Minutes of the Board Meeting
September 22, 2026

location: **Kollegienhaus (main building), Faculty Room 112**
Time: **12:15 p.m. – 1:45 p.m.**

Participants: **Kathrin Knapp (online), Anna Sophia Roth, Micha Bigler (online), Sepideh Alassi (online), Sergej Maul, Carlo Tschopp, Alexander Wiese (online), Lena Zarifoglu (online), Tomás Sousa, Antonia Vogler (online), Stephanie Lawrence (online), Patricia Eiche**

Absent: **Felix André Erb, Nadia Bellardi, Valentin Waibl, Michelle Donovan**

Total: **12 present, 9 of whom were eligible to vote**

Minutes: **Patricia Eiche**

Agenda:

1. **Approval of the agenda of the board meeting on September 22, 2026**
2. **Election of minutes taker and vote counter**
3. **Approval of the minutes of the last board meeting on June 11, 2026**
4. **Personnel**
   a) **Co-general management**
   b) **Co-presidium**
5. **Finances**
   a) **Current situation**
   b) **skuba-Clinic**
   c) **Speaker fees**
6. **Current status of ongoing avuba business**
   a) **Reform of employment and working conditions for doctoral and postdoctoral researchers**
   b) **Collaboration in academic self-government**
   c) **Increase in the avuba membership fee to CHF 25 per semester (proposal to be submitted to the General Meeting)**
   d) **Akademis Agreement**
   e) **Catering Services at the University**
   f) **“Your Idea – Your University” Ideas Contest**
   g) **Cost-cutting measures / Anti-austerity**
   h) **Personal integrity / Prevention of abuse of power**
7. **Varia**
8. **avuba’s next executive board meeting**

Agenda Item 1: Approval of the agenda of the Executive Board meeting on September 22, 2026

The agenda for the board meeting is approved unanimously.

Agenda Item 2: Election of minutes taker and vote counter

Patricia Eiche is elected unanimously as minutes taker and vote counter.

Agenda Item 3: Approval of the minutes of the last board meeting on June 11, 2026

The minutes of the board meeting held on June 11, 2026, were approved unanimously.

Agenda Item 4: Personnel

a) Co-general manager

Alexandra Campana, co-general manager of avuba, had been working 50% of full-time hours since January 1, 2026, and has been on sick leave since August 10, 2026. Her successor, Stephanie Lawrence, assumed the role of co-general manager effective September 1, 2026. She introduced herself to the executive board, welcomed those present, and expressed her enthusiasm for continued collaboration.

Due to Alexandra Campana's absence, which began earlier than planned, Patricia Eiche is currently working at full capacity and has once again accumulated overtime. She currently has approximately 40 hours of overtime as well as 25 vacation days from 2026 that she has not yet taken. Since September through December are typically among the busiest months of the avuba year, it is only possible to a limited extent to reduce overtime at short notice. Patricia Eiche plans to use up her overtime and take her vacation days by the end of 2027 at the latest. This will not result in any additional costs for avuba.

Tomás Sousa and Micha Bigler explain that due to the hiring process, Alexandra Campana's absence earlier than expected, and Stephanie Lawrence's onboarding, various projects scheduled for 2026 could not be advanced to the extent originally planned. At the same time, the onboarding process was used to structure the relevant procedures and create various documents. This is intended to facilitate and ensure knowledge transfer in the future, so that relevant knowledge is documented and retrievable regardless of the individual involved.

b) Co-presidium

Tomás Sousa also informs the executive board that 2027 will be his final year of his PhD program and that he is expected to be abroad for approximately six weeks at the beginning of the year. Since this will leave him with less time to devote to avuba next year, he would like to step down from his position as co-president, provided that a suitable candidate comes forward to stand for election at the upcoming avuba General Meeting on November 23, 2026. Should no suitable candidate be identified for the position, Tomás Sousa would be willing to serve as co-president for another year. The General Meeting on November 23, 2026, was already announced in the previous minutes.

Micha Bigler states that he will stand for election as a co-president for another year.

Kathrin Knapp thanked Tomás Sousa for his valuable work, particularly in connection with the professionalization of internal processes and documentation.

