

avuba statement on the consultation paper "Auslegeordnung"

As of 13 January 2026

Corresponds to the German document with the name DE_20260109_avuba Stellungnahme zum Vernehmlassungspapier «Auslegeordnung»_1545_FINAL

Contents

1. Background information.....	1
2. Summary of the assessment of the "Auslegeordnung"	2
3. Detailed feedback on the 30 proposed measures	3
4. Overall assessment of the "Auslegeordnung" from the Assistants' perspective	33
5. Key reform measures for effective reform from the Assistants' perspective	34

1. Background information

avuba was asked to draft a statement on the reform of employment and working conditions for doctoral candidates and postdocs and to submit it by 11 January 2026. avuba's comprehensive response to the consultation paper is based on:

- 2025, November/December, quantitative survey on the "Auslegeordnung", completed by
 - 90 enrolled doctoral candidates without employment
 - 116 employed doctoral candidates
 - 62 employed postdocs
- 2025, November/December, qualitative survey by avuba on the "Auslegeordnung" among avuba board members, Assistants' representatives in inter-faculty commissions and Assistants' representatives in faculty committees and faculty assemblies
- [2025, avuba summary of the results of the Unibas Mental Health Survey 2024](#)
- 2025, April, qualitative survey of former Assistants' representatives
- [2021, summary of the avuba Postdoc Survey 2020](#)
- [2019, summary of the results of the avuba Assistants' survey 2018](#)
- Results of the first major reform of the working and employment conditions of Assistants at the University of Basel, which led to the introduction of the following measures on 1 February 2017:
 - Standardized job descriptions,
 - Defined employment periods for doctoral candidates (2 + 6 semesters) and postdocs (4 + 8 semesters), with limited extension options for valid reasons,
 - Two salary grades for doctoral candidates (DOC 1 and DOC 2) and five salary grades for postdocs (POSTDOC 1–5),
 - Minimum employment level of 60%,
 - Protected research time of at least 60% of the employment level,
 - Teaching obligation of 0%–20% of the employment level during the semester (which corresponds to 0–2 contact hours of teaching per week for a 60% position),
 - Time spent on non-qualifying activities (e.g. self-administration) 0%–20% of the employment level.

2. Summary of the assessment of the "Auslegeordnung"

According to [personnel statistics for 2024](#), the total number of employees at the University of Basel was 3,312.6 full-time equivalents. Of these, 1,275.4 were Assistants, representing 38.5% of all employees and around 61% of academic staff. Assistants thus make a key contribution to research, teaching, and supervision, but at the same time face particular structural challenges. These include high work pressure due to multiple responsibilities, a pronounced publish-or-perish culture, fixed-term employment contracts as well as uncertain career and planning prospects.

As highlighted in the executive summary of the Mental Health Survey Report 2024, among other sources, Assistants at the University of Basel are under considerable psychological strain, regardless of their age, gender, discipline, or type of position. Poor mental health among researchers not only affects those concerned, but also has systemic consequences: a loss of innovative strength, a decline in research quality and productivity, an increase in absenteeism due to illness, and a deterioration in the quality of teaching and supervision provided to students. Against this backdrop, avuba sees an urgent need for comprehensive mid-level staff reform and welcomes the fact that the University of Basel launched the corresponding project in the fall of 2024.

Across all groups, the reform package is perceived as well-intentioned but insufficient. The prevailing assessment is that it focuses too heavily on information, guidelines, and existing obligations and procedures, while key structural problems remain largely untouched. Many respondents describe the reform as cosmetic and cost-neutral, and fear that it could primarily give the impression of "having done something" without noticeably changing the everyday reality of Assistants.

Several measures proposed in the "Auslegeordnung" have already been standard practice since 1 February 2017. However, their concrete design and implementation – for example, as regards the drafting and review of job descriptions that realistically reflect the actual job content and corresponding workload – have never been systematically monitored. These measures have therefore not yet had a real impact on all Assistants.

avuba sees the current reform as a starting point for further developments, and will continue to support the University of Basel in the design, implementation, and evaluation of continuing reform measures. avuba asks the Rectorate to make a transparent and well-reasoned decision on which of the measures listed below shall be implemented. In addition, the chosen measures should be implemented university-wide in order to prevent further unequal treatment of Assistants and to hold the faculties accountable. If the measures are not introduced university-wide, this must be communicated and explained transparently.

3. Detailed feedback on the 30 proposed measures

The following is a summary of the feedback received on the individual measures along with graphs visualizing the quantitative results. For better readability, comments and graphs are listed one below the other on each page.

3.1 Employment contract / General conditions

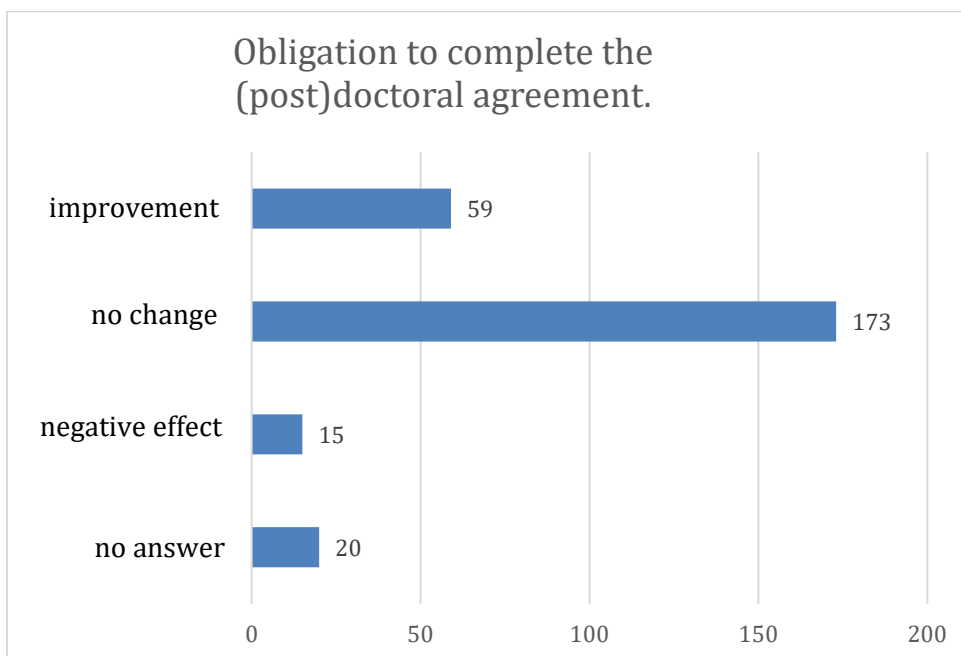
3.1.1 Clarity of tasks and duties, proposal A – Obligation to conclude a (post)doctoral agreement (M1)

The survey results show that the majority of Assistants do **not** perceive the mandatory introduction of (post)doctoral agreements **as a change to the current situation**. This assessment suggests that (post)doctoral agreements either already exist in many contexts, or that a mandatory requirement alone would not bring about any noticeable improvement.

Postdocs in particular often seem to lack formalized agreements, and feedback shows that the mere existence of a template does not add value if it is not completed thoroughly, carefully, and specifically.

It is considered sensible for the **(post)doctoral agreements themselves to contain all relevant information**, rather than referring to additional information sheets.

From the Assistants' point of view, this measure can only be expected to have a positive effect under clear conditions: the agreements must be **concluded at the beginning of the employment, regularly updated, centrally accessible, and institutionally reviewed. In addition, clear incentives and binding guidelines are needed to ensure consistent ongoing use (updating)**. Without binding standards, clear deadlines, and systematic monitoring, the measure is at risk of remaining largely symbolic.



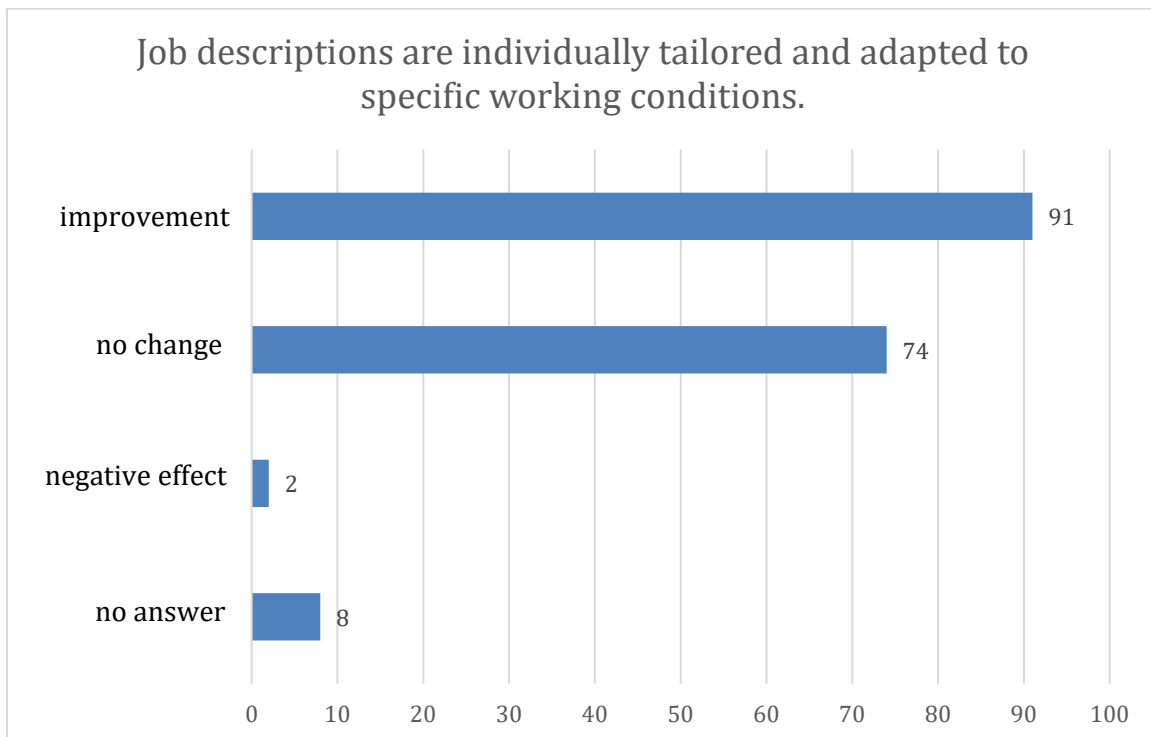
3.1.2 Clarity of tasks and duties, proposal B – Individually tailored job descriptions (M2)

The survey results show that Assistants **generally welcome** individually tailored job descriptions, but that a large proportion do **not consider them to be a substantial change to the current situation**. This suggests that job descriptions either already exist, and/or are insufficiently meaningful in practice.

It appears that general or standardized templates often do not reflect the actual realities of work in research, teaching, and administration, and therefore only contribute to a limited extent to clarifying expectations. Thus, a merely formal adjustment without clarification of content is hardly perceived as an effective improvement.

From avuba's point of view, individually tailored job descriptions only add value if they refer to **specific and realistic proportions** of research, teaching, and administrative tasks, **explicitly identify protected research time**, and provide **clear information on the respective workload in accordance with the employment contract**. A prerequisite for successful implementation is also that **job descriptions are stipulated before the contract is signed, regularly reviewed** and, in the event of deviations, used as a reference for clarification and correction.

As comprehensive **timekeeping** is not currently planned, a **voluntary tracking of working hours** could serve as a **solution**. To this end, HR could, for instance, make the **previous Excel table** available again for Assistants to use for their own documentation and as support in discussions with supervisors. Without the above conditions, there is a risk that this measure will also remain largely formal in nature.

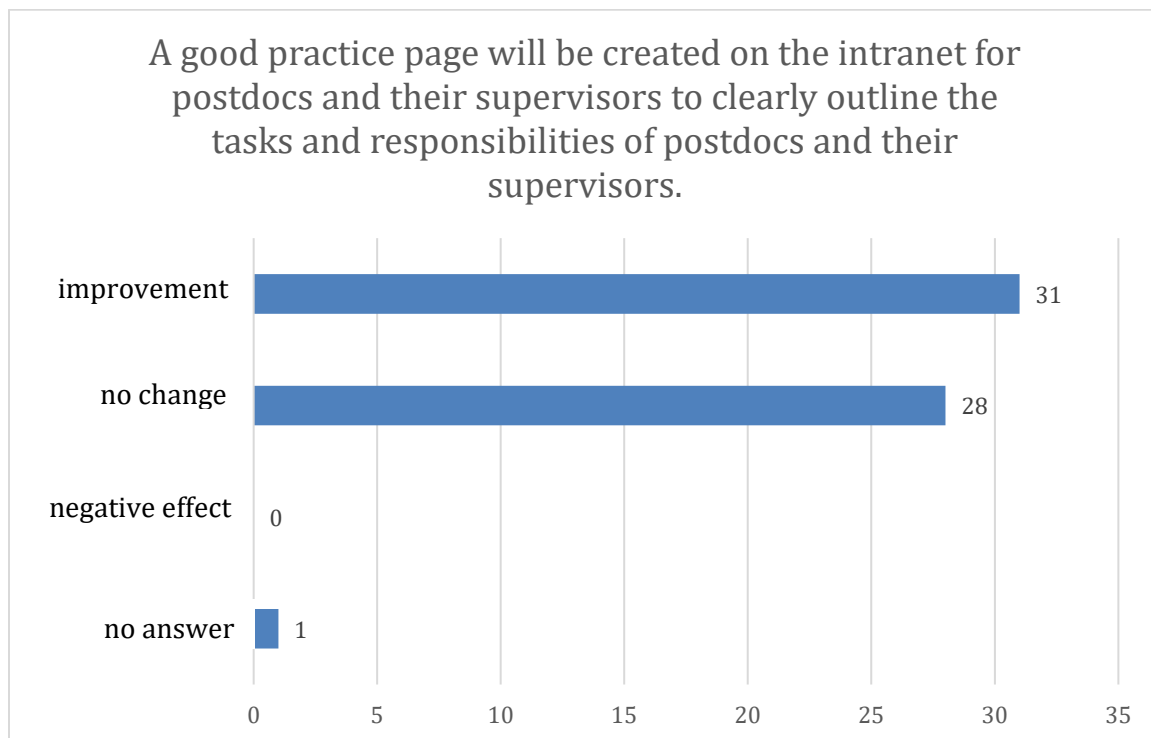


3.1.3 Clarity of tasks and duties, proposal C – Intranet page with best practices for postdocs and supervisors (M3)

The survey results show that Assistants generally view a central good practice page on the rights and obligations of postdocs and supervisors positively, but that the majority do **not** consider it **to be a measure with immediate effect**.

