



Tips & tricks for a successful doctorate

11 May 2023



Assistierendenvereinigung
der Universität Basel



Introduction

avuba:

- assistant's association
- Approx. 2'700 doctoral students and 500 postdocs.

How can avuba help during your PhD?

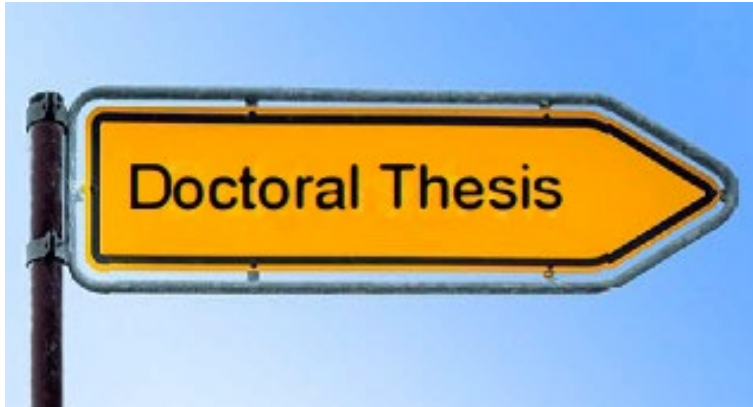
- ➔ Individual **counseling**
- ➔ Forwarding your **questions anonymously**
- ➔ Reporting structural problems (HR / vice rectors / president)
- ➔ Goal: improve working and research conditions

➔ avuba@unibas.ch



Agenda

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- 1 During your dissertation
 - 2 Completing your dissertation
 - 3 Questions and answers
 - 4 Feedback on the event
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Slides and important links are available on our website

- 1 During your dissertation
 - a) General conditions
 - b) Teaching & administration
 - c) Illness & accident
 - d) Illness & parenting
 - e) Funding
 - f) Data management
 - g) Time & project management
 - h) Visibility & building networks
 - i) Communication & conflict management
 - j) Mental health
 - k) Permit Renewal: non-EU

- Depends on your contract
- Employment term: **4+1 years maximum**
- Prolongation in justified cases, e.g., due to academic training, familial obligations, only if funding is available)

- **Sign a doctoral agreement**
 - Scope and frequency of reports
 - ECTS points & additional requirements
 - in accordance with regulations of the faculty, doctoral programs

Who to contact in event of uncertainty:

➔ supervisor, members of the doctoral committee, faculty contacts, HR



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
PROTECTED TIME (§ 24, 2 “Regulation for academic personnel at the University of Basel”)



- Obligation: Inform superiors immediately
- From the 4th day of illness, a doctor's certificate must be submitted to > HR Shared Services
- Sick/accident days during (paid) vacations: covered upon presentation of a doctor's certificate (you can take the vacation days another time)
- Application to sickness allowance insurance is made after 30 days → paid out after 90 days
- No obligation to continue paying wages during the probationary period. Short absences are paid anyway; dependent on the individual case
- After probationary period: wage continuation is paid for a maximum of 730 days (100%) in case of illness or accident
- If a person leaves the company, he/she will receive the daily allowance directly from the insurance, which is 80% of the last salary



Parents are allowed to:

- Take a maximum of 3 days off per illness event of a child.
- Take a maximum of 10 days off per year in total for that reason.

In case of serious illness or accident:

- Apply for special leave up to a maximum of 14 weeks which has to be approved by the compensation and insurance fund of the canton of Basel-Stadt.

Unpaid leave:

- May last a maximum of 6 months and may be taken in consultation with and only with the approval of the supervisor.

Career Advancement Office – information on funding opportunities

- Research
- Mobility
- Parental support

www.unibas.ch/en/Research/Individual-Funding.html

“Career Funding for PhDs”

- Graduate Center (GRACE); Transferable Skills

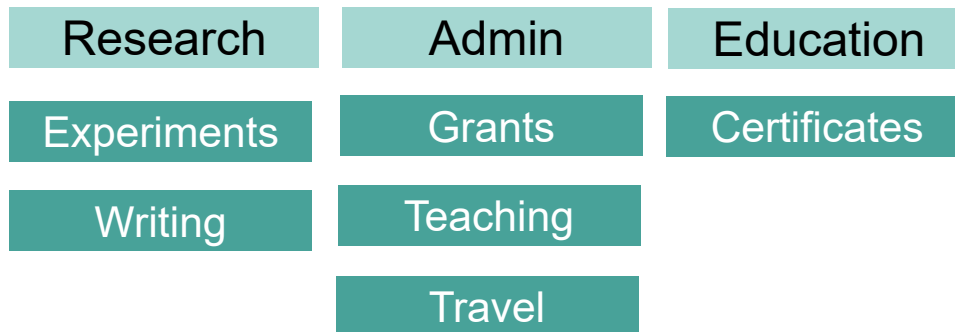
Funding is vital to pursue an academic career

