

# PhD SUPERVISOR

## Onboarding, Supervision and Graduation of Doctoral Candidates

2024

The content of this guide is based on the **“Curriculum for the Doctoral Programme in Technical/Natural Sciences”** and the statutes of all Doctoral Schools adapted by the Task Force Doktorat.

This guide is for all faculty members at Graz University of Technology who are PhD supervisors. All mandatory and binding regulations can be found in

- Excerpt of Statutes: Legal Regulations for Academic Affairs (Satzungsteil Studienrecht der Technischen Universität Graz)
- Curriculum for the Doctoral Programme in Technical/Natural Sciences<sup>1</sup>
- Statutes of the relevant Doctoral Schools

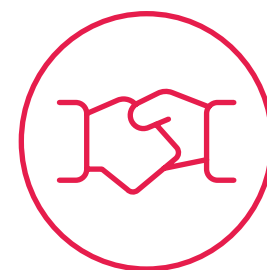
This folder’s intention is to summarize the relevant facts and to provide additional practical information for a successful PhD supervision.

The standard tool for managing the PhD process can be found in TUGRAZonline: “Doctoral Management”. TU4U<sup>2</sup> and the public homepage of our Doctoral Schools<sup>3</sup> provide additional documents.

<sup>1</sup> §1 (1) Curriculum for the Doctoral Programme: : Graduates of this degree programme are awarded the academic degree “Doktorin der Technischen Wissenschaften” or “Doktor der Technischen Wissenschaften” (Doctor of Technical Sciences), abbreviated as “Dr.techn.”/ “Doktorin der Naturwissenschaften” or “Doktor der Naturwissenschaften” (Doctor of Natural Sciences), abbreviated as “Dr. rer. nat.”. In accordance with § 54 (4) Universities Act 2002 (UG), the international equivalent of this university degree is “Doctor of Philosophy”, abbreviated as “PhD”.

<sup>2</sup> <https://tu4u.tugraz.at/studierende/organisation-und-administration/studienadministration-durch-dekanate>

<sup>3</sup> [www.tugraz.at/en/studying-and-teaching/degree-and-certificate-programmes/doctoral-programmes/overview-doctoral-programmes](http://www.tugraz.at/en/studying-and-teaching/degree-and-certificate-programmes/doctoral-programmes/overview-doctoral-programmes)



## 1 Who is eligible to serve as a PhD supervisor?

PhD supervisors are required to have a “venia docendi” (§ 29 Excerpt of Statutes: Legal Regulations for Academic Affairs). Investigators holding a PhD degree can serve as co-supervisors for a PhD student, as long as a person with “venia docendi” acts as the official PhD supervisor.

## 2 Selection of a PhD student

The PhD supervisor has considerable responsibility in accompanying a student through an important step of her\*his professional career.

### The following aspects should be considered before accepting a PhD student

- in case of employment at TU Graz: Will sufficient financial support for the student salary and research costs be available over the planned time of the PhD project?
- in case of a dissertation alongside a professional career: Will the employer provide sufficient time and opportunity for dissertation work? Is it possible to publish the results in international journals?
- what kinds of skill sets are necessary to successfully accomplish the PhD project?

Formal prerequisite for starting a PhD at Graz University of Technology is a master’s degree

(or equivalent) in the respective field from a university or another recognised post-secondary educational institution (*Curriculum* §2). Students from abroad need a declaration of equivalence of their degree to the Austrian master degree from the Dean of Studies in charge. For getting this, the students’ Registrar’s Office helps.

Before finally agreeing on a PhD supervision, it is important that PhD supervisor (and co-supervisors) and future PhD student openly discuss and agree about the topic and scope of the PhD project, mode of supervision, financial support, expectations regarding involvement in teaching and participation in other projects.

## 3 Admission of a PhD student

For admission you must provide your PhD student with a supervision confirmation which has to be signed (§ 4 (1) *Curriculum for the Doctoral Programme*). The form can be found in TU4U<sup>4</sup>.

It is advised that you (or a “PhD buddy”) help the student with the formal enrolment as a doctoral student at the Registrar’s Office.

## 4 Supervision

After admission to the doctoral program, you and your PhD student define the topic for the doctoral project and conclude an “educational agreement” (§ 4 (1-2) *Curriculum for the Doctoral Programme*). The project design

should consider that the research questions can be answered within the planned time frame.

The “educational agreement” can be filled out and uploaded in the “Doctoral Management”. The Doctoral Schools have individual forms, which have to be filled out.

The necessary forms must be submitted by the doctoral student electronically via TUGRAZonline (“My Doctoral Project”), and approved by you via TUGRAZonline: “Doctoral Management”. The educational agreement should be submitted in general within the first 3-6 months (at most 12 months) of the PhD studies.