From avuba's point of view, the responses illustrate that passive solutions without institutional anchoring in everyday working life hardly contribute to the clarifying of expectations or preventing and resolving of conflicts. Accordingly, the usefulness of a good practice page is highly dependent on whether it serves more than just a documentary function.

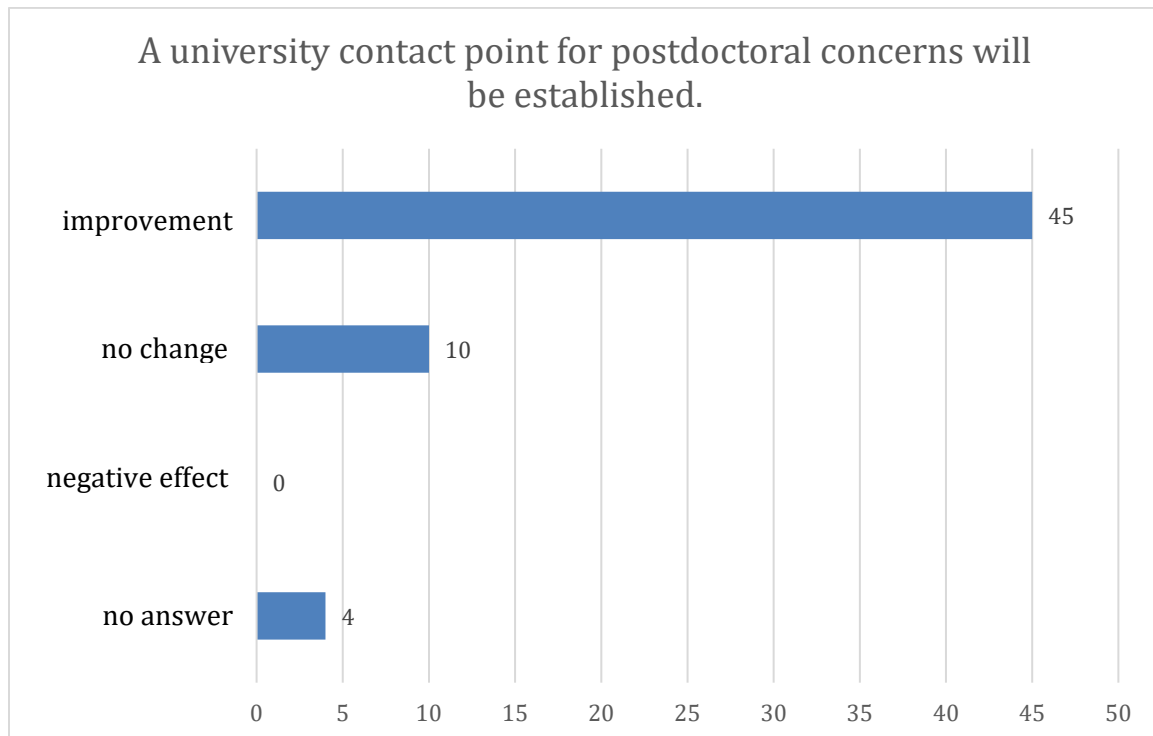
From avuba's perspective, such a measure can only be effective if the guidelines are **binding** and **systematically integrated into onboarding processes, contract documents, and continuing education formats for supervisors**. Where faculty-specific supervision guidelines already exist, a university-wide good practice page can contribute to consistency and visibility. However, without active implementation, clear responsibilities, and regular review and updates, there is a risk that the measure will remain predominantly informative and symbolic in nature.



3.1.4 Clarity of tasks and duties, proposal D – University contact point for postdocs (M4)

The survey results show a **very positive assessment** of a university-wide contact point for postdocs.

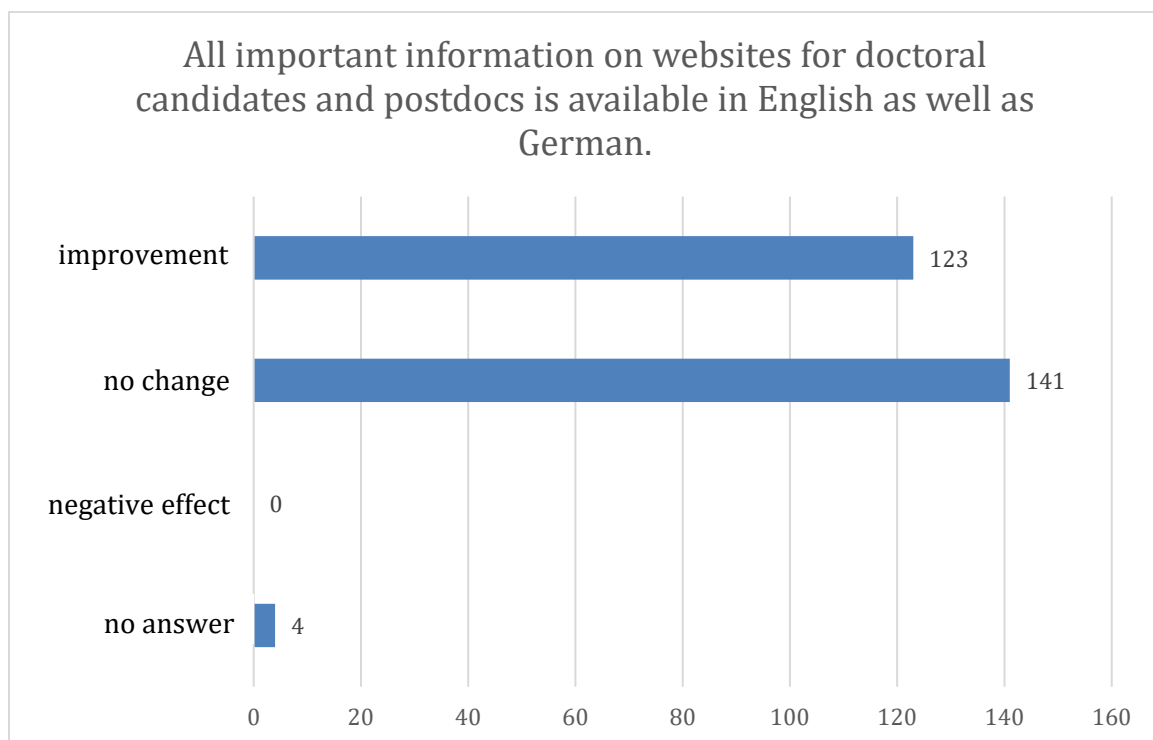
However, a noticeable improvement can only be expected if the central **contact point communicates clearly, positions itself independently**, and is equipped with **specific powers to provide confidential advice and, if requested, referral and coordination**. It is also crucial that existing faculty services are systematically networked to ensure equal access to support in all faculties. Without clear responsibilities and institutional anchoring, there is a risk that the measure will remain largely symbolic.



3.1.5 Clarity of tasks and duties, proposal E – Bilingual information (German/English) (M5)

Assistants widely support the provision of bilingual information, but the majority **do not perceive it as a measure with immediate impact**. This suggests that bilingual information already exists in some cases, or that AI services are increasingly being used to translate information.

From avuba's point of view, it is important that documents are easy to find – for example, on the respective best practice pages for enrolled doctoral candidates, employed doctoral candidates, or postdocs – or, if possible, already integrated into the (post)doctoral agreement. At the same time, it is clear that the **actual participation of non-German-speaking Assistants** in university self-governance will remain limited as long as meetings are predominantly held in German. Information sheets alone are not sufficient to ensure equal access to information and opportunities for participation. avuba therefore advocates **greater integration of English in both faculty and inter-faculty committees**. The first step would be to accept English as a working language, and the second step would then be to conduct meetings in English whenever possible.

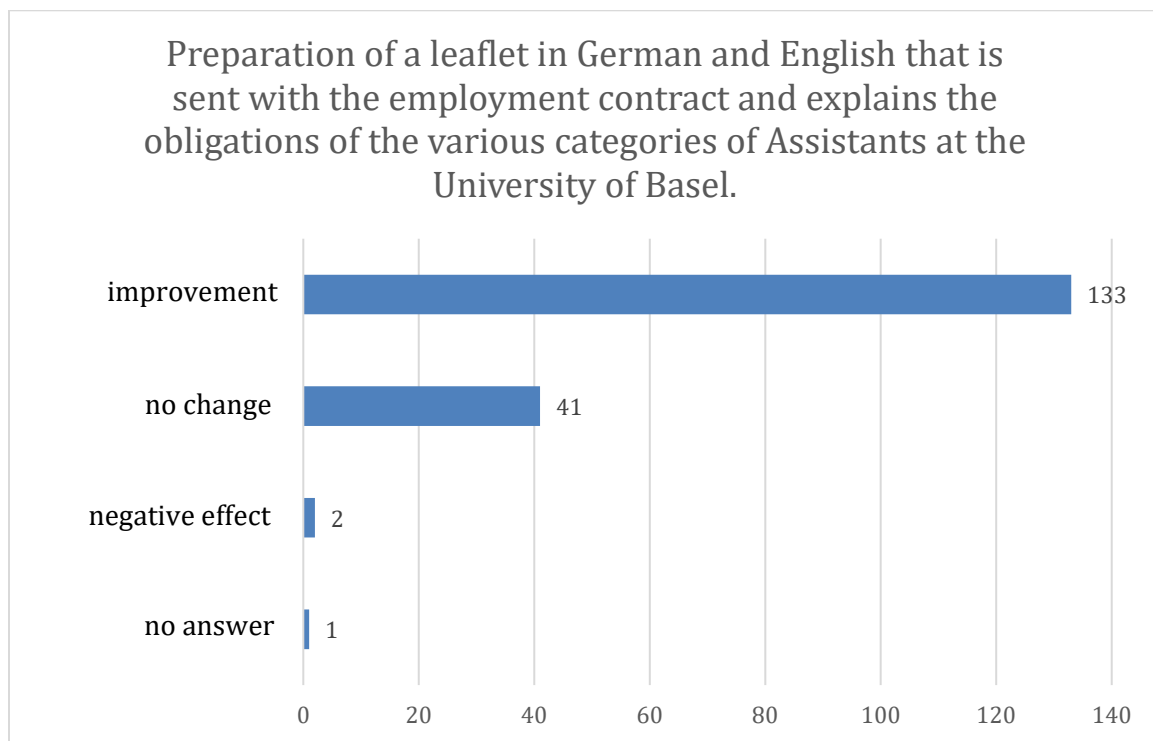


3.1.6 Transparency of employment conditions, proposal A – Information sheet per faculty/department (M6)

The survey results show that **transparency is considered very valuable**.

Assistants generally welcome faculty-specific information on employment conditions, due to the frequency of incomplete or inconsistent information. At the same time, qualitative feedback expresses concern that the added value of such leaflets will remain limited if they merely reproduce existing documents. The **information should also be integrated as far as possible into existing (post)doctoral agreements**.

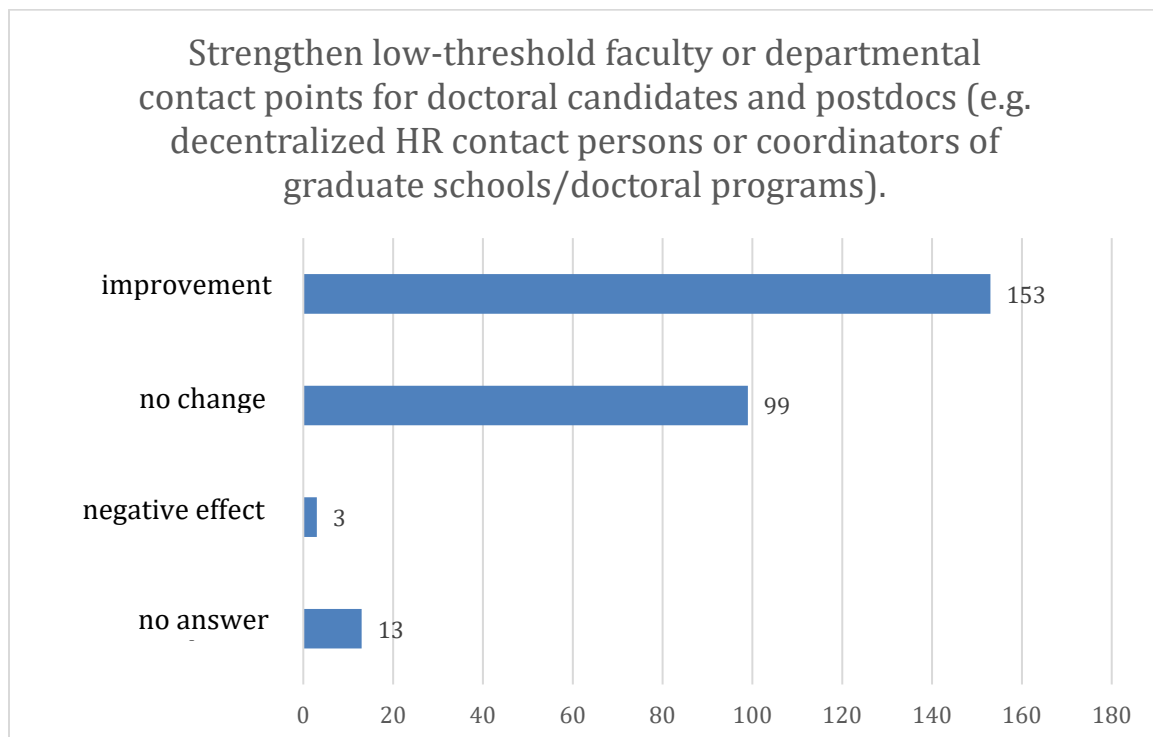
From avuba's point of view, additional information only adds value if it is **concise, regularly updated**, and actively communicated during recruitment and onboarding. Without coordination, such materials run the risk of reinforcing existing inequalities in access to information rather than reducing them.



3.1.7 Transparency of employment conditions, proposal B – Low-threshold contact points (M7)

Assistants view low-threshold contact points generally positively. **However, their effectiveness is called into question if they do not have the necessary powers or mandates** to follow up on concerns or trigger binding measures. In such cases, Assistants primarily experience these contact points as formalized opportunities for discussion that offer them no concrete added value and do not bring about any noticeable improvements.

Effective implementation requires that **the roles, responsibilities, availability, competencies, and confidentiality of these centers are clearly defined** and made visible. The people who perform these roles must be trained accordingly.



