship, what is working well, and what could be improved.

In this context, the supervision agreement, which is concluded between the supervisor and the doctoral candidate as part of the admission procedure, is of particular importance. The purpose of this agreement is to ensure that responsibilities, expectations and framework conditions for supervision are defined clearly from the start. The agreement allows for the formal definition of key aspects, including time and work schedules, regular supervision meetings, qualification goals, career planning and networking measures.

**TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION:**

- Structure your meetings (e.g. with an agenda)
- Take notes on feedback and discussion outcomes. Summarise key points briefly in writing and share them with your supervisor
- Schedule follow-up meetings
- Send brief progress updates in regular intervals

RESEARCH PHASE

At the core of this phase is the in-depth engagement with your research topic, leading into the writing and development phase.

Elaboration and writing phase

The writing phase requires not only subject-specific expertise but also perseverance, structure, and reflection. Useful tools and activities during this phase include:

- Keeping a research diary to document ideas, progress, and challenges
- Using writing tools and time management methods to make the writing process more efficient
- Attending research colloquia to present your work for discussion and feedback



GOAL:

- Clarify questions regarding presentation and communication of research results/findings,
- engage in scientific communication (publications, presentations, networking within the scientific community/industry, research stays),
- learn and use tools for literature research and management, assess your current position, and focus on career development (mentoring and coaching).



CHECKLIST:

- ✓ Review and adaptation of the project plan
- ✓ Use of project management and writing tools
- ✓ Active conference participation



TIP:

Critical reading and the presentation of various excerpts from your research project are particularly important in this phase. If you are aiming for an academic career, further training in higher education didactics can be beneficial. Additionally, special attention should be paid to maintaining a healthy work-life balance during this stage.

During this phase, you should also consider the following questions:

- **What skills do I need to successfully complete my project?**

Take advantage of the support services offered by the RCC, such as workshops on writing techniques, presentation skills, or peer group exchanges.

- **How can I ensure my wellbeing?**

Take time to reflect on how you handle pressure, identify which coping strategies work best for you, and find out where to find support if needed.

FINAL PHASE

The final phase of the doctoral program involves key steps: completing the dissertation, professional proof-reading, and selecting suitable reviewers (if the supervisors do not act as examiners). Additionally, thorough formal and content-related preparation for the viva voce examination (Rigorosum) or thesis defense (Defensio) is crucial (e.g., which individuals will participate and what the evaluation criteria are). At this stage, it is also important to explore various career options.



GOAL:

viva voce examination/thesis defense



CHECKLIST:

- ✓ What career options do I have? How can I prepare for the different possibilities?
- ✓ International doctoral candidates: Be mindful of potential visa expiration if your employment contract at the University of Graz ends.
- ✓ Expiring funding: Develop strategies to complete the dissertation within the funding period or explore additional funding opportunities.



TIP:

Further training in science communication or idea pitching can be helpful for career development in academia.

Doctorate at the University of Graz



ADMISSION TO DOCTORAL STUDIES

First, you must select a dissertation topic and find a supervisor who will accompany you in your research project.

Then, prepare the necessary documents and upload your application via UNIGRAZonline. Your application will be reviewed by the relevant dean's office; once it has been successfully reviewed, you will receive an email informing you that your application has been accepted. At the same time, you will be asked to submit your application for enrolment to the Academic Affairs Office. Only after the signed application has been received can the final steps for actual enrolment be carried out.



Further information



TIP:

Please be sure to note the application and admission deadlines, which you can find here for the individual curriculum: doctorate.uni-graz.at/en/doctoral-studies



THE CURRICULUM – A GUIDE TO DOCTORAL STUDIES

The University of Graz offers 12 doctoral programmes, each based on its own curriculum. (For detailed information, scan the QR code above.) The curriculum sets out the legal and content-related framework for doctoral studies, including answers to the following questions:

- What are the admission criteria established by the doctoral school?
- How many semesters does the programme last and what requirements must be met?
- What qualifications should be acquired during the programme?
- What are the requirements for the dissertation (including topic, supervision and assessment) and the final examination (defence or oral examination)?

The curriculum committees are responsible for creating and developing the curricula.

The chair of each committee is the contact person for questions regarding the recognition of preliminary studies and examinations, as well as for the further development of the curriculum content. The Dean of Studies supports the curriculum committees in their tasks.

Once a year, progress on the dissertation must be demonstrated. The manner in which this is to be done is specified in the relevant curriculum.



NOTE FOR INTERNATIONAL DOCTORAL CANDIDATES:

As the official language in Austria is German, only the German-language version of the curriculum is legally binding. Some doctoral programmes offer courtesy translations of their curriculum, but for others, only German-language versions exist. The English-language version of a curriculum is for reference purposes only. If you have any questions regarding interpretation or specific content, your supervisors, the respective contact persons for doctoral studies at the relevant dean's office or the Research Careers Campus will be happy to assist you.