Some faculties / research groups may have additional funding sources



- **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)
- **Data storage:** Individual folder structure (example)

PhD data folder





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

- Set goals, delays are normal
- Plan time slots for concentrated work (beware: emails / phone) → weekly
- Plan breaks from work → weekly
- Plan (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)
 - excel available on the intranet (HR -> Documents -> Downloads -> Work hours form)



Make yourself visible

Publications

Conferences (at least once a year)

- Field specific conferences and application schedules
- Actively: present your own work
- Passively: attend relevant talks

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 cause difficulties with supervisor

(Lack of information regarding data/facts or needs interests and values)

- ➔ Address issues 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:

- ➔ Doctoral Committee, faculty contact, coordinator personal integrity (Cora Wagner), dean of research, your Senate representative, avuba
- ➔ Individual consultation (Ariane Schnepf, Head Leadership & Development; or Marianne Mathys, Head of Career Advancement)

Doing a PhD is stressful, but there are helpful resources available

- Take holidays
 - Manage your expectations (“I am good enough”)
 - Don’t pressure yourself when need a rest
 - To do list
 - Socialize with other PhDs
 - Keep contacts outside of university
 - get exercise, fresh air, sunlight (UniSport)
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- If necessary: Get psychological counselling
(<https://studienberatung.unibas.ch/de/beratung/psychologische-beratung/>)

Non-EU students need to renew permits on a yearly basis

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.

HR will then apply for your permit renewal

Tips:

1. Keep track of timeline
2. Regularly check the status of your permit with migration and HR
3. In case of a delay (not caused by you), a temporary visa may be issued
→ allows you to travel within Schengen area and return to Switzerland
4. After PhD completion (degree proof required) you can apply for a 6 month visa extension

2 Completing your dissertation

a) Submission, defense and publication

b) Open Access

c) Career

Process and deadlines

- Arrange a schedule (varies by faculty, process can take up to 2 years)
 - ➔ Submit draft to supervisor
 - ➔ **Correct the “MUST” corrections and leave out the “NICE TO HAVE” ones in order to finish your PhD**
 - ➔ Submit manuscript to the Doctoral Committee
 - ➔ Defense of your dissertation → provisional title of “Dr. des.”
 - ➔ (arrange a suitable date early on!)
 - ➔ Printed copies submitted within 2 years of examination
 - ➔ Receipt of the doctorate certificate, definitive title

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

Vision: all publicly funded publications 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 | <https://openaccess.unibas.ch>



Keep in mind

- Only about 15% of postdocs stay in academia
- Only 4.5% of qualified academics 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!

Academic career: What to expect

- Application to a postdoc entails different field-specific procedures
- Nomadic life
- Academic positions: high demand, low supply

Academic career: Important factors for success

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

Advantages of non-academic careers

- More open-ended jobs
- Salaries tend to be higher
- Less mobility required (→ family planning)

Important to know:

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

Documentation of 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
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- Document conferences, courses, trainings, camps and research stays
 - Request an employment reference that confirms your various skills

1. Application:

- How are your PhD skills useful for the job?
- 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
- Have a career plan, sell your profile
- 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
- ask friends and contacts of yours

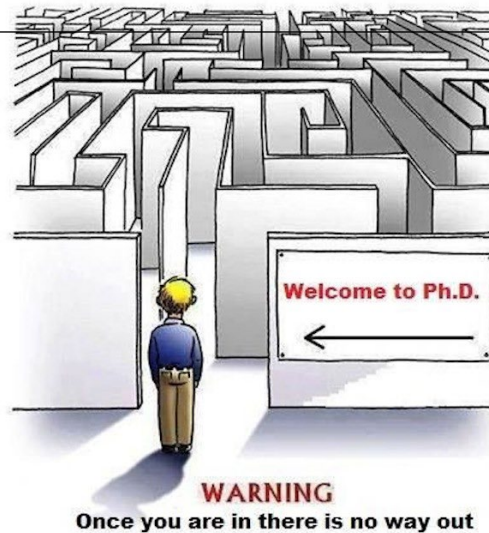
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3 Questions and answers

→ 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!

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