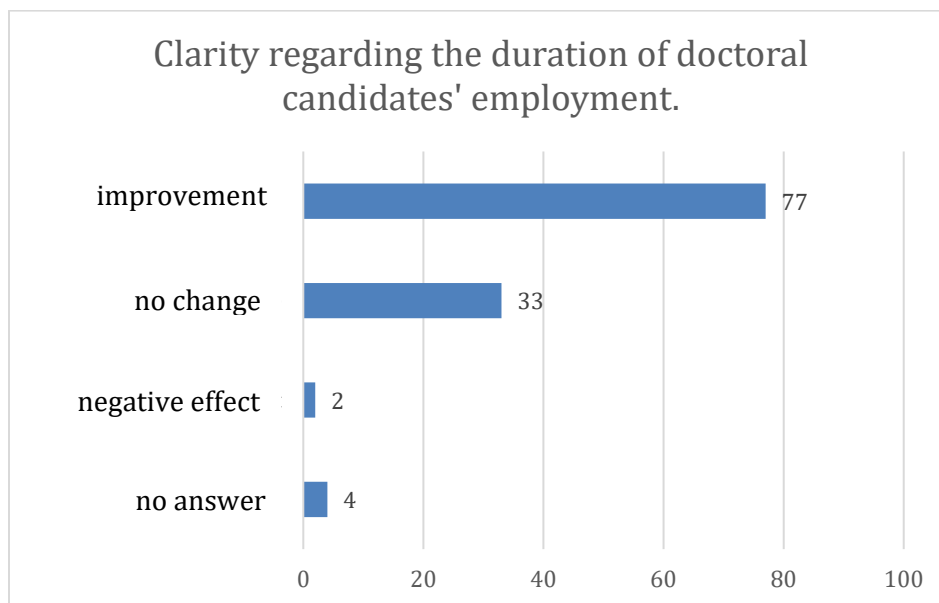
3.1.8 Clarity about the duration of doctoral candidates' employment (M8)

Assistants clearly support the disclosure of financing for the entire duration of the doctoral program, but this is predominantly seen as **a measure that creates transparency rather than solutions to structural problems**. Many doctoral candidates continue to experience uncertainty due to short-term contracts and project-dependent funding.

A real improvement requires that information on the duration of funding is **communicated in a binding manner at the time of hiring, documented in the doctoral agreement, and monitored institutionally**. Without active monitoring, there is a risk of inconsistent practices between faculties.

This is particularly relevant for **Assistants without a Swiss passport or C permit**, whose residence status is directly linked to their employment. **Planning security is crucial** for this group of people, which is why **chain contracts** (e.g. 1+1+1+1) or appointments lasting less than a year **should be avoided** where possible. In addition, professors need to be made aware of the legal and personal consequences of short-term contracts, and HR needs to play an active role in ensuring that **short-term contracts are only issued in justified exceptional cases**. This is also important in view of the psychological strain on those affected.

Furthermore, it is evident that structural improvements **require forward-looking financial planning**. In particular, research group leaders whose funding is largely dependent on third-party funding should be **offered the prospect of multi-year employment** even if their budget is project-linked. IT solutions could possibly be designed to enable multi-year financial planning, or, if necessary, **financial planning could be coordinated centrally or at faculty level** rather than exclusively at the level of individual research groups. This would allow existing funds to be used flexibly and **enable transitional financing**. A **central bridging fund**, for example at departmental level, **could also help to cushion financial gaps in the event of project delays or illness or pregnancy of project staff**, thus ensuring continuity of employment during the qualification period.

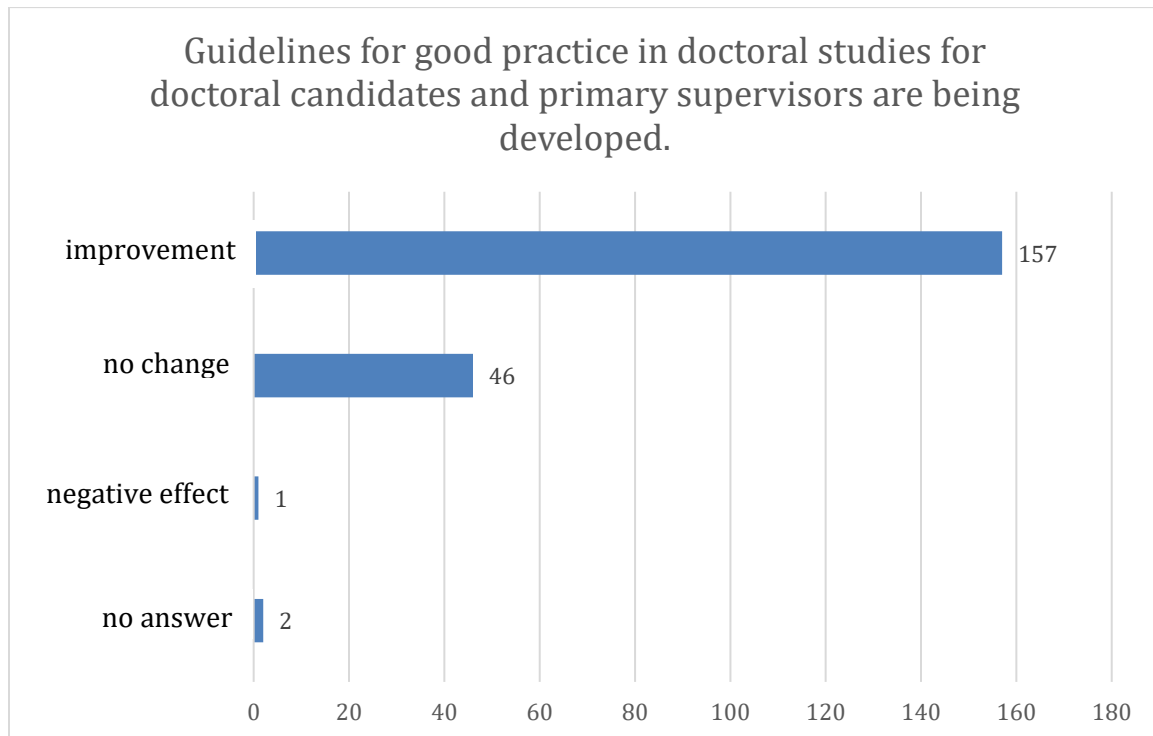


3.1.9 Transparency regarding salary and workload in doctoral programs, proposal A – Guidelines for good practice in doctoral programs for doctoral candidates and primary supervisors (M9)

Assistants **widely support** a guide to good practice in doctoral studies, but many do not consider it to be automatically effective. Qualitative feedback shows that existing guidelines often have little influence on everyday working life.

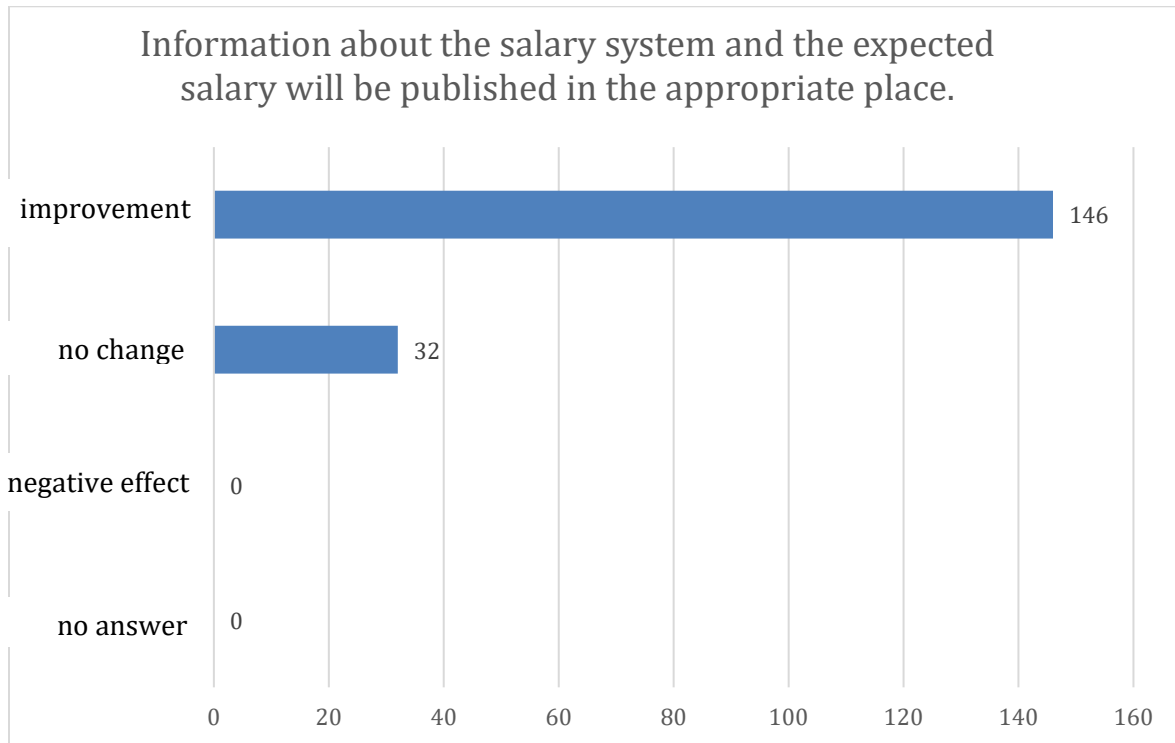
An effect can only be expected if the guidelines are **applied in a binding manner, integrated into onboarding processes, and regularly reviewed**. Without clear accountability, there is a risk that such guidelines remain primarily declaratory in nature.

In addition, avuba emphasizes that key information from the guide should be **integrated** directly into **(post)doctoral agreements**. This includes, in particular, clear **information on holiday entitlements** and explicit **references to rest periods** in order to institutionalize their importance and make them visible.



3.1.10 Transparency regarding salary and workload in doctoral programs, Proposal B – Transparent salary information (M10)

Assistants view transparent salary information **positively**. All employed Assistants should have access to the full salary scales so that they can understand how salaries develop over the course of the qualification period (e.g. doctoral program, first year, second year, etc.). The University should centrally publish the relevant **salary scales along with a comprehensible explanation of the various scales and salary development** on the intranet.

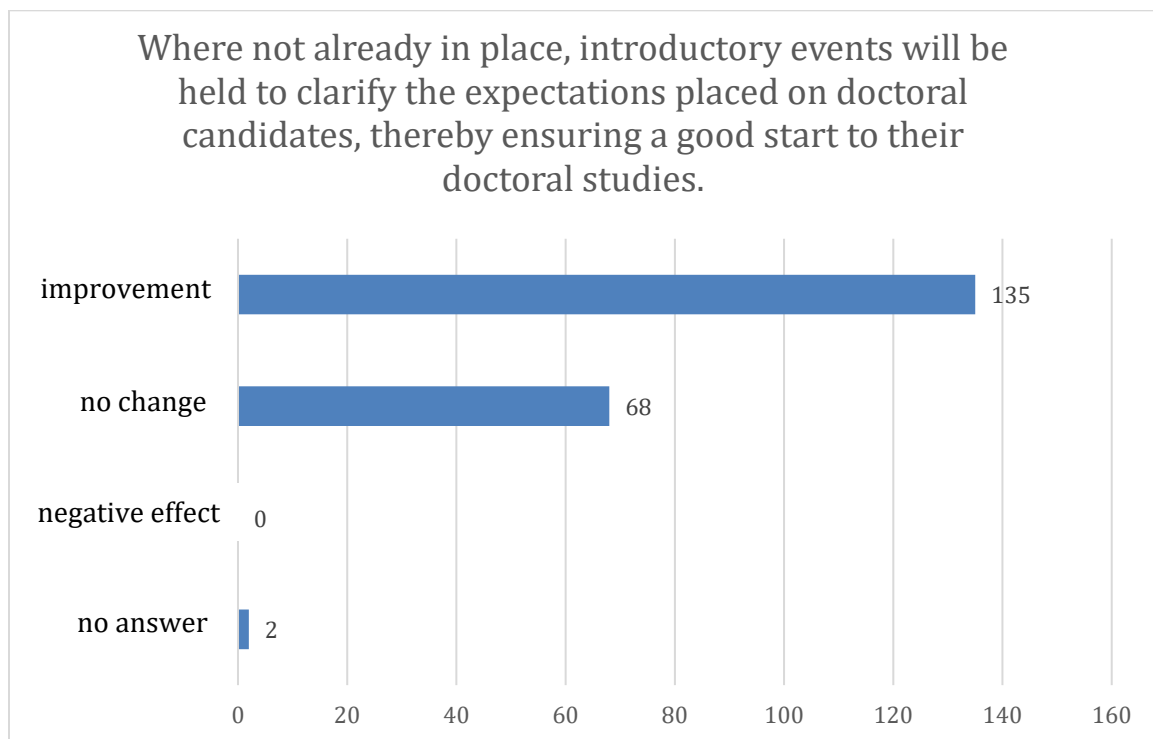


3.1.11 Transparency regarding salary and workload in doctoral programs, proposal C – Introductory events to clarify expectations (M11)

Assistants **clearly support** transparency regarding the expected workload, but many perceive it as **insufficiently implemented**. Non-binding guidelines do not provide planning security. Such information is only effective if it is **realistic, compatible with protected research time**, and reviewed **regularly**. Without control mechanisms, there is a risk of additional frustration, particularly in teaching-intensive faculties.

In addition to the information shared at introductory events, HR should inform Assistants, especially those from abroad, about their rights, for example with regard to holiday entitlement. This could be published on an additional intranet page for international employees. In addition, supervisors must be informed that they have a **duty of care** toward their employees on behalf of the University and that they are responsible for ensuring that Assistants have **sufficient time to rest** and that **holiday entitlement is taken**. The Swiss-wide Mental Health Survey evaluation has shown that supervisors often pressure Assistants to work on weekends. In the long term, this is not beneficial for either the individual or the organization.

