

# Tips & tricks for a successful doctorate

avuba lunchtime meeting, January 20, 2022



Assistierendenvereinigung  
der Universität Basel

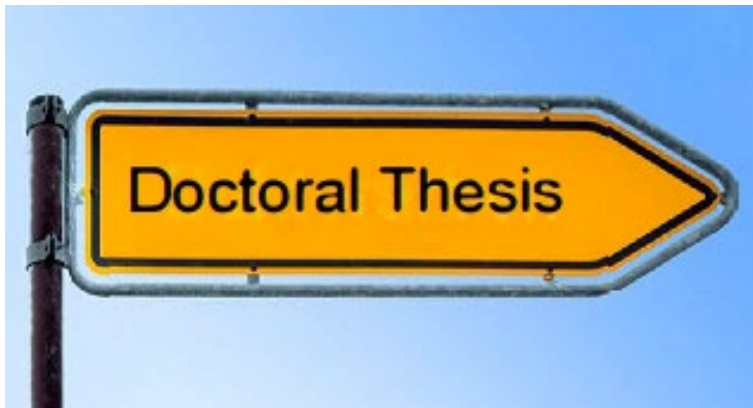
avuba is the assistant's association of the University of Basel and comprises around 2'500 doctoral students and 500 postdocs.

How can avuba help you if you have questions or problems during your PhD?

- ➔ Individual counseling by the avuba co-presidents or the general manager
- ➔ Forwarding your question anonymously i.e. getting answers for you
- ➔ Submitting structural problems to the HR, the vice rectors and/or the President's office in order to improve working and research conditions

[avuba@unibas.ch](mailto:avuba@unibas.ch)

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- 1 During your dissertation
  - 2 Completing your dissertation
  - 3 Questions and answers
  - 4 Feedback on the event
- 



PDF of the slides and a sheet with important links are available here:  
<https://avuba.unibas.ch/en/services/regular-events/>

## 1 During your dissertation

- a) General conditions
- b) Teaching and administration
- c) Funding
- d) Data management
- e) Time and project management
- f) Visibility and building networks
- g) Communication and conflict management
- h) Mental health
- j) Permit Renewal: non-EU

- Individual: Depends on your contract
  - Employment term: **4+1 years maximum** (justified cases, in particular if it is absolutely necessary for academic training or in order to meet familial obligations and only if funding is available)
  - Make sure you get a doctoral agreement (scope and frequency of reporting, acquisition of ECTS points, fulfilment of any additional requirements for admission) which states what is necessary in order to complete your doctoral studies (in accordance with the doctoral study regulations of the faculty including doctoral programs and graduate schools)
- ➔ Who to contact in event of uncertainty: supervisor, members of the doctoral committee, faculty contacts, local / central HR
- ➔ Use the doctoral agreement to have a written record

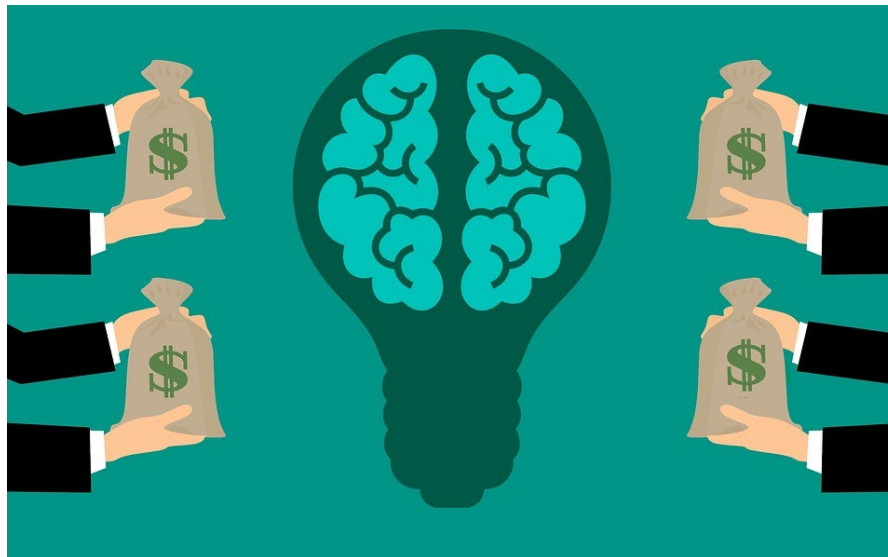
## Teaching

- **Maximum 20%** of your employment level can be dedicated to teaching (§ 24, 2 “Regulation for academic personnel at the University of Basel”)
- Details should be stated in your doctoral agreement
- Academic positions sometimes require teaching experience

