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Recommendations for a future-oriented qualification of doctoral candidates in Germany

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German University Association of Advanced Graduate Training
www.uniwind.org

… about UniWiND

- Currently 87 member universities and institutions from all over Germany (one member from Austria).
- All members share the common objective of advancing the academic qualification for early-career researchers.
- Annual conference (300 participants) and online events
- Thematic task forces and networks
- Publication series

Perspective of the Graduate centres

- Contact points for doctoral candidates (as well as for postdocs and supervisors)
- Have also an institutional role in shaping the doctoral process
- Provide interdisciplinary qualification programmes according to the Salzburg Principles

What already has been achieved (since 2011)

- Graduate centres have been established at German universities.
- Reliable data about doctoral candidates (e. g. from the National Academics Panel Study, www.nacaps.de)
- Common understanding that doctoral candidates are early-career researchers.

Challenges or peculiarities of the German academic system

- High number of doctoral candidates (compared to other European countries), most of whom leave the universities.
- Traditional concept of the doctoral supervisor as „Doktorvater“ or „Doktormutter“ - supervisor and reviewer in one person
- Multiple ways to the doctorate and diverse funding schemes: e. g. at non-university research institutions, fixed-term part-time employment contracts, scholarships etc.

UniWiND Recommendations 2025 (short version)

1. **Separation of supervision and assessment** with simultaneous abolition of the previous grading practice
2. **Appropriate funding of doctoral projects** (3 +1 years, 65% of a full-time position)
3. **Representation** of doctoral candidates in university self-governance
4. **Mandatory training in good scientific practice**, including aspects related to AI
5. **Alignment of interdisciplinary training** with the requirements of the non-academic labour market
6. **Support of international doctoral candidates**, especially during onboarding and offboarding
7. **Openness to doctoral qualification with partner institutions**, while ensuring all quality standards

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Separation of supervision and assessment

- Supervision in general by thesis committees or by at least two persons.
- Separation of supervision and assessment of dissertations (not by a single person) -> discussion in Germany
- Replacement of the current grading practice by a system that only awards honours to outstanding dissertations and otherwise distinguishes between "passed" and "failed"

Appropriate funding

- The minimum duration of doctoral funding (initial contract) is 3 years (with possible extensions).
- The minimum of part-time contracts is at least 65% of a full-time position.
- Sustainable funding should be clarified before the start of the doctorate and set out in the supervision agreement.

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We look forward to your suggestions!

Contact:

https://www.uniwind.org/