Agenda Item 5: Finances, a) Current situation, b) skuba-Clinic, c) Speaker fees

a) Current Situation

The financial audit for the second quarter of 2026 was conducted by Carlo Tschopp on August 14, 2026. The audit was based on the documents prepared by Patricia Eiche as well as the SAP figures as of August 10, 2026. Personnel and operating costs, as well as income from membership fees, are within budget. There are currently no budget exceedances, liquidity shortages, or other unplanned events with financial implications.

Due to Alexandra Campana's absence due to illness since August 10, 2026, and her upcoming maternity leave, avuba is incurring additional personnel costs. Since the sickness allowance insurance does not provide benefits until after a 90-day waiting period, avuba will cover her full salary costs up to the date of birth. During maternity leave, as decided by the executive board on June 11, 2026, avuba will cover the difference between the 80% EO benefit and her full salary for the first 14 weeks, and will cover the full salary costs for the additional two weeks, in accordance with the University of Basel's policy of 16 weeks of paid maternity leave at full salary. Afterward, Alexandra Campana will take her remaining 16 vacation days. Depending on the due date, her employment with avuba is expected to last until the end of February 2027.

Patricia Eiche has been taking on as many of Alexandra Campana's responsibilities as possible since June 10, 2026. Any resulting overtime will be compensated later and will not result in additional costs for avuba. Stephanie Lawrence began her position on September 1, 2026. The associated additional personnel costs were already approved by the avuba board on May 11, 2026, via a circular resolution.

Despite the higher personnel costs, Patricia Eiche currently expects a slightly better year-end result for 2026 than budgeted. The main reasons for this are the lower-than-expected expenditures for events to date, as well as the CHF 10,000 allocated for extraordinary expenditures—which includes honoraria, overtime, and measures related to mental health and well-being—that are not expected to be needed.

In the coming weeks, Patricia Eiche will present the avuba board with a preliminary projection for the 2026 year-end result as well as budget proposals for 2027. The board will then decide which budget proposals will be submitted for a vote at the avuba General Meeting on November 23, 2026.

b) skuba-Clinic

Since 2016, avuba has supported the skuba-Clinic with an annual contribution of CHF 2,000. This enables assistants at the University of Basel to receive free legal counseling from the skuba-Clinic for a period of two semesters, from September to September. The SKUBA legal counseling service is not funded exclusively through a student-run curriculum but is supported by the Faculty of Law, avuba, skuba as well as two law firms. It is open to students, doctoral researchers, and postdoctoral researchers at the University of Basel.

The SKUBA legal counseling service is integrated into the Faculty of Law's lecture schedule and is provided under the direction of a lecturer. This supervisor must be a licensed attorney and has to be employed by the University, and typically also serves as an assistant in a professorship. Currently, Jessica Enzmann supervises the legal counseling service. Those seeking legal advice receive an initial assessment based on relevant case law and legal literature, which is then examined and supplemented by a practitioner with an academic background.

After the number of cases handled by the skuba-Clinic declined in recent years, there has now been an overall increase in consultation requests, so that a waiting list had to be established for the first time.

Avuba members are also taking advantage of this service: Over the past two semesters (Fall 2025 and Spring 2026), five assistants sought advice from the skuba-Clinic. Both postdoctoral researchers who had used the advice service spoke very positively about it and indicated that they would use it again if needed.

For the current fall semester of 2026, the skuba-Clinic has already received five inquiries from avuba members to date.

Patricia Eiche explains that the avuba General Meeting on November 24, 2025, approved the avuba Budget Proposal A. This proposal already allocated CHF 2,000 for co-financing of the free legal counseling for assistants provided by the skuba-Clinic. It is the responsibility of the executive board to review the situation each September and decide whether the funds budgeted should also be used for that purpose.

://: -> The executive board resolves to provide a financial contribution of CHF 1,000 per semester to the skuba-Clinic for another year, for a total of CHF 2,000.