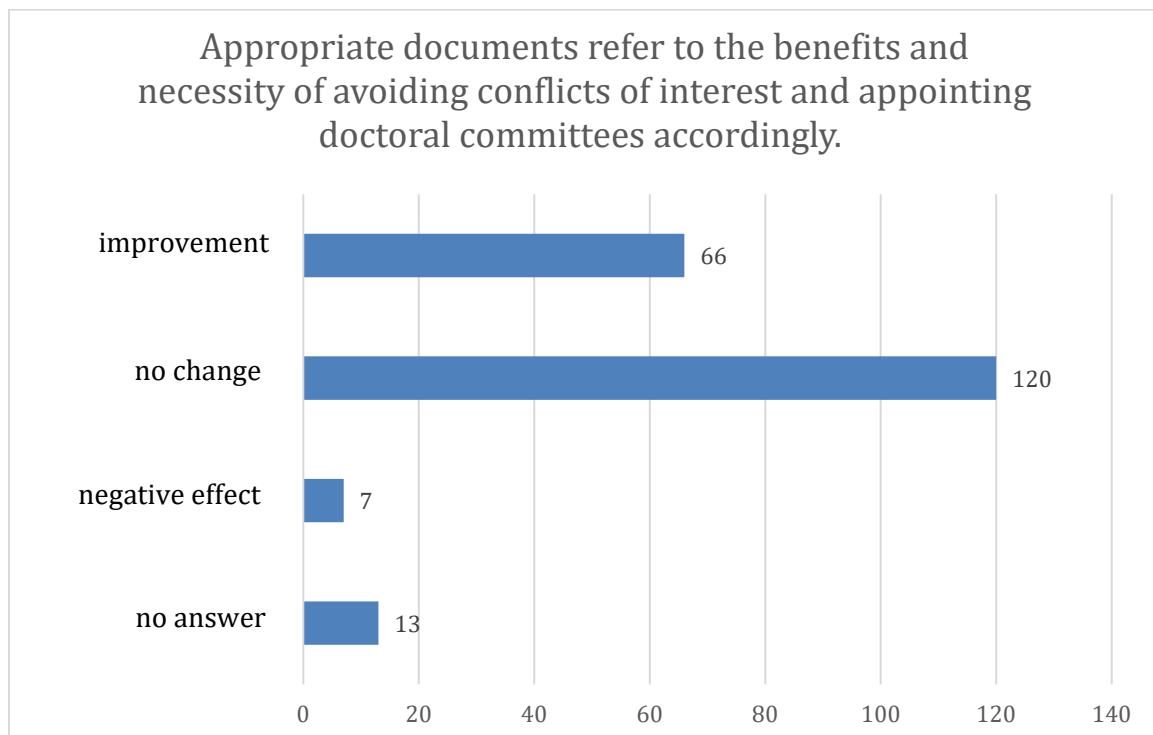
For this reason, the **framework conditions** – which also identify attendance days, especially in the case of part-time contracts – should also be **specified in the (post)doctoral agreement**.



3.2 Supervision & mentoring

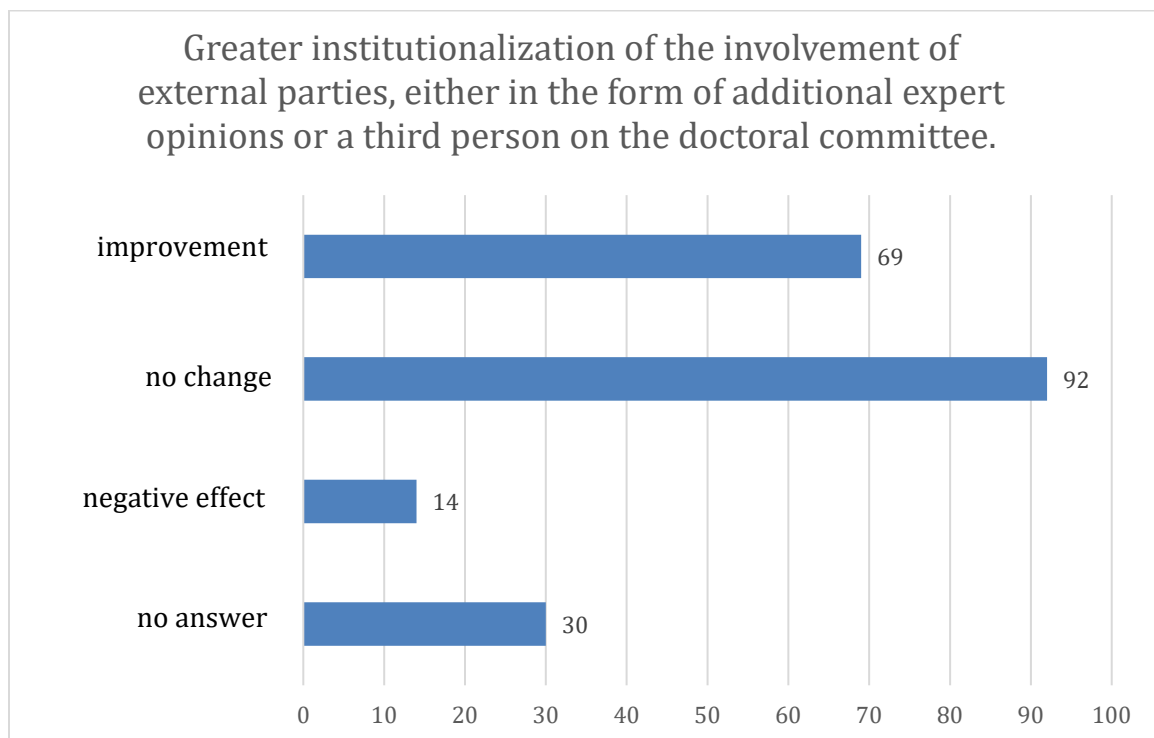
3.2.1 Appropriate documents should refer to the benefits and necessity of avoiding conflicts of interest and appointing doctoral committees accordingly (M12)

Assistants **clearly support** the application of recusal rules, **but consider it largely ineffective without consistent enforcement**. Actual improvement can only be expected if these rules are applied in a binding manner, clearly anchored in the doctoral agreements, and linked to comprehensible consequences in the event of non-compliance. In addition, transparent and low-threshold procedures are needed that clearly regulate which independent body doctoral candidates can turn to if they wish to decline a supervisor due to a recusal – even at a later stage in their doctoral studies. **The corresponding request for exclusion or recusal should be reviewed and formally decided upon by an independent body** (e.g. the central PhD committee), while the doctoral board is merely informed and does not have sole decision-making authority. **Doctoral agreements with inadmissible supervision constellations should not be approved in the first place.**



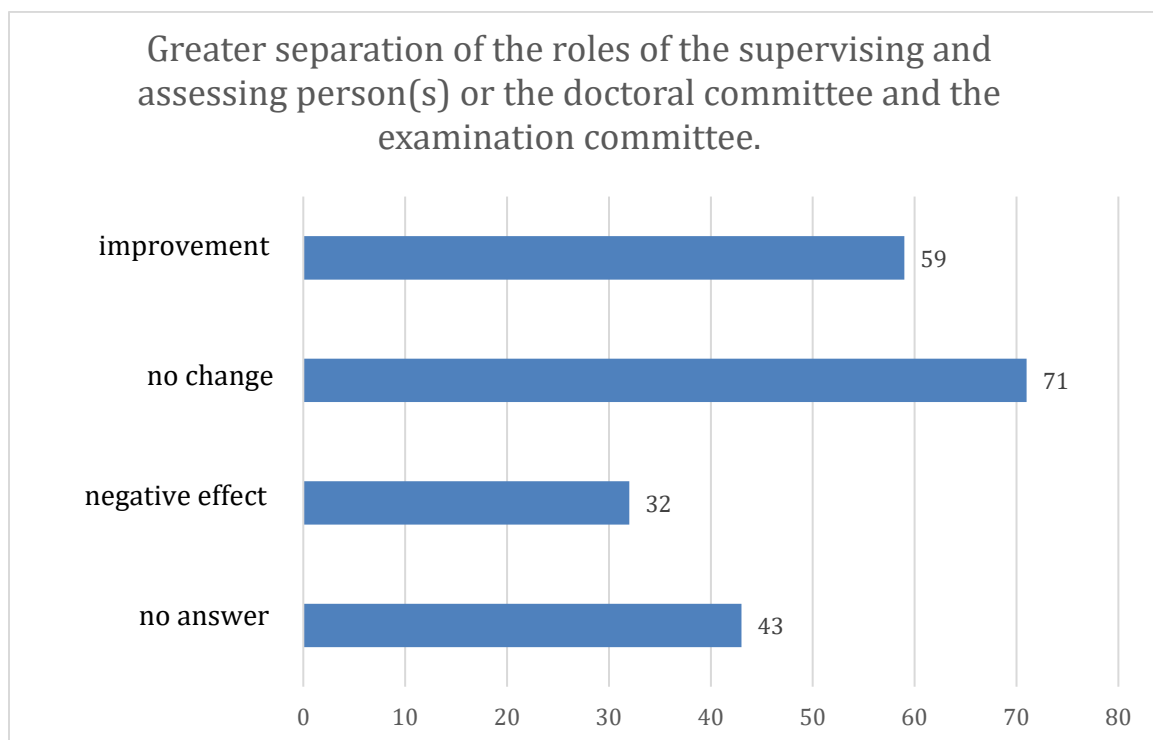
3.2.2 An additional independent person is consulted for the assessment of a dissertation, Proposal A – Greater institutionalization of external review (M13)

Assistants regard external review as a sensible step toward greater independence, but only consider it effective if it is implemented **systematically and university-wide**. **Clear selection criteria**, **binding rules on bias**, and **meaningful involvement of doctoral students** in the selection process are crucial. Without these conditions, the effect of the measure remains limited. At the same time, the responses point to **considerable challenges in the practical implementation**, particularly with regard to the question of how to find professionally qualified and independent external individuals who are willing to take on this task without additional remuneration. Each additional reviewer furthermore increases the coordination effort and can thus complicate planning, discussions, and feedback processes.



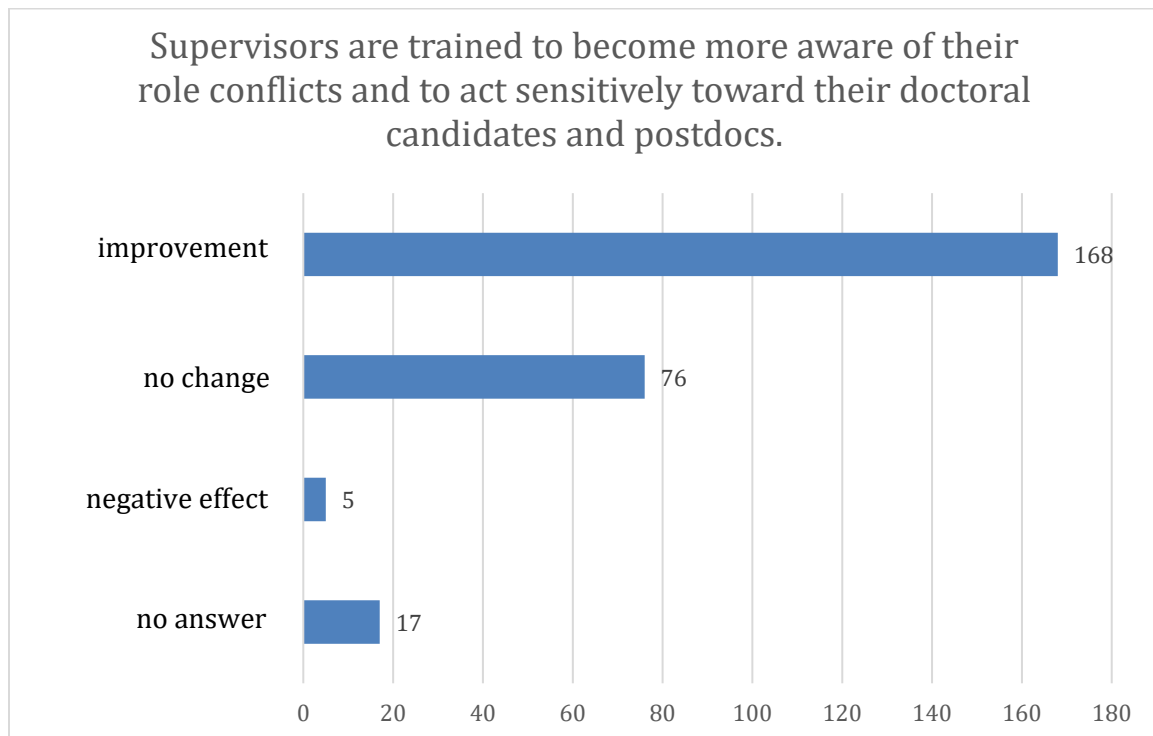
3.2.3 An additional independent person is consulted for the assessment of a dissertation, Proposal B – Separation of the supervisory and examination committee (M14)

The evaluation shows a mixed picture: **while some of the Assistants consider a greater separation of roles to be potentially positive, many respondents see no change as a result, and a significant proportion even see possible negative consequences.** Accordingly, the effect of the measure is highly context-driven. It depends largely on whether it is implemented consistently and accompanied by regular supervisory committee meetings that also evaluate the doctoral process and not just the final product. Moreover, Assistants report that external examiners sometimes give lower assessments than their own supervisors. Therefore, separation does not in itself represent an improvement, but is primarily seen as a possible supportive measure in problematic supervision situations. A prerequisite for effective implementation is a clearly established right of veto for Assistants vis-à-vis external supervisors. If the person consulted is not truly independent, for example due to their personal proximity to the current supervisor, the measure will be ineffective or may further weaken the position of the Assistants.



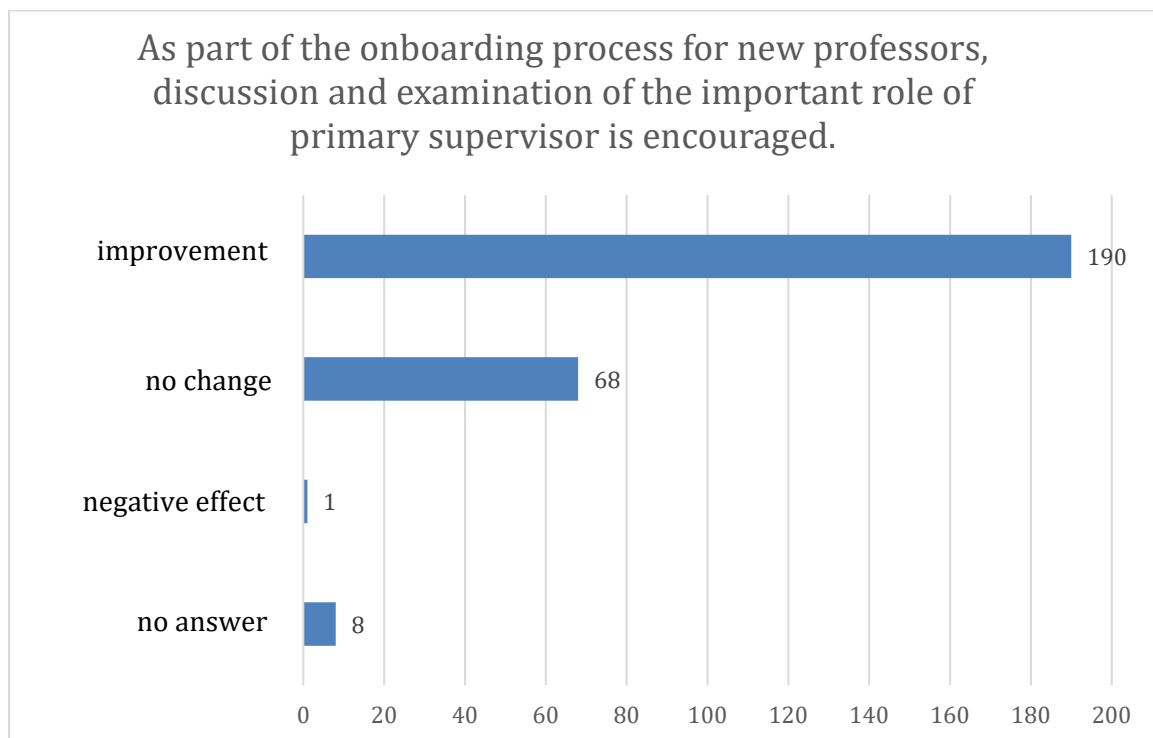
3.2.4 Leadership development opportunities and reflection on the role of the primary supervisor, proposal A – Training the primary supervisor on role conflicts (M15)

Respondents widely support mandatory training, but only consider it effective if it is truly **mandatory, regular, and binding in terms of content**, i.e., if it covers topics that are linked to institutional rules (e.g. doctoral study regulations, personal integrity regulations, or good scientific practice). From the Assistants' point of view, voluntary or ad hoc training does not reach all relevant target groups. They also emphasize that training alone has little effect if it is aimed exclusively at newly hired professors or if structural challenges are not taken into account. For example, supervisors who are themselves in evaluation periods are often under considerable pressure, so that training courses without simultaneous structural relief are unlikely to bring about lasting change for their team members.