THE DOCTORAL SCHOOL – ORGANISATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR DOCTORAL STUDIES

In order to begin doctoral studies at the University of Graz, you must be accepted into the subject-specific doctoral school. This doctoral school will review your application to determine whether you meet the academic requirements for your chosen doctoral programme.

The assessment is carried out by a committee, which also includes your designated supervisor, and results in either admission, admission with conditions or non-admission.

The doctoral school therefore primarily plays a formal role in doctoral studies; academic exchange takes place with your supervisors and other doctoral candidates in your field of research.

DOCTORAL FORUMS (FORMER: DOCTORAL PROGRAMS) – NETWORKING AND ACADEMIC EXCHANGE



Further information

In addition to the regular curriculum, doctoral forums (doctoral programs) also offer opportunities for subject-specific and interdisciplinary networking. They are supported by a group of supervisors and are designed for a limited number of doctoral candidates.

Characteristics of doctoral forums:

- Common research area or overarching research question
- Promotion of transdisciplinary research approaches
- Optional additional courses and networking opportunities

Participation is voluntary and not a prerequisite for doctoral studies.

Support services at the University of Graz



THE RESEARCH CAREERS CAMPUS (RCC)

The Research Careers Campus is the central institution for doctoral students, postdocs and those in career development positions. The RCC offers an information platform for the doctoral and postdoctoral phases, individual counselling on career planning, academic profile development, and strategic decisions in everyday research, as well as financial support opportunities for doctoral candidates and postdoctoral researchers at the University of Graz. The aim is also to strengthen a positive research culture at the University of Graz through events (such as the 3MT Competition or the Seraphine Puchleitner Prize).

Consultations

The RCC team assists (prospective) doctoral candidates who need information about or guidance in doctoral studies. In consultations, the following topics are often addressed: orientation within the doctoral study program, challenges and possible solutions during the process, and career path planning.

Coaching

Career coaching with external experts: The RCC offers a number of sessions with professional coaches. Possible areas include professional development, strategic career planning both within and outside academia, as well as addressing challenges and conflict management in everyday working life.

Ombudsperson

The RCC Ombuds Office is available to assist with personal or interpersonal issues arising during your dissertation process, as well as with any other concerns where you are unsure whom to contact.



Further information:
[Services and Support –
Doctoral Research at the
University of Graz](#)

Responsibilities of the ombudspersons:

- Mediation in serious conflicts within the framework of doctoral training
- Mediation in cases of inappropriate behaviour and/or discrimination
- Assistance with questions regarding good scientific practice
- Support with individual challenges on the path to completing your doctorate



Ombudspersons –
Research Careers Campus Graz

WELCOME CENTER

The Welcome Center is your first point of contact if you are coming from abroad to take up a position at the University of Graz. It provides information and support for planning your arrival in Graz, allowing you to focus more quickly on the primary reasons for your stay. The Welcome Center collaborates with various internal and external institutions, such as embassies and authorities, to assist you.



Further information:
Welcome Center

Kontakt:
welcome@uni-graz.at
international.students@uni-graz.at
+43 316 380 3940

UNIHELP

uniHELP is a platform on the University of Graz intranet (for employees only) that provides support and assistance services for employees directly at the University of Graz. Here you will find an overview of services related to conflict resolution, psychosocial counselling, crisis support and other specialized services.



Further information:

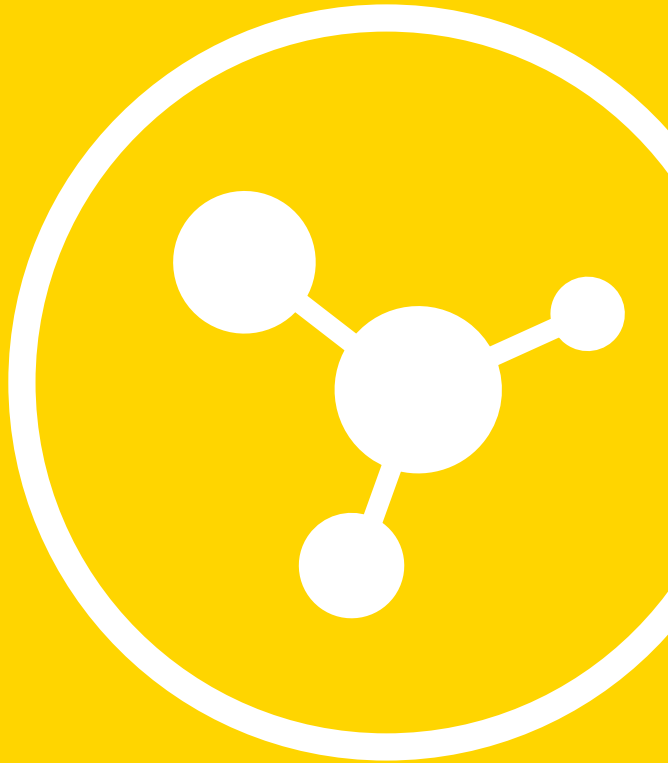
uniHELP



Counselling services for
students – University of Graz

RCC Workshops

Make curiosity
your profession!