This means that teaching assistants at the University of Basel will be provided with free legal counseling for another year. As before, teaching assistants may contact the skuba-Clinic with a variety of legal concerns. For example, the clinic answers questions regarding lease, employment, or purchase agreements, as well as matters related to corporate law, those arising from the founding of a startup.

To raise awareness about the free legal counseling service for avuba members, Tomás Sousa proposes to create, among other things, a “Services” flyer for assistants, modeled after the “Save Money in Basel – Practical Tips, Benefits & Funding for PhDs and postdocs” flyer developed in 2026. The flyer should clearly summarize avuba’s various services and offerings, including free legal advice. It ought to be distributed through the teaching assistants’ representative bodies at various locations across the University of Basel, displayed in prominent locations, and additionally shared via avuba’s social media channels.

c) <u>Speaker Fees for Information Sessions for avuba Members</u>

The avuba General Meeting approves the budget for the coming year, which includes, among other things, a budget line item for “events, lunchtime meetings, happy hours, social events, and refreshments for meetings, including writing retreats.” To date, no honoraria have been paid from this budget. This policy will continue to apply to university staff who, for example, speak at avuba lunchtime meetings.

Subjects deemed relevant to avuba members for which no suitable internal university or volunteer speaker may be found, it ought to be possible to offer a small honorarium to external speakers in the future. Examples include informational events on the Swiss health insurance, social security, or tax systems, which might be of particular interest to international assistants.

://: -> The Executive Board resolves that honoraria may be paid for such events within the framework of the event budget approved by the General Meeting. Honoraria of up to CHF 200 per event may be approved by the co-presidium. For higher amounts, the approval of the avuba board is required.

Agenda Item 6: Current status of ongoing avuba matters: a) Reform of employment and working conditions for doctoral researchers and postdoctoral researchers, b) Collaboration in academic self-government, c) Increase in the avuba membership fee to CHF 25 per semester (proposal to be submitted to the General Meeting), d) Akademis agreement, e) Food services at the University, f) "Your Idea – Your University" ideas competition, g) Cost-cutting measures / anti-austerity, h) Personal integrity / prevention of abuse of power

a) Reform of employment and working conditions for doctoral researchers and postdoctoral researchers

Patricia Zweifel, project coordinator was invited to the avuba board meeting to discuss this agenda item and to provide an update on the current status of the project. Following the conclusion of the consultation process on the University's originally proposed 30 measures, avuba submitted a detailed 36-page statement on January 11, 2026. avuba's feedback was highly valued in the subsequent process. In February 2026, the results of the consultation were summarized and subsequently consolidated for the President's Office. In May 2026, the President's Office decided to implement ten projects in an initial phase.

The President's Office's decision regarding the ten projects was communicated university-wide on September 10, 2026. A phased implementation is planned: implementation of the first five projects will begin in the fall semester of 2026, and that of the remaining five in the spring semester of 2027. All ten projects are scheduled to be implemented by the end of 2028.

The ten approved projects address various aspects of the working, employment, and supervision conditions for doctoral researchers and postdoctoral researchers. They focus in particular on improvements in information, communication, transparency, and guidelines. Since some projects incorporate several of the originally proposed measures, a total of approximately 15 of the 30 measures will be implemented. Details on the measures and brief project descriptions are available on the intranet.

Two years after the implementation is completed, that is, in 2030, the effectiveness of the projects will be reviewed as part of the quality management processes. The avuba board emphasizes that avuba should be involved in defining the criteria and indicators for this evaluation. From avuba's perspective, the evaluation should not only verify whether the individual projects have been formally implemented, but whether they have an impact on the day-to-day work of the assistants and thus lead to a genuine improvement in existing problems.

avuba welcomes the ten approved projects as important steps but notes that they do not sufficiently address key structural concerns. In avuba's view, further action is needed among other things to effectively ensure "Protected Research Time" and to manage workloads, to address supervision and power dynamics, to ensure contract and employment security, and to provide long-term career prospects for doctoral researchers and postdoctoral researchers.

A further project phase, in which measures with financial implications are also to be examined and implemented, is planned. However, the amount of funding available for the second project phase has not yet been definitively determined. Patricia Zweifel expects this issue to be resolved by the end of 2026, allowing the next phase to begin in 2027. She expressed her gratitude for avuba's detailed statement and emphasized that she greatly values the dialogue and that she looks forward to maintaining strong collaboration with avuba.