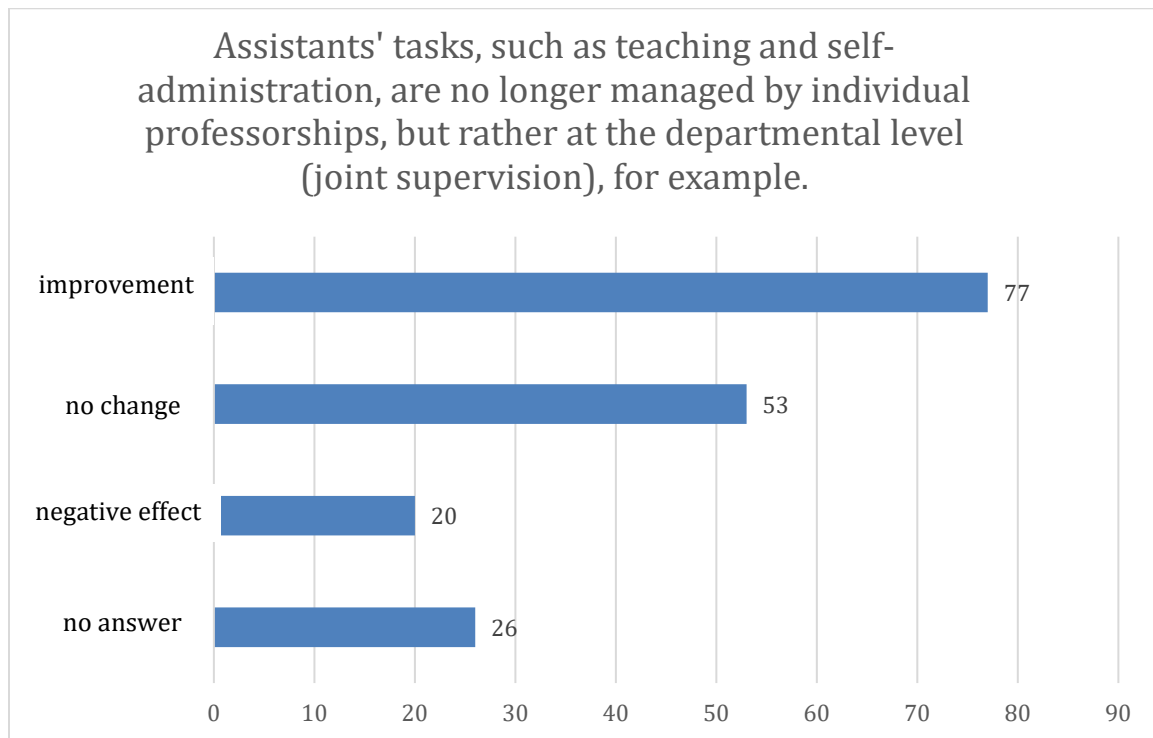
3.2.5 Leadership development opportunities and reflection on the role as primary supervisor, proposal B – Role as primary supervisor during the onboarding of new professors (M16)

Assistants view the integration of the role of supervisor into onboarding **positively**, but consider it only effective if it goes beyond mere information and includes **binding expectations and reflection**. Without clear standards, the effect remains individual or faculty-dependent. The effectiveness of such measures remains structurally limited as long as **financial resources** are **primarily tied to chairs**. In this constellation, the main responsibility – and thus also the **decision-making power** over continued employment or contract extensions – lies with individual professorships. A sustainable change in the supervisory and power relationships would require an adjustment of cash flows in order to redistribute responsibility and decision-making powers across the institution.



3.2.6 Strengthening joint supervision of doctoral candidates (M17)

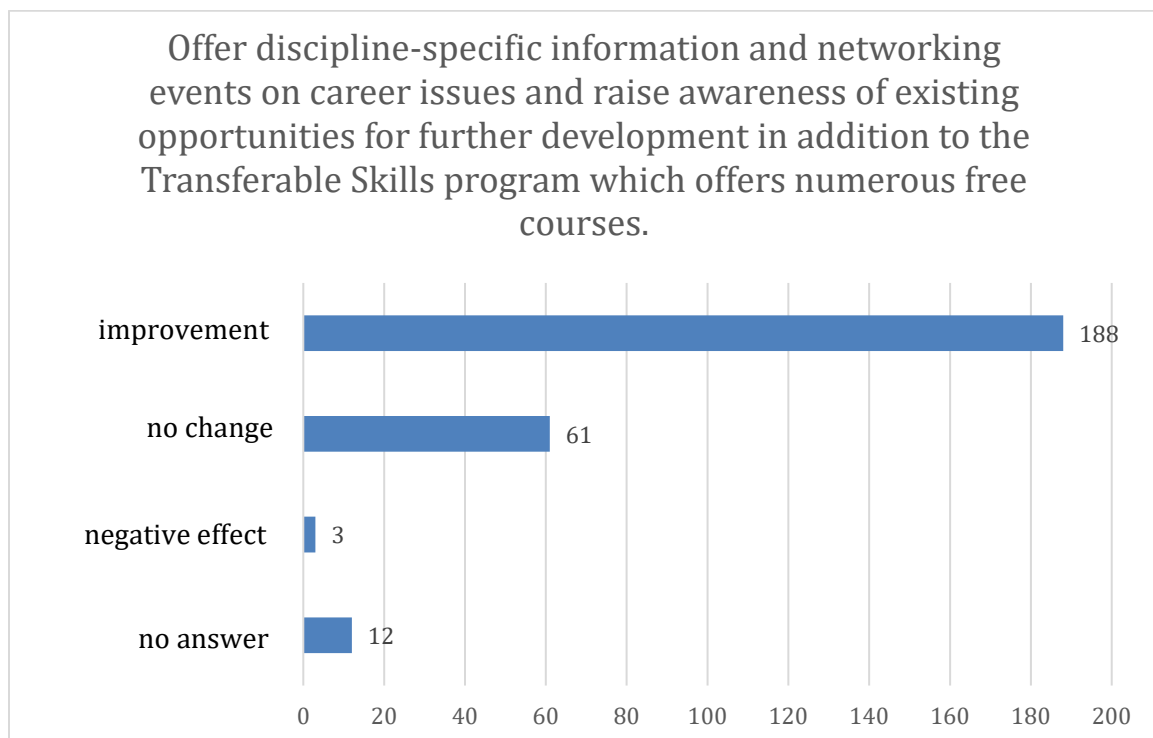
Assistants see joint supervision models as an effective **means of reducing dependence on individual supervisors and distributing the workload more evenly**. They emphasize that such models can also alleviate overload by decoupling teaching and administrative tasks from a single professorship. avuba stresses that joint supervision must be clearly structured, i.e., duties and the distribution of tasks must be transparent and precisely defined so that responsibilities and workload do not remain unclear and are shifted to the Assistants.



3.3 Career development

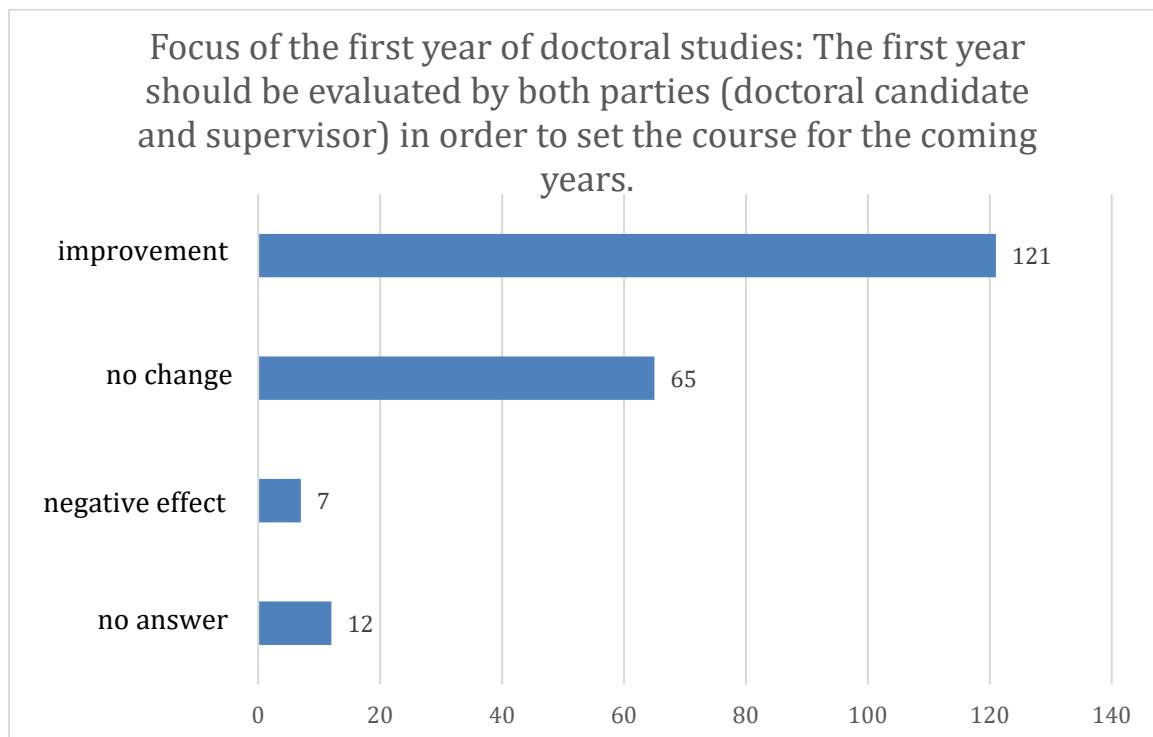
3.3.1 Promoting discussion about career paths and highlighting alternatives to an academic career (M18)

Assistants **strongly support** the provision of subject-specific information and networking opportunities on academic and non-academic career paths, as many complain about a lack of systematic advice in this area. avuba emphasizes that such measures must be visible, practical, and realistic, and **should not depend solely on supervisors**. Faculty-specific formats are essential. Both doctoral candidates and postdocs would benefit from this measure.



3.3.2 Careful selection, proposal A – The first year should be evaluated by both parties (doctoral candidates and supervisors) in order to set the course for the coming years (M19)

Assistants generally see a structured evaluation of the first year of doctoral study as an opportunity to clarify expectations and provide early guidance. However, Assistants express **concern that such evaluations could increase pressure if they are designed as one-sided performance assessments**, which could have a negative impact on doctoral candidates. From avuba's point of view, the measure must be clearly designed as a mutual process that also places responsibility on the supervisors and improves onboarding quality. Doctoral candidates should be informed that the first year serves as an orientation and evaluation phase and that contract extensions or renewals will be made by mutual agreement.

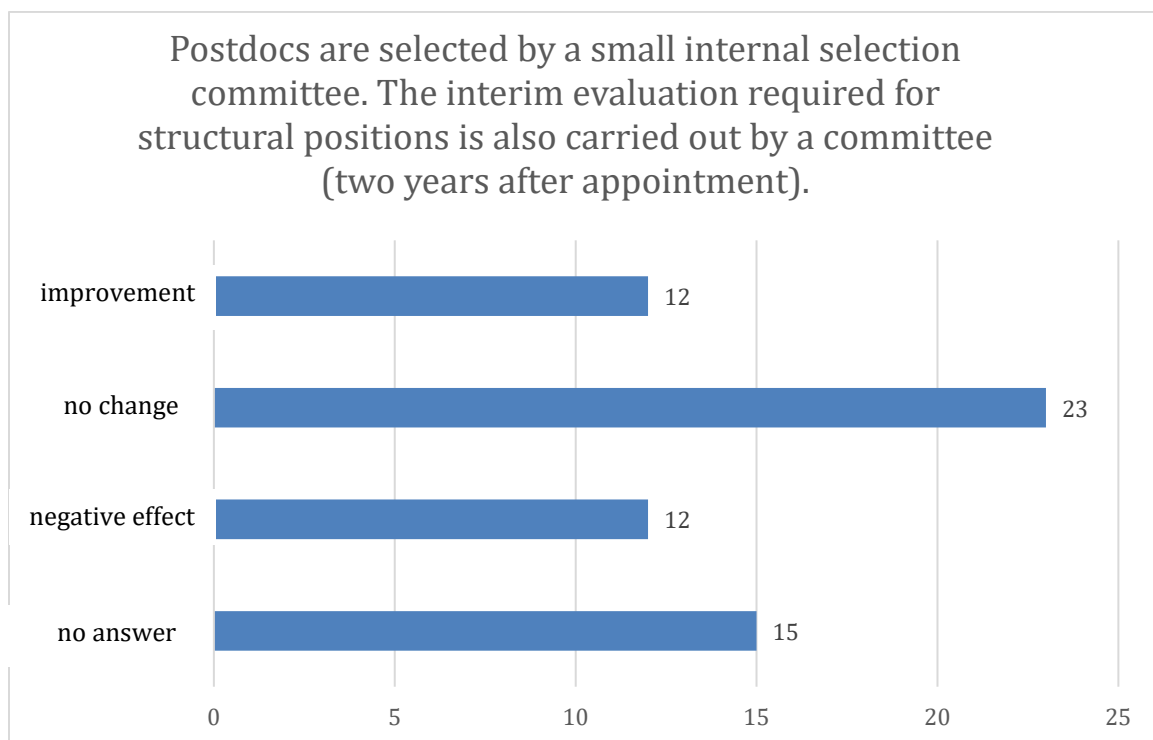


3.3.3 Careful selection of young researchers, proposal B – Selection committee for structural postdoctoral positions (M20)

Some postdocs view the introduction of selection committees and interim evaluations for structural postdoctoral positions positively, as **it can potentially contribute to greater transparency and reduce individual dependencies**. However, the responses show that the measure remains abstract for many Assistants and its concrete benefits are unclear.