A doctoral program should not only focus on completing a dissertation but also serve as an opportunity for personal and professional development. The broader the range of acquired skills, the greater the chances of finding meaningful employment after completing the doctorate. To help you explore your own skills and improve them efficiently, if necessary, the European Commission has developed the [European Competence Framework for Researchers](#), which is a helpful resource for planning your professional development.

Based on this framework, the RCC offers a wide range of interdisciplinary courses for personal and academic advancement.

Additionally, several departments at the University of Graz provide further training opportunities for doctoral candidates, such as the Graz Center for Empirical Research, the Coordination Centre for Gender Studies and Equal Opportunities (Career Program for Female Scientists), the Human Resources and Organizational Development Unit with UniStartWiss (only for employed doctoral candidates with a contract term of at least three years), the Writing Center, or the workshops on academic publishing and research data management offered by the University Library.



Detailed information about the workshops and registration: [Training and Development – Research Careers Campus Graz](#)



TIP:

Tip for those who are looking for additional opportunities and wish to network across Austria: The workshops offered by the Career Center of the Ludwig Boltzmann Gesellschaft are open to all researchers in Austria and free of charge!

Academic Staff: Employment Law Aspects



If you are writing your dissertation as part of your employment at the University of Graz, you are considered part of the academic university staff. There are three different types of positions that may apply:

- University Assistant
- Project Assistant
- Academic Project Staff

University Assistants are typically employed at the university for four years with a workload of 75%. The employment relationship is intended to deepen and expand professional and academic qualifications, with the completion of the doctoral program being the central career goal. Accordingly, an average of 30% of the agreed working hours are available for work on the dissertation. The exact distribution of tasks is coordinated with your supervisor. Typical responsibilities of University Assistants include:

- Independent research within the framework of your dissertation
- Participation in research projects within the working group
- Independent teaching activities
- Administrative tasks related to teaching and research

Both Project Assistants and Academic Project Staff work on specific research projects conducted at the university; however, their employment is funded differently. While the personnel costs for Project Assistants are covered by the university's global budget, Academic Project Staff are employed in externally funded research projects and are paid from the respective project budget. The duration of the employment contract is generally tied to the project duration.

The focus of these positions includes:

- Participation in academic research within the project context
- Publication activities within the framework of the project
- Project administration (e.g. reporting, organization)
- Attendance at conferences and workshops



NOTE

When starting a project position, it should be clarified on an individual basis whether and to what extent working hours can be allocated to your own dissertation. This should be discussed with the project leader and depends on the project structure. In the case of externally funded employment, such an agreement also requires the approval of the funding agency.

Employment Law Framework

The employment relationship with the university is governed by the Universities Collective Agreement, which regulates key aspects such as remuneration and working hours. Additionally, a fixed-term employment contract is concluded with the university, specifying the duration of your employment, the agreed workload, salary classification, and your responsibilities.



NOTE

We recommend initiating discussions with your supervisor early (at least 6 months before the end of your contract) to explore potential follow-up options, such as project positions or postdoc opportunities. For advice on the employment law requirements for possible continued employment, the Human Resources Management is available to assist you.

Working Hours and Leave

The allocation of working hours is determined based on the agreed workload in coordination with your supervisor or project leader. Weekends and public holidays should generally remain work-free unless there is an important official reason. Additionally, you are entitled to paid leave amounting to 5 weeks per calendar year. In the event of illness, you have a legal right to continued payment of your salary, provided you submit a medical certificate as required.

Social Insurance and Pension Scheme

As an employee of the University of Graz, you are fully covered by social insurance — this includes health, accident, pension, and unemployment insurance — unless your employment is classified as marginal. Additionally, the university contributes to an employee provident fund, and for employment contracts with a total duration of at least 24 months, contributions are also made to a pension fund.

**For further information,
please contact Human
Resources or the Works
Council:**

Human Resources:
personalmanagement@uni-graz.at
+43 316 380 2150



Works Council for
Academic University Staff:
brwiss@uni-graz.at
+43 316 380 2110



**General information on
working at University of
Graz can be found on this
website:** [Work at the
University of Graz | Career](#)

Standards of Good Scientific Practice



Members of the university are obligated to adhere to the principles for ensuring good scientific practice and avoiding breaches of scientific integrity. These principles are outlined in the section of the statutes titled *Principles for Ensuring Good Scientific Practice and Avoiding Breaches of Scientific Integrity*.

**Further information:**

Satzungsteil „Grundsätze zur Sicherung guter wissenschaftlicher Praxis und zur Vermeidung von Verletzungen der Pflichten zur wissenschaftlichen Integrität“