## Administration

- Assistants can also perform administrative tasks
- **At least 60%** of your workload must be dedicated to your research (§ 24, 2 “Regulation for academic personnel at the University of Basel”)

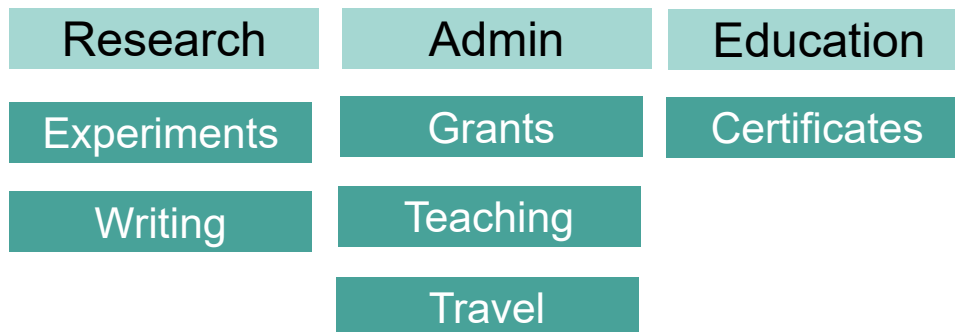
- Career Advancement Office – information on funding opportunities including research funding, mobility programs, support for parents, etc. on their website ([www.unibas.ch/en/Research/Individual-Funding.html](http://www.unibas.ch/en/Research/Individual-Funding.html))
- Next “Career Funding for PhDs” course on 17 March 2022  
<https://fortbildung.unibas.ch/courses/organizer/scientific-tools/career-funding-for-phds-overview-and-services-294275>
- Funding is very important if you would like to pursue an academic career
- Some faculties / research groups may have additional funding sources



<https://pixabay.com/illustrations/crowdfunding-funding-ideas-banknote-3576868/>

- Research Data Management: <https://researchdata.unibas.ch/en/>
  - Data collection and documentation
  - Ethics, legal and security issues
  - Data storage and preservation
  - Data sharing and re-use
  - **FAIR** Data Principles (Wilkinson et al. 2016, findable, accessible, interoperable, reusable)
- Store your data intelligently -> Individual folder structure (example)

## PhD data folder





## **Top priority: reach the next qualification stage within 4 years!**

- Set interim goals but at the same time know, that delays are normal
- Plan weekly time blocks for concentrated work in which you don't answer emails or phone calls
- Plan weekly time blocks for breaks from work
- Plan regular (at least annual) meetings with your supervisors
- Document all important meetings in your doctoral agreement
- Agree with your supervisor on responsibilities and financial resources
- Track your time (record of working time and vacations taken) (f.ex. Into the excel available on the intranet (HR -> Documents -> Downloads -> Work hours form))

## Make yourself visible

- Publications
- Attend conferences at least once a year
  - Each field has its well known conferences and application schedules
  - Actively: present your own work
  - Passively: attend talks relevant to your research or conferences hosted by your supervisor/department
- Further possibilities
  - Take on leadership roles in projects
  - Organize events
  - Represent the group on faculty and/or university committees
  - Social networks: Twitter, SNF Media Training, Sci Five, etc.