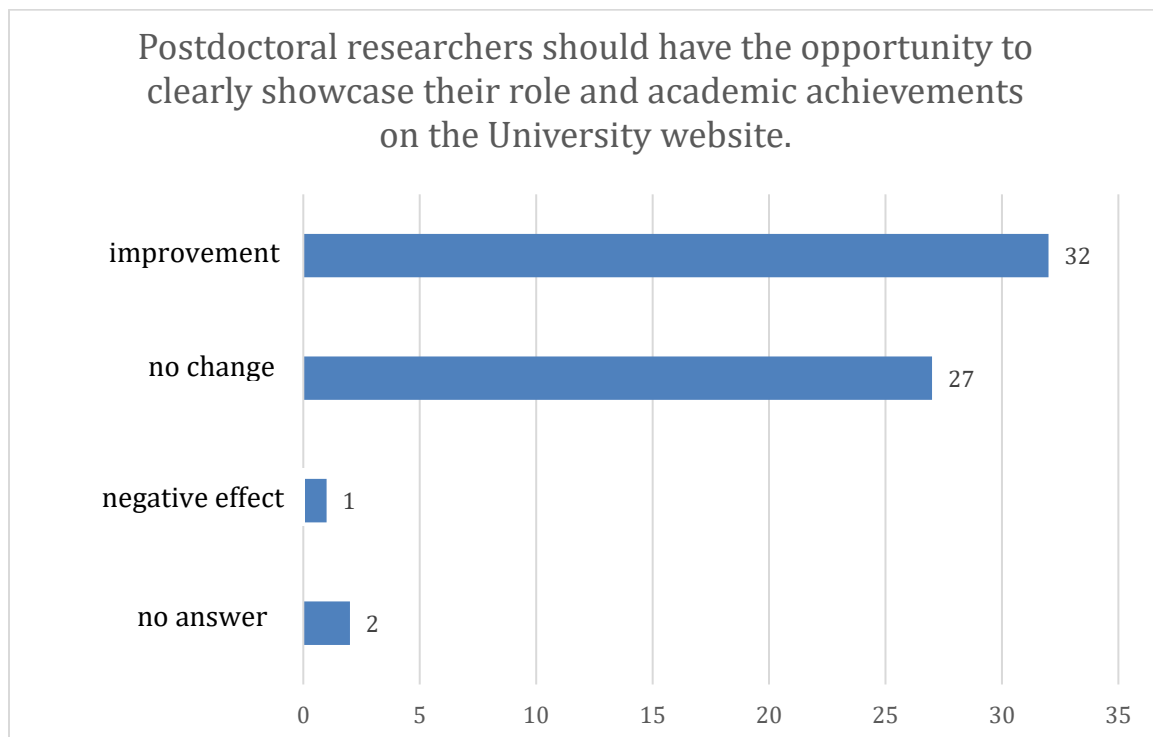
In particular, it **does not address the risk that postdocs are primarily retained out of institutional self-interest** due to their specific knowledge, their continuity in ongoing research projects, and the comparatively low supervision costs, without this leading to career decisions or a systematic consideration of alternative career paths.

From the postdocs' point of view, **interim evaluations** by a committee can only provide guidance at an early stage **if they are linked to clear follow-up options**. A sustainable reduction in institutional dependencies and a realistic opening up to alternative career paths require, above all, clearly defined and transparent career prospects.



3.3.4 Promoting the independence of postdocs (M21)

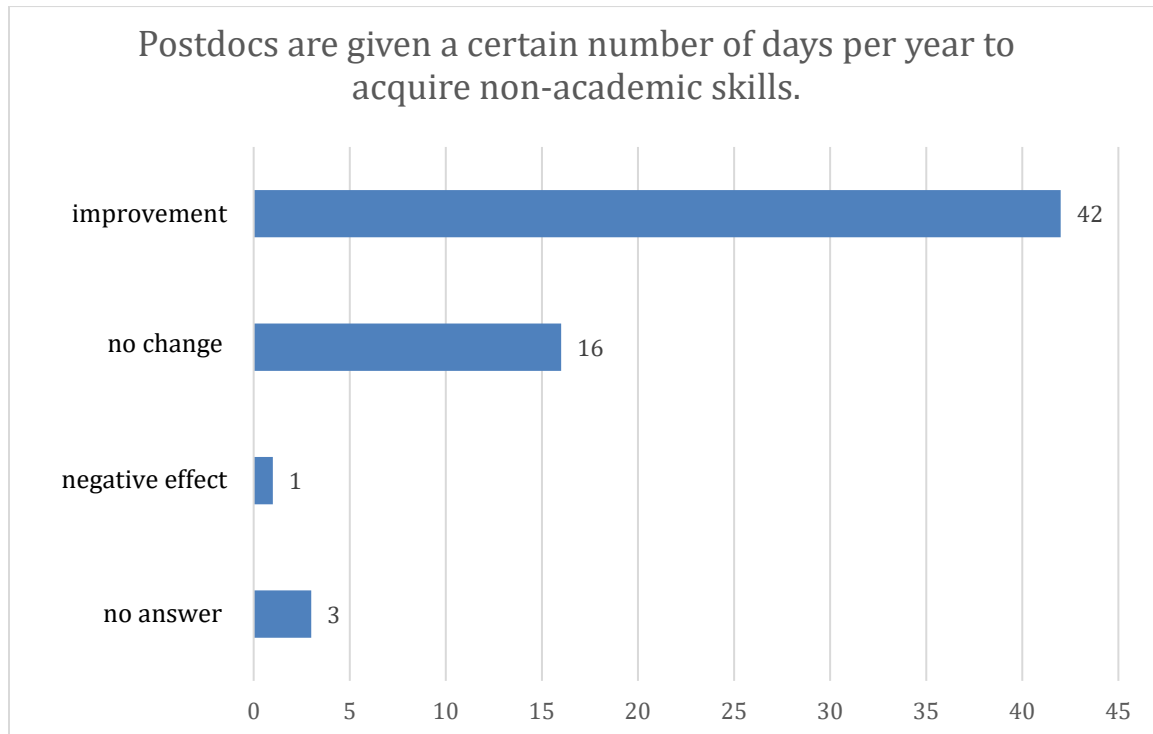
Respondents generally consider the **highlighting of independent postdoctoral achievements** – such as project management experience or self-acquired third-party funds – **on the University website** to be **beneficial** for career development. However, the evaluation shows that this measure alone **contributes only to a limited extent to a noticeable improvement**. Assistants also emphasize that visibility must be based on transparent and fair criteria in order to avoid new inequalities. An adaptation of the structural framework, for example by **providing postdocs with their own research budget** and clearly defined development prospects, or by providing targeted **support in acquiring third-party funding** (including formal application ownership), could bring about more **sustainable effects** in promoting postdoctoral independence.



3.3.5 Opportunities for postdocs to acquire non-academic skills (M22)

The allocation of defined days for the acquisition of non-academic skills is **viewed very positively**, but its effectiveness depends on this **time** being **protected** and not undermined by other tasks. avuba would like to emphasize that doctoral candidates consider this **measure desirable**, too.

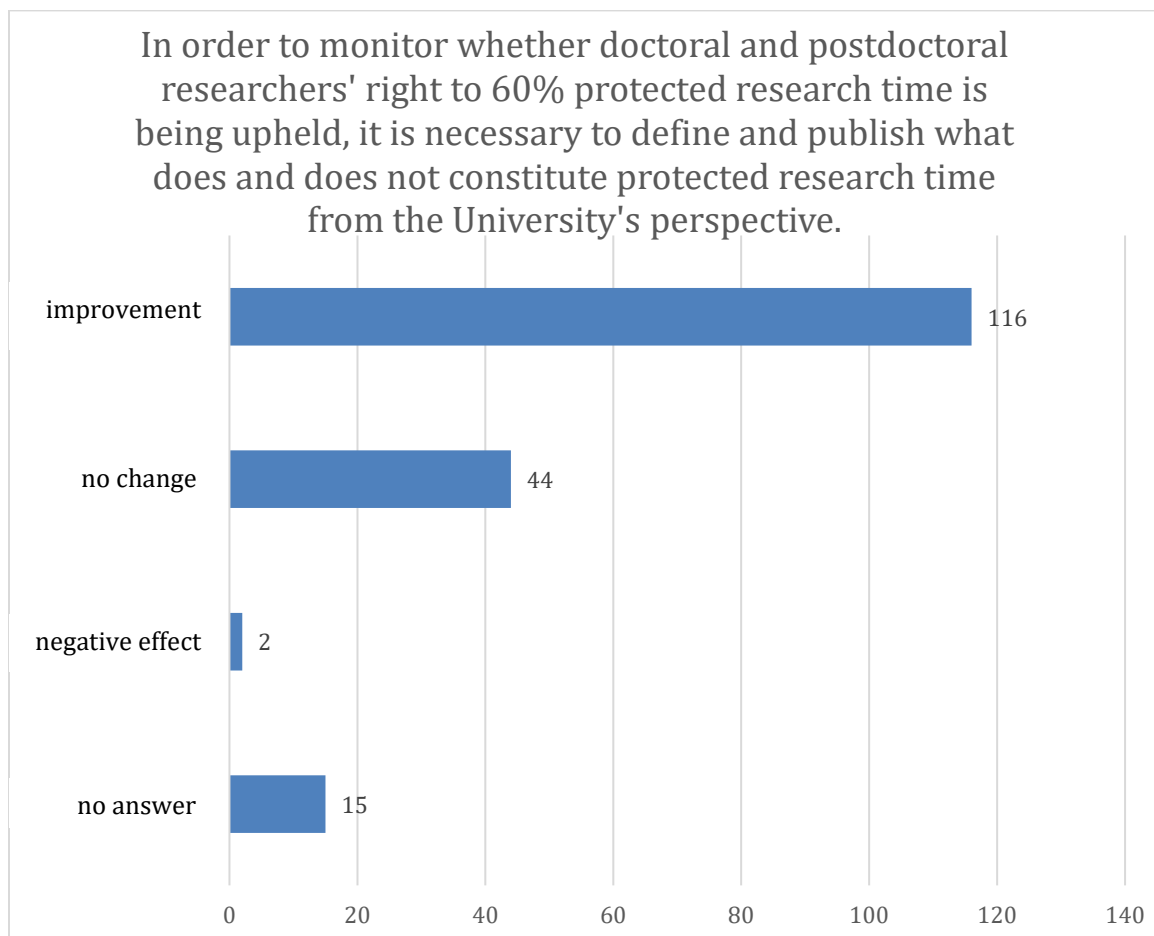
The promotion and active advertising of the [Transferable Skills Portfolio](#) as a tool for the systematic documentation of interdisciplinary skills would enable Assistants to document their acquisition of non-academic skills in a visible and comprehensible manner.



3.4 Protected research time, teaching obligations & academic self-administration

3.4.1 Define protected research time more clearly (M23)

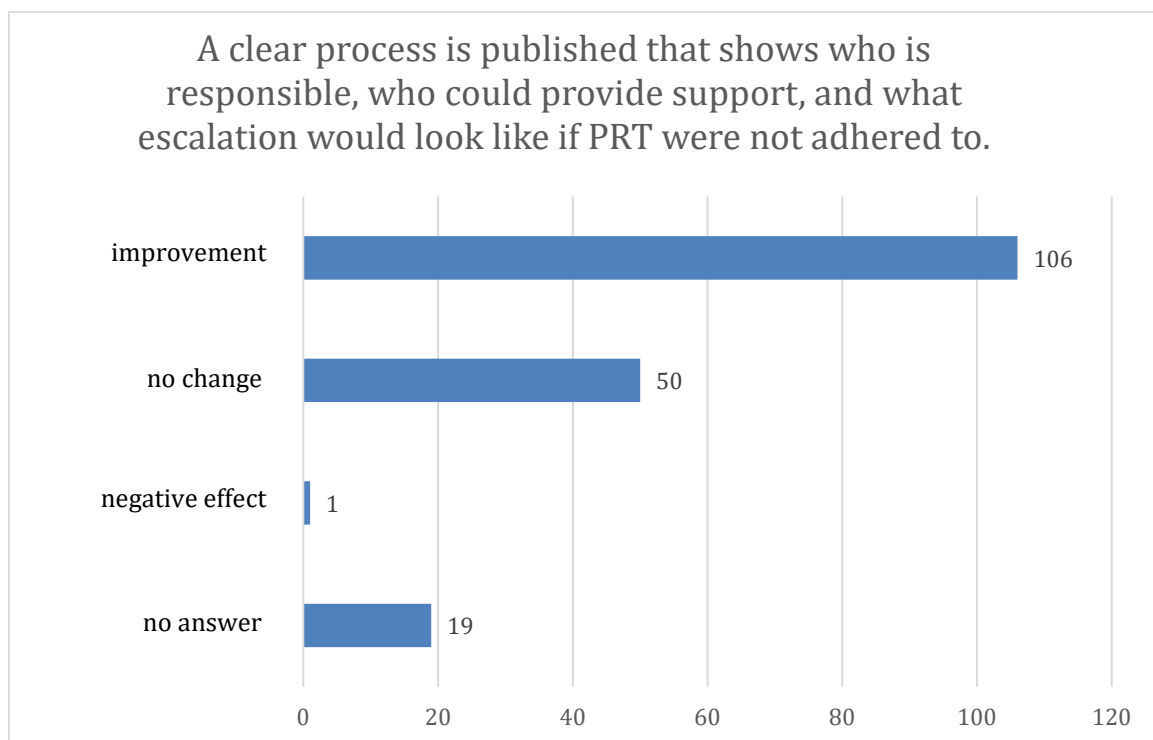
Clarifying – at faculty or even departmental level – what is meant by protected research time (PRT) is one of the most strongly supported measures. Many Assistants report that PRT is poorly understood or systematically undermined in practice. avuba therefore calls for a binding, university-wide rough definition and at least seven faculty-specific specifications to be published on the intranet. This enables the monitoring of compliance. Otherwise, PRT will remain a purely formal entitlement.