Now that the first phase of the Mittelbaureform has been completed, we provide a detailed review (in italics) to document the reform process to date and the key developments.

Review

The current project, "Reform of employment and working conditions for doctoral and postdoctoral researchers," is part of a long-term effort to improve and standardize the framework for early-career academics at the University of Basel. In earlier reform phases, the terms of employment for doctoral researchers and postdoctoral researchers had already been reviewed and, in some cases, standardized. A more comprehensive reform was prepared in 2014 and led to significant changes that took effect in 2017. These included, among other things, standardized job descriptions, defined contract durations, a minimum employment level, and guidelines regarding protected research time as well as teaching obligations and academic self-governance. Since 2020, there have also been more uniform university-wide processes for the hiring and supervision of doctoral researchers and postdoctoral researchers.
Despite these earlier reform steps, there was still a need for action. Against this backdrop, the preparation for a new university-wide reform began in 2024. On June 3, 2024, the planned "Reform of employment and working conditions for doctoral and postdoctoral researchers", was presented and discussed at the (Post-)Doctorate Forum. During the spring and summer, reform needs and potential measures were gathered, and areas for action were identified. In the fall of 2024, the University of Basel finally launched the project "Reform of Employment and Working Conditions for Doctoral Researchers and Postdoctoral Researchers"—coordinated by Patricia Zweifel, who reported to and continues to report to Prof. Nadja Braun Binder, Vice Rector for People & Culture.
In the first phase of the project, the University's focal area was on measures that could be implemented without additional funding. The various reform initiatives were grouped by theme and then consolidated into a "comprehensive overview." This overview included areas of action such as employment contracts, supervision and mentoring, career development, protected research time, teaching obligations and academic self-governance, family-friendliness, equal opportunity and inclusion, personal integrity and mental health, as well as monitoring.
From these areas of action, 30 measures were classified as cost-neutral and proposed for further examination.
The University compiled the potentially cost-neutral measures in the so-called "overview."
The overview was discussed in various university boards in 2025 and subsequently submitted for public comment. Based on its own consultations, previous surveys, and experiences with existing employment and working conditions, avuba drafted a detailed statement on the proposed 30 measures, which was submitted on January 11, 2026. (avuba statement on the consultation paper "Overview" dated January 9, 2026)
On September 8, 2026, the faculties, avuba, and the social partners received advance notice regarding the university-wide announcement, which was scheduled for September 10. avuba used this advance notice to formulate its position on the ten approved projects and on the continuing need for action. This enabled avuba to publish its statement just a few hours after the President's Office issued its official announcement on September 10. (avuba's statement on the first implementation phase of the reform of working conditions and terms of employment: "Individual Improvements but No Reform," dated September 10, 2026)

On September 9, 2026, Micha Bigler, as co-president of avuba, contacted the VPOD mid-level faculty group. He proposed a discussion of their respective positions and further steps so that both organizations could take action in accordance with their respective roles, capabilities, and areas of expertise and, if necessary, support one another. By the time of the avuba board meeting on September 22, 2026, avuba had not received a response.
On September 10, 2026, avuba informed all its members via email of its assessment of the approved projects and referred them to the detailed statement "Mid-level staff reform: Individual Improvements, but No Reform," which was published simultaneously on the avuba website. In this notice, avuba highlights four key areas where further improvements are expected: the effective enforcement of protected research time; the protection of assistants who report problems; contracts and wages that correspond to the work actually performed; and realistic career prospects after the qualification phase.
In the email, avuba also announces that the discussion with the President's Office will be continued and that the issue of the measures that are still necessary will be raised at the Senate. At the same time, assistants are called upon to register with avuba or their faculty assistant representatives and to advocate for the interests of assistants, particularly on university and faculty boards.
The avuba lunch meeting titled "Reform of Employment and Working Conditions: What Has Been Decided and What Is Still Missing?" is also scheduled for September 24, 2026. Patricia Zweifel will present the Rectorate's Office's decisions and the planned implementation, whereas avuba will explain its position. Assistants will have the opportunity to ask questions and share their own experiences.