## A lack of communication can often cause difficulties at work

- Lack of information
- Different interpretations of data or facts
- Different needs, interests, or values than your PI/Supervisor
  - ➔ Address these issues as soon as they happen and keep documentation
  - ➔ Ensure clarity regarding goals and results
  - ➔ Describe the conflict objectively
  - ➔ Look for solutions

If this does not work, involve others people or seek help:

- ➔ Doctoral Committee, faculty contact, coordinator personal integrity (Mélanie Nussbaumer), dean of research, your Senate representative, avuba
- ➔ Arrange individual consultation with Ariane Schnepf (Staff and Organizational Development) or Marianne Mathys (Office of Early Career Researchers' Development)

The PhD is a stressful time but there are good options and resources for you

- Take your holidays & recharge
- Manage your own expectations and tell yourself “I am good enough”
- Don’t pressure yourself to work when you are tired and need a rest
- If you have a to do list, also include things that can be dealt with quickly (feeling of accomplishment)
- Talk to other PhDs – they know how it feels like
- Put the "universe of the university" into perspective through contacts outside of the university
- Make sure you get some physical exercise, fresh air and sunlight (check the course catalogue of UniSport / gyms around the city often offer student discounts)
- If necessary: Get psychological counselling (<https://studienberatung.unibas.ch/de/beratung/psychologische-beratung/>)

1. Non EU students must renew their permits on a yearly basis
2. 2-3 months before your permit expires, you will receive a form from the canton of Basel which must be filled out with HR and handed in.
3. HR will then apply for your permit renewal
4. Make sure to keep track of when you sent out the form, and to check with migration and HR regarding the status of the permit
5. In case there has been a delay (which is not your fault) a temporary visa may be issued which allows you to travel in the Schengen area and return to Switzerland
6. Upon completion of the PhD you can apply to a 6 month visa extension to look for a job – but this is your responsibility (you need proof of your degree)

## 2 Completing your dissertation

a) Submission, defense and publication

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b) Open Access

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c) Career

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## Process and deadlines

- Arrange a schedule (varies by faculty, process can take up to 2 years)
  - ➔ Submission of a draft to your supervisor
  - ➔ Submission of your manuscript to the Doctoral Committee
  - ➔ Defense of your dissertation conferment of the provisional title of “Dr. des.” awarded (early arrange of a date suitable for all involved)
  - ➔ Printed copies submitted within 2 years of the examination
  - ➔ Receipt of the doctorate certificate, conferment of the definitive title e.g. “Dr. phil.”

## Publication

- Electronic publication: relatively quick (open access)
- Print: doctoral students in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences spend several unpaid (self-financed) months preparing their manuscripts for printing

## **Open Access Policy of the University of Basel e.g. swissuniversities**

The vision of the Open Access strategy is for all publicly funded publications to be freely accessible by 2024.

### **Pros & Cons of OA Publishing**

- + Good scientific practice
- + Funders' mandates
- + Increased and fast distribution
- + Higher citation rates
- Low impact factor or ranking
- Deposits in an OA archive complicated
- Not yet a criteria for academic positions applications

### **Funding**

SNSF, Unibas (since January 2020)

Publish & Read” agreements for hybrid journals (agreement already signed with Elsevier)

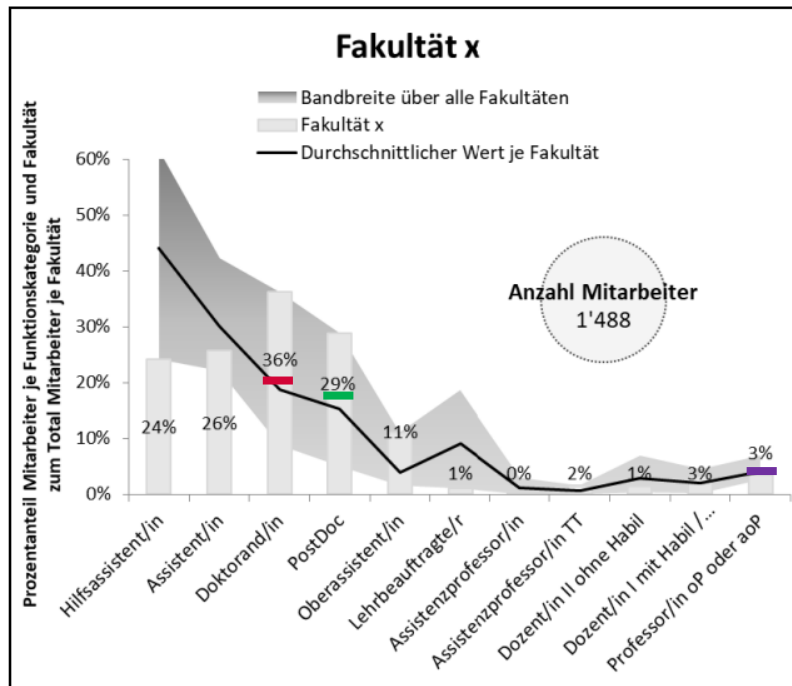
### **Support: Open Access Coordination (University Library)**