3.4.2 More active communication of the right to protected research time (M24)

Respondents **generally welcome the strengthening of the right to PRT through clear communication and escalation procedures**. However, fear of retaliation or ignorance of available support often prevents Assistants from exercising this right. From avuba's point of view, effective enforcement requires designated contact persons, transparent escalation channels, compensatory measures in the event of violations, and **protection for Assistants from the negative consequences of reporting non-compliance with PRT**. On the one hand, Assistants should have the opportunity (e.g. as part of optional timekeeping) to document their working hours and tasks. On the other hand, the University should ensure that such documentation does not lead to disadvantages for Assistants by establishing clear protection mechanisms against retaliatory measures and consistently sanctioning violations.

In addition, the University must be aware that professors might in future appoint student assistants to certain areas of work so that they no longer have to hire more expensive Assistants.

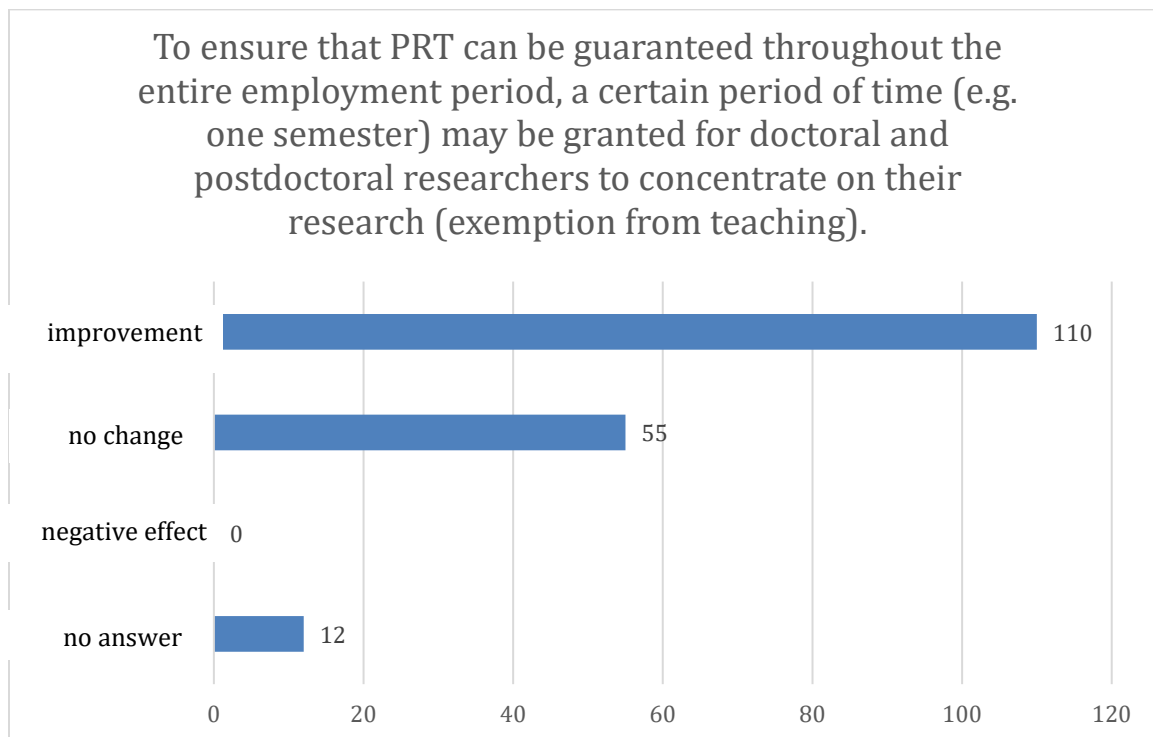


3.4.3 Enabling a research-intensive phase for doctoral candidates and postdocs (M25)

A **temporary reduction in teaching obligations to enable research-intensive phases** is considered **particularly useful in teaching-intensive faculties**. avuba supports this measure, but underlines that it must be structurally anchored in order to avoid simply shifting the burden to subsequent semesters or colleagues. A prerequisite for sustainable implementation is a fair distribution of the workload and sufficient teaching capacity so that no additional conflicts with supervisors arise. Especially smaller subjects **require clear regulations** to ensure that a temporary teaching load reduction does not create a double burden later on or cause students to miss key courses for the completion of their Bachelor's or Master's degrees because courses are not offered.

Feedback received by avuba shows that the way in which the teaching load is handled for SNSF doctoral candidates who are structurally and formally exempt from teaching varies greatly between departments: while some departments consistently implement the relevant regulations, others distribute the teaching load evenly among all doctoral candidates. Furthermore, the University must ensure that **research semesters are only granted to professors if it has been clarified in advance who will take over their teaching duties, and how this additional work will later be compensated either through teaching load reduction or additional remuneration**.

Additionally, HR or the respective management should **ensure that professors comply with their general teaching obligation of eight contact hours per week** in accordance with OWP (Ordnung für das Wissenschaftliche Personal / Regulation for academic personnel at the University of Basel), so that this is not passed on to Assistants.

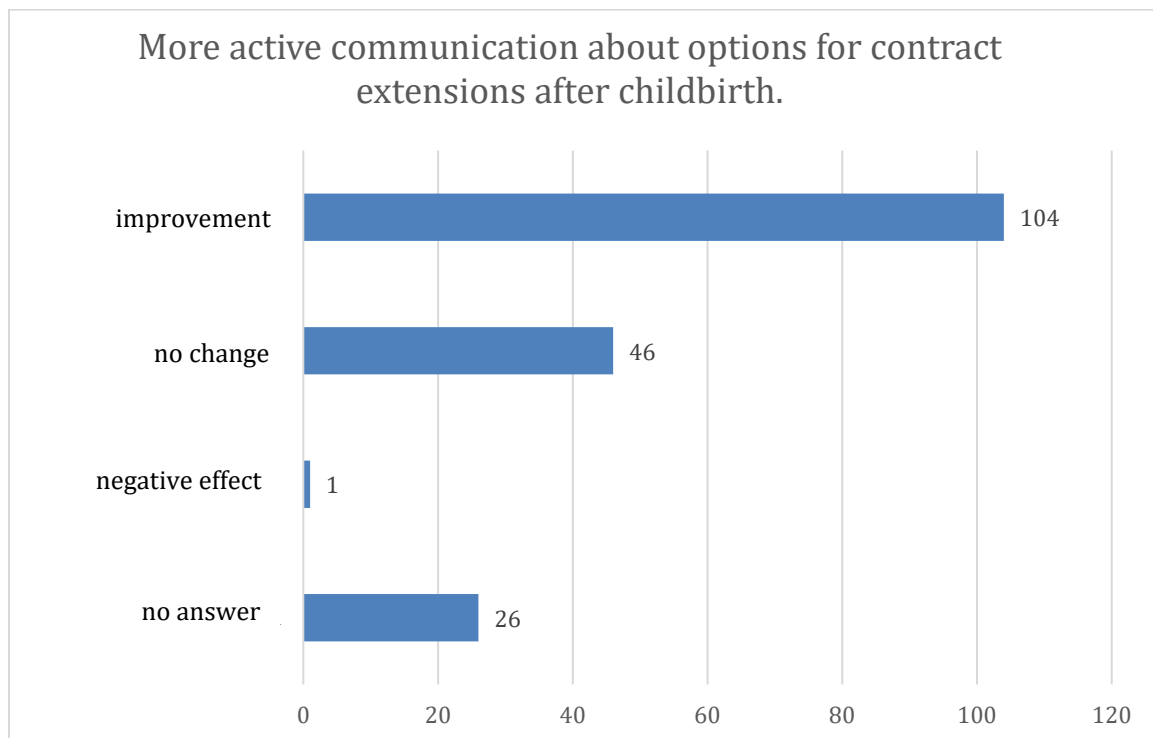


3.5 Family friendliness, equality & inclusion

3.5.1 Contract extension after pregnancy (M26)

Assistants consider clear regulations on contract extension after pregnancy essential, but emphasize that the biggest challenge lies not in the existence of rules, but in their active communication. avuba therefore calls for proactive, repeated, and targeted communication by the University that is integrated into onboarding, contracts, and faculty practices, rather than reliance on individual initiative. Targeted awareness campaigns for doctoral candidates and postdocs who have become parents, as well as their supervisors, could significantly improve the effectiveness of regulations.

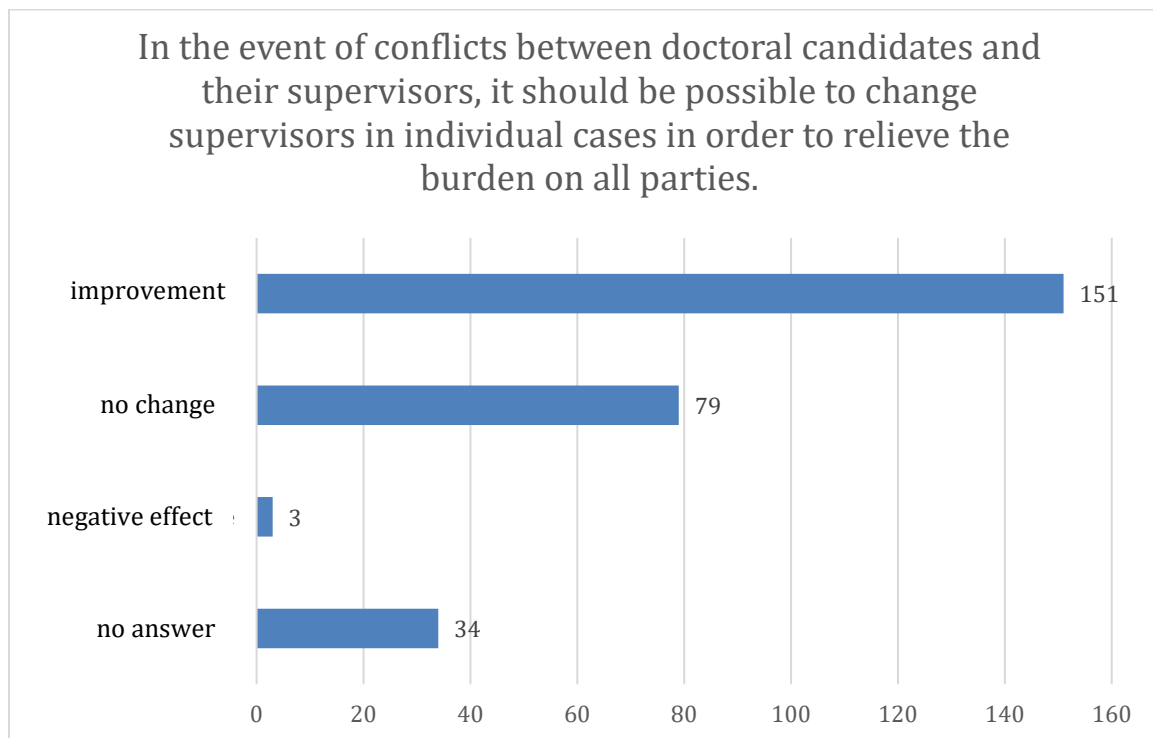
Avuba points out that family-friendly working conditions are structurally difficult to implement in certain contexts, such as in laboratory-intensive research teams. At the same time, avuba calls on the University and the respective departments **to develop suitable solutions so that affected Assistants can still successfully complete their qualification projects**. These include, in particular, flexible or reduced employment models, adjusted schedules, extended qualification periods, temporary relief from teaching or administrative duties, and alternative organizational solutions within the research teams. These options should be transparently communicated and actively facilitated.



3.6 Personal integrity and mental health

3.6.1 Support when changing supervisors (M27)

Assistants consider the possibility of changing supervisors in the event of conflict essential. This is closely linked to issues of personal integrity, mental health, and power imbalances. Qualitative feedback indicates considerable stress caused by problematic relationships with supervisors, abuse of power, and the lack of visible, trustworthy contact persons. From avuba's point of view, this measure can only be effective if the **procedure for changing supervisors is clearly defined, easily accessible, actively communicated**, and if Assistants are explicitly protected from negative consequences. A purely formal option without protective mechanisms would not sufficiently remove the existing barriers. This possibility would also have to be clearly **mentioned in the doctoral agreement for all to see**. The [avuba summary of the UNIBAS Mental Health Survey Report 2024](#) lists numerous other measures that could improve Assistants' mental health.



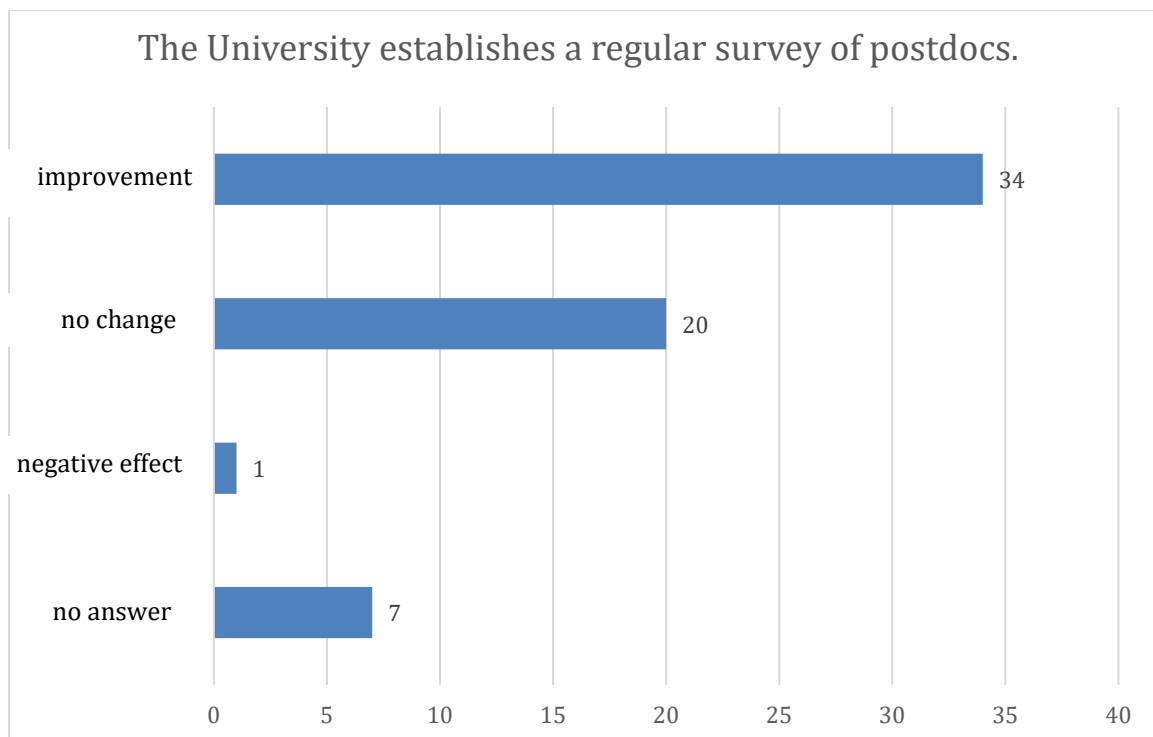
3.7 Monitoring

3.7.1 Postdoc survey, proposal A – Regular surveys (M28)

Regular postdoc surveys are generally welcomed. However, avuba emphasizes that surveys are only useful if their **results** are **transparently communicated and linked to visible follow-up measures**. Otherwise, there is a risk that surveys are perceived as symbolic rather than transformative.