Outlook

As the next important step, Nadja Braun Binder will present the results of the consultation at the Senate Meeting on November 5, 2026. A thorough discussion within the Senate is planned to follow. Micha Bigler, as co-president of avuba, will represent the assistants' position in this discussion.

The aim is to assess the reform process to date from avuba's perspective while also focusing on the pending issues. Particular emphasis will be placed on identifying which measures and structural improvements are still missing in the ongoing reform process and how these can be addressed in the next project phase.

avuba will actively support the ongoing process, continue its dialogue with the President's Office, and bring the pending structural concerns to the attention of the university's boards. At the same time, it will critically monitor the implementation of the ten approved projects and advocate for the subsequent evaluation in order to assess not only formal implementation but also the actual impact on the terms of employment of assistants.

b) Participation in academic self-government

Building on the discussion from the last Executive Board meeting, the structure of AVETH at ETH Zurich is being considered as a possible model for greater participation by assistants. The basic idea is a stronger "bottom-up" organization, with assistants organizing themselves at the department or faculty level. Thereby, they would be more closely integrated into the overarching advocacy efforts. The goal would be to anchor avuba more firmly within the faculties and departments, to attract more assistants to higher education policy and academic self-government, to better integrate existing local initiatives and PhD clubs, and to reduce vacancies on university boards so that Group III would be represented as much as possible. At the same time, more people could be gradually introduced to representative and leadership roles, and responsibility within avuba could be distributed more broadly.

The executive board is discussing whether elements of this model could be adapted for avuba. The intention is not to fully adopt the AVETH structure, but rather to examine which elements would be appropriate for the University of Basel and avuba's existing structures. In October, the avuba board will hold an additional meeting to discuss possible options and to decide which proposals should be presented to the avuba General Meeting in November for discussion or decision.

c) Increase in the avuba membership fee to CHF 25 per semester (proposal for the General Meeting)

In the context of a potential restructuring of avuba from a predominantly centralized to a more decentralized structure—and the associated transfer of a portion of the membership fees to the decentralized organizations—the question arises as to whether the membership fees ought to be increased.

Currently, the membership fee is CHF 20 per semester. An increase to CHF 25 per semester is proposed. If membership numbers remain constant, this would generate additional income that could be used, in particular, for co-financing of the decentralized structures. At the same time, decentralization would need to be accompanied by a corresponding shift in responsibilities and resources, as well as a reduction in central tasks and structures.

Since the University collects the membership fees, an increase to CHF 25 could be implemented no earlier than the second half of 2027. For the spring semester of 2027, the fee would therefore remain at CHF 20, consequently, the additional income would not yet be generated for a full year in 2027.

The avuba board has agreed that a proposal to increase the membership fee to CHF 25 per semester should be presented to the General Meeting on November 23, 2026. The specific details—and, in particular, the rationale to be presented to members—will be discussed once more by the board beforehand. The goal is to involve members in the further development of avuba and to gain additional commitment through stronger integration at the faculty level, without losing members (see agenda item "Academic Self-Government").

d) Akademis Agreement

On June 29, 2017, avuba entered into a framework agreement with Akademis GmbH. The goal was to provide avuba members with free access to special or discounted insurance and financial offerings. Among other things, the agreement provided for advice and discounts on health and property insurance, retirement planning and financial advice, as well as informational seminars. In return, avuba promoted these offers to its members and agreed not to enter into any comparable agreements with other providers of insurance and financial services for the duration of the contract.

The collaboration was originally temporary until the end of 2019 and, according to the contract, automatically renews for another year unless terminated in writing with a three-month deadline effective at the end of the year.

The prerequisites for the original collaboration have not been met for quite some time: The relevant services are no longer offered to avuba members, and there has been no active collaboration for several years. However, the contract has never been terminated in writing. To clarify the situation, the agreement is now to be formally terminated. Andrin Blauenstein has already been informed in advance by Patricia Eiche.