061 207 29 91 | [openaccess@unibas.ch](mailto:openaccess@unibas.ch) | <https://openaccess.unibas.ch>



## Keep in mind

- According to estimates, only about 15% of postdocs stay in academia and only 4.5% of those with the qualifications required receive a professor's position.
- Pursue your academic career with passion but have a plan B in mind from the start and assess your options every year!



*Dr. Matthias Hirt, «Die Vermessung des Mittelbaus: Nachwuchsförderung in Zahlen und Massnahmen» (2021), Academic staff of a selected faculty of the University of Bern*

## **Academic career: What to expect**

- In some fields the application to a postdoc entails different procedures (e.g. job market in economics)
- Nomadic life
- High demand for academic positions, and low supply

## **Academic career: Important factors for success**

- Excellent publications / presentations at highly-esteemed conferences
- Successful grant applications / third party funding
- International network that can be proved
- Teaching experience
- Luck / timing

## Advantages of non-academic careers

- Jobs are often open-ended
- Salaries are often better
- Less mobility required (which makes it easier to plan a family, for example)

## Important to know:

- ➔ Outside academia, skills are considered more important than publications and specialization.
- ➔ Bureaucratic hurdles (for non EU PhDs): visa procedure changes
- ➔ Prove your skills (through documentation)

## **Documentation for future job applications includes skills, working experience, competences etc.**

Areas include:

- ✓ Analysis & Problem-Solving
  - ✓ Interpersonal & Leadership Skills
  - ✓ Project Management & Organization
  - ✓ Research & Information Management
  - ✓ Self-Management & Work Habits
  - ✓ Written & Oral Communication
- 
- Document continuously every conference, each course, training, camp or research stay
  - Request an employment reference that confirms your various skills

- 1. Application:** academic CVs will place focus on research output, industry CVs will place focus on skills
  - Reshape your CV → how is what you learned/did useful for the job? Link your academic experience to the job description
  - Match your skills to the position, e.g. coding skills, project skills, presentations, languages, teaching etc.
- 2. Interview:**
  - Several rounds → typically 2-3
  - In some fields, you will be asked prepare a presentation to a case study
  - Final interview: be sure to have a career plan, sell your profile and how it will serve the company
  - What skills do you bring to the table and what you want to learn → Prepare questions for them
- 3. Salary negotiation: sell your PhD as work experience!**
  - Look up salary ranges on Glassdoor, Kununu, LinkedIn/Xing and/or ask friends and contacts of yours (better if you know someone in the company)

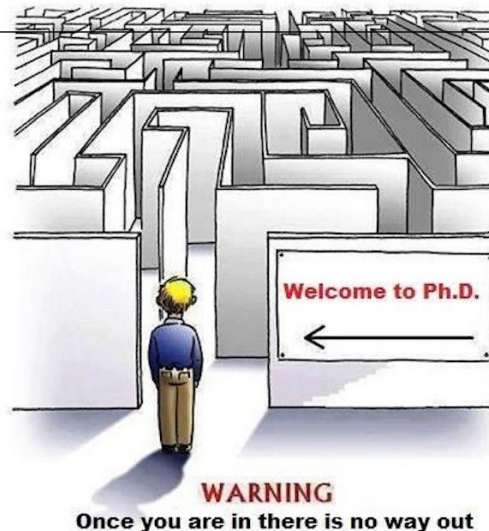
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3 Questions and answers

→ Please write your questions into the chat

4 Feedback



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## 4 Feedback

→ Please write suggestions for improving the presentation into the chat



# Thank you for your attention!