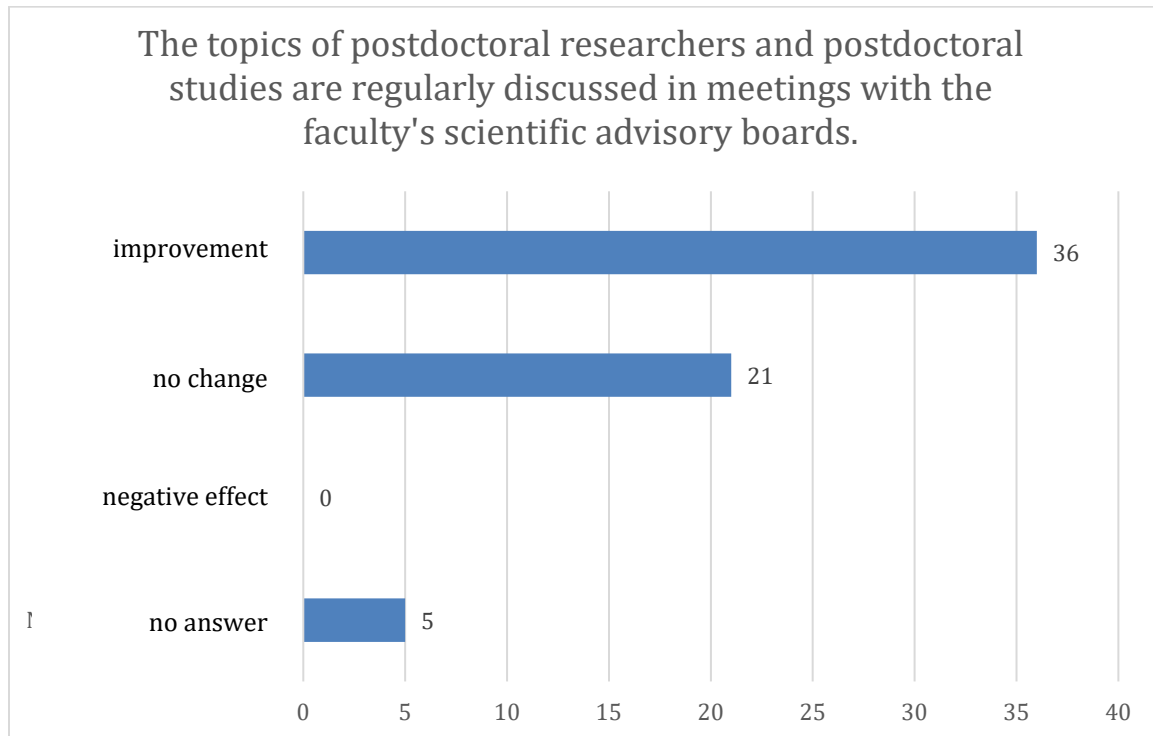
In addition to protecting anonymity, the University must ensure that smaller faculties or departments do not remain structurally invisible.

The last and only postdoc survey at the University was conducted by avuba in 2020. Click here for [the results report](#).



3.7.2 Postdoc survey, proposal B – Participation in scientific advisory boards (M29)

Regular discussion of the situation of postdocs – not only in connection with scientific advisory board meetings – can help to raise structural issues to a strategic level. avuba considers this measure to be **potentially valuable**, provided that it goes beyond formal reporting and includes clearly defined questions, feedback loops, procedures, and responsibilities.

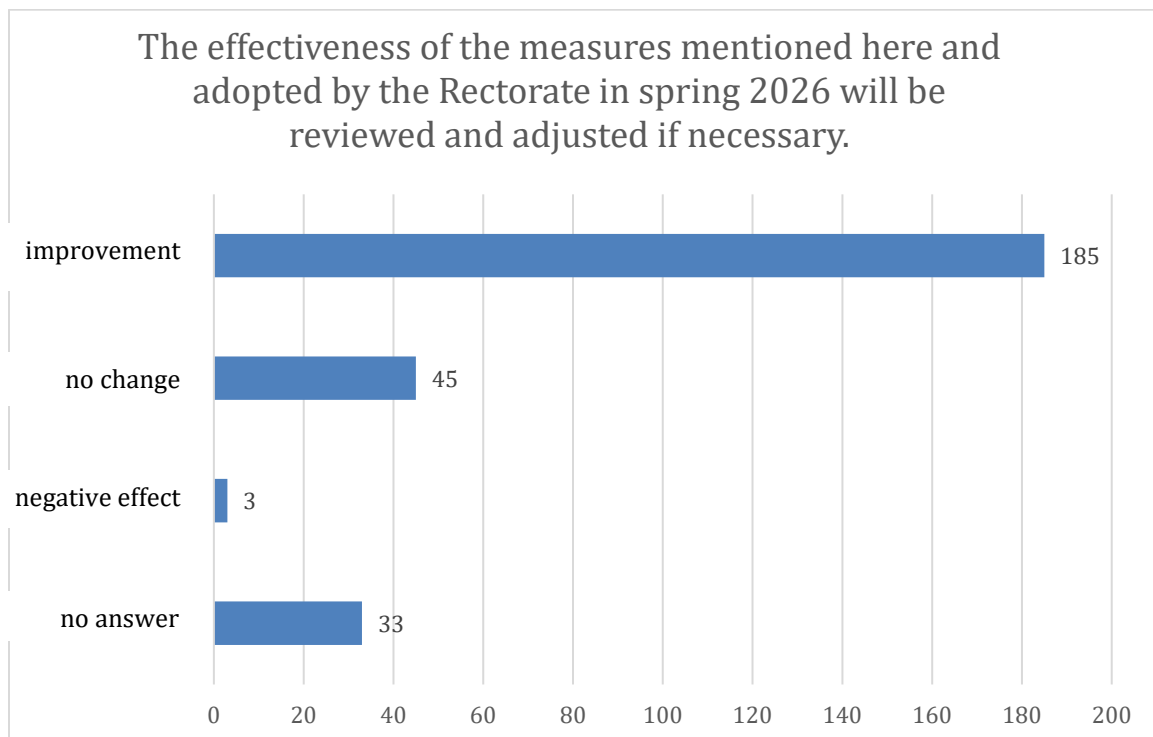


3.7.3 Reviewing the effectiveness of the implemented measures (M30)

Respondents consider the obligation **to regularly review taken measures and adjust them if necessary** to be essential. At the same time, Assistants emphasize the importance of monitoring and evaluation, as reforms without systematic review of their **actual implementation in the Assistants' everyday work** run the risk of remaining purely symbolic.

avuba therefore expects the University of Basel to conduct a binding and systematic review of the effectiveness of the implemented reform measures, including the possibility of targeted adjustments.

As implementation and impact can vary greatly between faculties, faculty-specific data must be systematically analyzed.



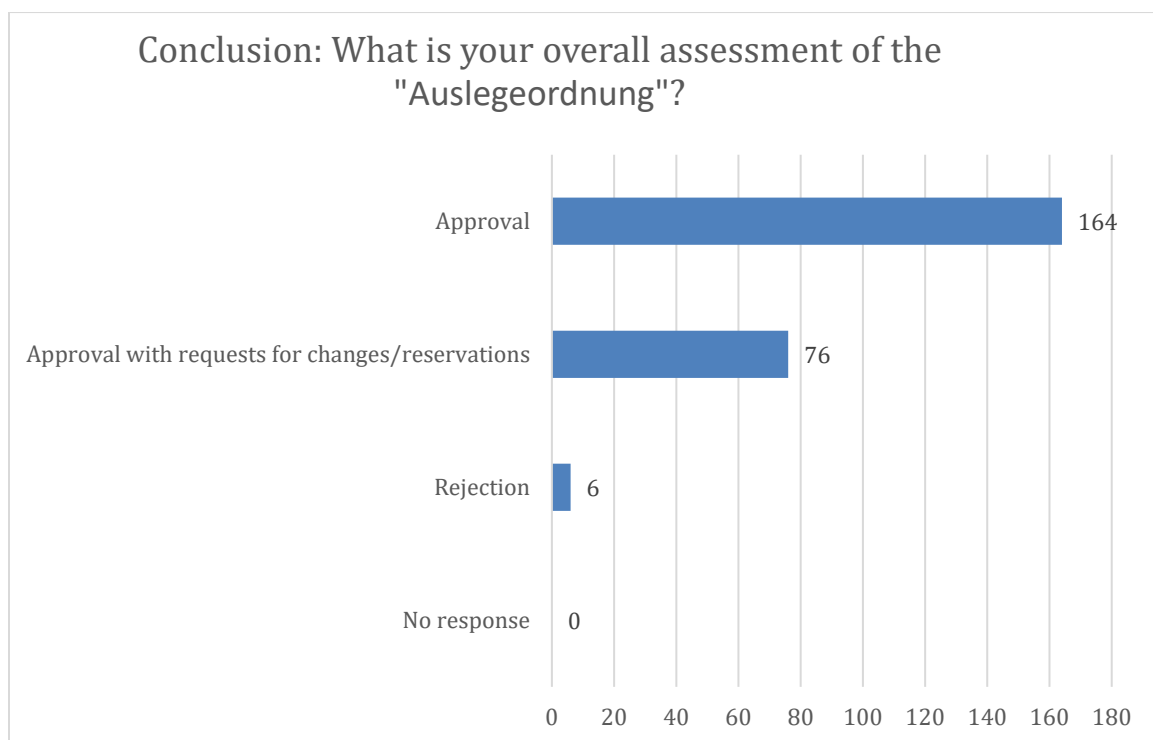
4. Overall assessment of the "Auslegeordnung" from the Assistants' perspective

With regard to measures M1–M30, Assistants generally support the **direction of the reform package** and recognize its potential for improvement. The quantitative results show **majority approval**.

Across all groups, the measures in their current form are largely perceived as **well-intentioned but insufficient**. The prevailing opinion is that the reform focuses too much on leaflets, guidelines, and procedures, while the **concrete implementation and enforceability of the measures as well as core structural problems remain largely untouched**.

Accordingly, many respondents describe the package of measures as cosmetic and doubt that it will substantially improve their everyday reality.

In the next chapter, avuba therefore summarizes the measures necessary for successful implementation from the Assistants' perspective.



5. Key reform measures for effective reform from the Assistants' perspective

The following section lists the measures that, from the Assistants' perspective, are central to the success of an effective reform to improve the working, employment, and supervision situation, and which need to be implemented to achieve a sustainable improvement.

1. Securing protected research time

(obligation, enforceability, workload and planning)

- Clear, university-wide binding definition of protected research time,
- Explicit institutional responsibility for compliance with protected research time (no individualized enforcement),
- Systematic, institutional monitoring of compliance with protected research time,
- Structural adjustments (staffing, realistic workload distribution) to actually enable PRT,
- Reduced teaching obligations or research-intensive phases in teaching-intensive departments,
- Fair and realistic distribution of workload within research teams or chairs,
- Binding upper limits for teaching, supervision, and administrative workloads per person.

2. Improvement of supervision and reduction of dependencies

(power relations, protective mechanisms, accountability)

- Strengthening structures that enable an appropriate separation of roles between employment, supervision, and assessment,
- Effective sanctions for rule violations,
- Independent, neutral contact points with real powers and protection against retaliation,
- Institutionally guaranteed possibility of changing supervisors,
- Binding minimum standards for supervision, including clear expectations of supervisors regarding supervision practices,
- Mandatory, recurring training for all supervisors,
- Institutional contact point for Assistants with labor law issues (independent of supervision).

3. Contract and employment security

(predictability, security, fairness)

- Transparency regarding financing throughout the entire duration of the doctoral program or employment,
 - Longer contract terms and avoidance of chain contracts,
 - Prevention of underemployment with simultaneous implicit or explicit expectations of full-time work,
 - Fair remuneration above the working poor level,
 - Provision of timesheet for optional documentation of working hours,
 - Recognition and compensation for overtime.
-

4. Career development, family friendliness, personal integrity, and mental and physical health

Career development

(Prospects)

- Establish permanent or long-term research-related positions below professorship level in order to relieve the burden on chairs, secure institutional know-how, and create sustainable prospects,
- Establish clear, realistic academic career prospects, including strengthened tenure track models,
- Central career counselling for doctoral candidates and postdocs with a focus on career paths outside academia.

Family friendliness, personal integrity, and mental and physical health

(Work-life balance, institutional duty of care)

- Implement a binding duty of care on the part of supervisors for the mental health of Assistants,
- Provide information about and enforce holiday entitlements,
- Clarification and institutional anchoring of weekends and recreational time as fundamentally work-free time,
- Recognition of overtime,
- Fair and realistic distribution of workload within research teams,
- Systematically promote part-time and remote working options, especially for pregnant women and nursing mothers (e.g. data analysis instead of laboratory work, writing, online meetings).

5. Equality and inclusion of international Assistants (non-EU/EFTA)

(reliable framework conditions, access to information, participation)

- Active addressing or structured introduction to topics such as (social) insurance, employment and residence law, as well as institutional support/contact points for questions,
- Consistent provision of all relevant information in English,
- Greater integration of English as the working language in faculty and inter-faculty committees to enable equal participation of international Assistants.

6. Monitoring

(evaluation and follow-up)

- Binding review of the effectiveness of the implemented reform measures with the possibility of follow-up procedures,
 - Faculty-specific data collection and evaluation to identify gaps and initiate targeted corrective measures,
 - Transparent and comprehensible decision-making processes with binding reporting to Assistants,
 - University-wide implementation of measures, or justified communication if individual measures are only partially implemented or implemented on a faculty-specific basis.
-

7. Also necessary for effective reform

(Structural requirements)

- Sufficient resources for the reform (staff, time, budget),
- Clear consequences for non-compliance with reform measures,
- Adjustment of funds and cash flows to reduce structural dependencies,
- Binding upper limits for teaching, supervision, and administrative workloads,
- Long-term job models between postdoc and professorship as genuine alternatives,
- **Binding and continuous involvement of avuba as the Assistants' representative in the further development and implementation of reform measures.**
