

Tips & tricks for a successful doctorate

2024



Assistierendenvereinigung
der Universität Basel

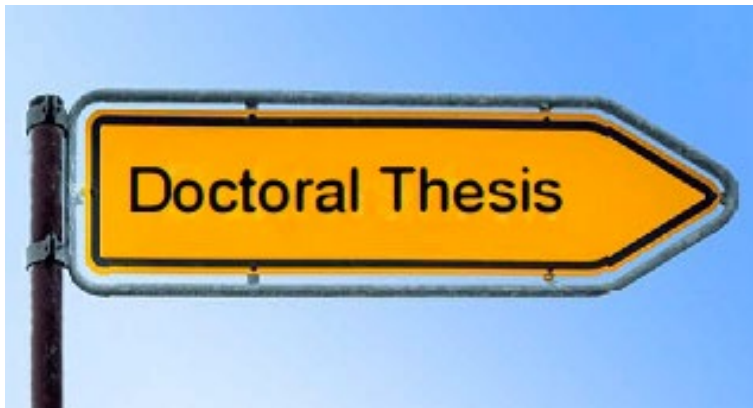
avuba

- assistant's association
- Approx. 2'700 doctoral researchers and 500 postdocs.
- Point of contact
- Offer services (lobbying, information, events, social project funding, legal advice)

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
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- ➔ avuba@unibas.ch

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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 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

- Depends on your contract
- Employment term for PhDs: **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

Extensive general information: [Welcome Center@unibas](mailto:Welcome.Center@unibas)

Help with health insurance, finances, day care: [Social Office@unibas](mailto:Social.Office@unibas)

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”)

Career Advancement Office – information on funding opportunities

- Research
- Mobility
- Parental support

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

“Career Funding for PhDs” Course

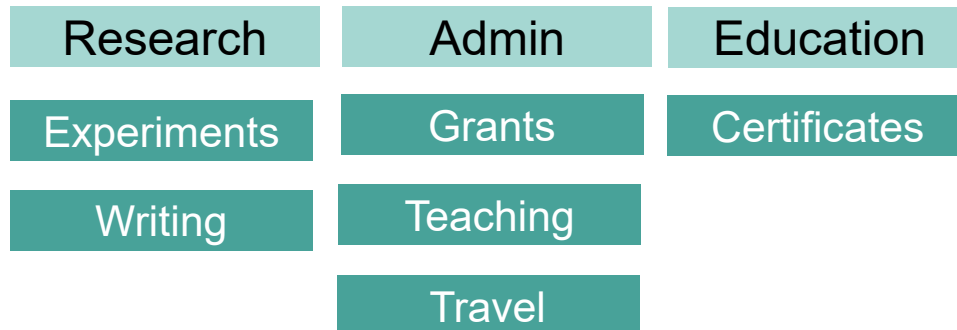
- Graduate Center (GRACE); Transferable Skills

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
 - Conflicts: Ariane Schnepf
 - Funding: Marianne Mathys
 - Personal Integrity: Cora Wagner

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 researchers 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
 - 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 researchers 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

OA Funding, check unibas website: [University Basel Open Access Publication Fund](#)

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.

Important for academic career

- Independent research as a postdoc
- Third-party funding
- Timing

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
 - [Mentoring-Programm | AlumniBasel](#)

1. Application:

- How are your PhD skills useful for the job?
- E.g., coding skills, project skills, presentations, languages, teaching etc.

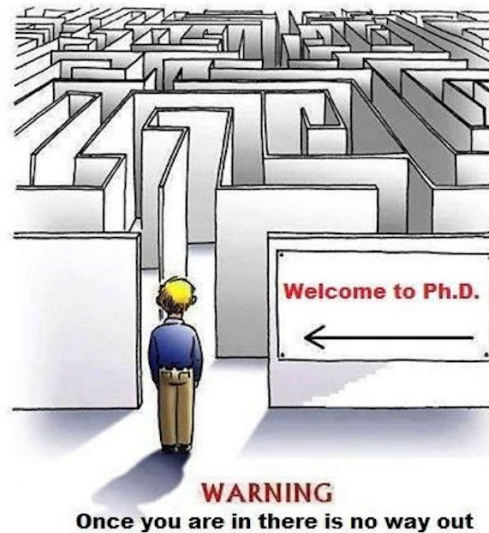
2. Interview:

- 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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→ Please write your questions into the chat
- 4 Feedback



1 During your dissertation

2 Completing your dissertation

3 Questions and answers

4 Feedback

→ Please write suggestions for improving the presentation into the chat



Thank you for your attention!

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