

Principles of Good Doctoral Supervision at TU Dortmund University

The promotion of early career researchers is a central task of TU Dortmund University. In accordance with the principles of the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, DFG) on effective career support in science (cf. DFG 2021), TU Dortmund University feels committed to research- and career-friendly structures, plannable career paths, competitive remuneration and equipment, equal opportunities, the consideration of individual backgrounds as well as the compatibility of work and family also for the early career phase of the doctorate. In addition to the “Rules of Good Scientific Practice at TU Dortmund University”, the following principles of good doctoral supervision apply:

1. Regular exchange

Good supervision includes regular feedback sessions and counseling on the future career. At least once per semester, the current progress and upcoming goals are compared. With the initiation of a doctorate, motivation, goals and mutual expectations are also clarified, including the frequency of meetings, the arrangements of the supervision itself and the relationship between personal responsibility and supportive supervision.

2. Supervision agreement

A supervision agreement regulates contact persons, roles, rights and duties.

3. Implementation of the working conditions

The working conditions are designed in such a way that, among other things, at least the qualification goal can be achieved by allowing enough free time to work on the doctoral project and granting access to research infrastructure.

4. Multiple supervision

Involving more than one supervisor is a suitable means of ensuring optimal supervision at all times. How the responsibilities are split and allocated to the supervisors is clarified and made transparent to the doctoral candidates in order to counteract possible conflicts in the supervisory relationship.

5. Basics of training during the qualification phase

The rules of good scientific practice, appropriate research data management and safety regulations are taught and applied in everyday activities. Measures for cross-disciplinary as well as subject-specific quality assurance, including an open error culture, are an important part of the training during the qualification phase.

6. Promotion of scientific independence

An appropriate ratio of support and personal responsibility leads to an increasing independence of the early career researchers. They have corresponding rights of participation.

7. Performance Evaluation

Individual achievements are adequately reflected and recognized (e.g. in publications and project proposals). Qualitative standards, if necessary discipline-specific, guide the evaluation of scientific performance in the context of the doctorate.

8. Role of the supervisors

The supervisors serve as role models. They are valued for the performance of their responsible and time-consuming task and are supported by further education and leadership training.

Supervisors oversee doctoral projects within the scope of their own professional expertise. In addition to providing scientific guidance for the doctoral project, they support early career researchers with interdisciplinary advice, training and leadership. If they are also the superiors of the doctoral candidates, they act in awareness of this dual role.

To counteract asymmetrical communication between the two parties, the aim is to communicate at eye level, supported by the establishment of low-hierarchy and flat communication structures.

Abuse of power and exploitation of relationships of dependency are to be prevented by appropriate organizational measures both at the level of the individual scientific workgroup and at the management level of the scientific institutions.

9. Career development support

For career development, supervisors support involvement in the scientific community and the development of networks, for example by participating in research colloquia, conferences and conducting international research stays, discussions about further career steps as well as teaching experiences.

10. Contribution of the doctoral candidates

For their part, doctoral candidates contribute to the success of good supervision by regularly informing their (first) supervisors about the progress of their work, longer absences or changes in their planning situation.

11. Personnel development and career support

Personnel development concepts enable and promote appropriate qualification in the specific subject science and interdisciplinary competencies and offer support and guidance for different career paths. The transitions between career stages are supported. Different career paths – including alternatives to the doctorate – enjoy the same recognition.

12. Mentoring

Mentoring offers supplement the supervision.

13. Contact person in case of conflict

In cases of conflict, the ombudspersons of TU Dortmund University as well as the “German Research Ombudsman” of the German Research Foundation (DFG) are available. In case of insoluble conflicts, a dissolution of the agreement is possible by mutual agreement and independently.

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