://: -> The executive board resolves to terminate the framework agreement with Akademis in due time, effective as of the next possible date.

e) Catering Services at the University

Following up on the Board's decision of June 11, 2026, regarding the proposal submitted by unissa (United for Sustainable Student Action) for exclusively vegan food options at the University of Basel, the Board revisits the topic of university dining.
The Board maintains its previous decision not to conduct a vote among academic staff on exclusively vegan food options. Instead, the Board would like to gain a broader understanding of academic staff's needs and satisfaction with the University's current dining options.
(Post-meeting note: Since summer 2025, Compass Group Switzerland has operated several of the University of Basel's main cafeterias and dining facilities. Before conducting the survey, avuba will contact Compass Group as well as the University's responsible unit for campus dining (Infrastructure & Operations; contact: Marcel Schildt) to discuss the current offerings and potential areas to address in the survey.)

://: -> The Board decides to conduct its own survey among academic staff, focusing in particular on their satisfaction with the current dining options and what additional options or improvements they feel are needed.

f) "Your Idea – Your University" Ideas Contest
The Board is once again reminded that, as part of the "Your Idea – Your University" competition, the University of Basel is inviting employees to submit ideas for improvements. In particular, the University is looking for ideas that simplify processes, make better use of resources, promote sustainability, or enhance the University's attractiveness. Ideas can be submitted until October 15, 2026. The top three ideas will be awarded CHF 5,000, CHF 3,000, and CHF 2,000, respectively. Board members who have ideas that avuba could submit are invited to contact Stephanie Lawrence and Patricia Eiche at avuba@unibas.ch

g) Cost-Cutting Measures / Anti-Austerity
Following the discussions of the avuba board on March 9 and June 11, 2026, regarding the austerity measures and their potential impact on the higher education sector, further mobilization was also discussed at the level of actionuni, the umbrella organization for assistants.

On August 30, 2026, avuba received an email from actionuni co-president Oliver Spiess with an update on a previously planned nationwide demonstration against the austerity measures. The demonstration was canceled because several potential coalition partners were unable to mobilize sufficient financial and human resources. Instead, the remaining organizations are planning a smaller event on October 24, 2026, which will, however, focus on subjects such as climate justice, democracy, and the 2027 elections. Since higher education institutions and research policy are no longer central subjects, actionuni will not participate in this event.

Both actionuni and avuba will continue to monitor further developments and, in particular, the potential impact of the austerity measures on the higher education sector. Neither actionuni nor avuba plans to hold its own event or mobilization campaign in October 2026, either at the national or regional level.

h) Personal Integrity / Prevention of Abuse of Power

Preventing abuse of power and protecting personal integrity are key priorities for avuba and are regularly addressed in discussions with University leadership and other University bodies. As part of the reform of academic staff employment conditions, avuba also advocates for structural improvements, particularly protected research time, independent points of contact and protection against retaliation, appropriate working and employment conditions, and more reliable career prospects.

The VPOD has asked avuba to co-sign an open letter to swissuniversities on abuse of power and sexualized violence at universities. avuba shares the underlying concerns but primarily addresses these issues through direct dialogue with University leadership and the Vice President's Office for People & Culture, together with skuba, and at the national level through actionuni.
://: -> The Board decides not to sign the open letter and to continue addressing the issue through the existing University and national channels.

Agenda Item 7: Varia

In preparation for the avuba General Assembly on November 23, 2026, the Board will meet in October to discuss the agenda and its content. This discussion will take place as part of an informal Board meeting, for which no minutes will be taken. According to the Statutes, the invitation must be sent at least 30 days before the General Assembly. Any matters requiring a decision or vote at the General Assembly must already be included as agenda items in the invitation. The invitation to avuba members will therefore be sent no later than October 23, 2026. avuba members may submit motions regarding the listed agenda items; these must be submitted in writing to the Board no later than seven days before the General Assembly.

Agenda Item 8: Upcoming avuba executive board meeting

The next official board meeting will take place in January or February 2027 with the new co-presidium.

Basel, October 2, 2026

Tomás Sousa
avuba co-president

Micha Bigler
avuba co-president