## 5 Instructional Classes

During the doctoral programme, your PhD student needs to complete instructional classes for at least 18 ECTS-credits (§ 6 *Curriculum for the Doctoral Programme*). These consist of courses on subject specific basic courses, soft skills, scientific methods and communication, as well as a privatissimum. The specifics are detailed in the statutes of your Doctoral School.

Discuss this matter with your PhD student at the beginning of her\*his studies and help her\*him to select appropriate courses. The student will have to submit the selection within the tool “My Doctoral Project” to the Dean of Studies for approval.

<sup>4</sup> [https://tu4u.tugraz.at/fileadmin/public/Studierende\\_und\\_Bedienstete/Formulare/Doktoratsstudium\\_Betreungszusage\\_Muster.docx](https://tu4u.tugraz.at/fileadmin/public/Studierende_und_Bedienstete/Formulare/Doktoratsstudium_Betreungszusage_Muster.docx)  
[https://tu4u.tugraz.at/fileadmin/public/Studierende\\_und\\_Bedienstete/Forms/Doctoral\\_programme\\_confirmation\\_of\\_supervision\\_sample\\_E.docx](https://tu4u.tugraz.at/fileadmin/public/Studierende_und_Bedienstete/Forms/Doctoral_programme_confirmation_of_supervision_sample_E.docx)



## 6 Mentoring (optional)

PhD students have the right to nominate a mentor (§4 (5) *Curriculum for the Doctoral Programme*), who will accompany them through their PhD project. Mentors should not be regarded as competitors to you in the supervision, but as a complementing person and a trusted advisor, who could bring in additional scientific expertise or give personal advice or mental support to the student.

## 7 Yearly Reflection and Progress Reports

The PhD student is obliged to submit yearly reflection and progress reports via the doctoral management tool in TUGRAZonline at the end of each year of her\*his studies (§4 (4) *Curriculum for the Doctoral Programme*). For its preparation, it is advisable to have the annual employee appraisal before that, discuss the progress so far and plan the next steps for the forthcoming year.

## 8 Publications

Assist your PhD student with your experience in selection of appropriate conferences and journals for publications. Create a draft schedule for suitable conferences. Discuss the option of a cumulative dissertation (“Manteldissertation”) with your PhD student since this may affect the publication strategy and the choice of referees.

## 9 Get Involved in your Doctoral School

As a PhD supervisor, you are also automatically a member of a Doctoral School. The Doctoral School is, on the one hand, a forum for scientific exchange and, on the other hand, ensures visibility and transparency in the doctoral process. Most Doctoral Schools organize Doctoral Seminars and Doc Days, in which the PhD students present their PhD proposal and research results to the Doc School members. Through your participation in these events, you will support your PhD student and the whole Doctoral School.

## 10 Finishing Up

The final year is a very stressful time for your PhD student, as she\*he will have to finalize experiments, calculations, designs, constructions, etc., have to write up the PhD thesis, and search and apply for the next career stage in industry or academia.

Therefore, it is important that well in advance you and your PhD student will have an open and honest conversation, on the kind of experiments or computations still to be done for the PhD thesis, when the thesis should be written up and how you can support your student for the next career stage. Help the PhD student to set realistic goals and time lines. Make sure that all this happens while the student receives

continuous funding and does not have to worry about her\*his financial situation.

Before your student writes up the thesis, you should discuss the contents and inform the student about the formal structure and the layout rules of Graz University of Technology. Most Doctoral Schools also allow for cumulative dissertations, based on published papers. You should discuss with your student if she\*he might qualify for and wants to consider such an option.

## 11 Preliminary Evaluation

Together with your PhD student you suggest reviewers of the PhD thesis to the head of the Doctoral School. Please bear in mind that not all the reviewers should work at the same institution and check the number of required reviewers (Details in the Statutes of the Doctoral School). The preliminary version of the PhD thesis is sent out to the reviewers approved by the Dean of Studies for preliminary inspection before finishing up.

In order to start the preliminary evaluation, the student has to upload in TUGRAZonline “My doctorate project” the final title of the dissertation, the list of publications and the desired reviewers/examiners.



## **12** Submission of the Thesis

At least 2 months before the planned examination date, the PhD thesis has to be submitted for review by electronic upload on the TUGRAZonline system. The submitted thesis is the final version, which cannot be changed afterwards. At this stage, the PhD student must already have completed all the instructional classes.

A plagiarism check of the submitted thesis has to be provided using the “similarity check” function in the Teach Center at TUGRAZonline and documented by the appropriate form. The check is done by the plagiarism officer of the supervising institute and signed by the PhD supervisor.

If the PhD thesis should be excluded from public use for a certain time period, then the PhD student has to apply for the embargo in TUG-online under “my thesis” and send this information to the Deans of Studies Office.

## **13** Evaluation of the PhD Thesis

The reviewers provide a written assessment of the thesis with a grading from 1-5 within the timeline set by the office of the Dean of Studies.

## **14** Doctoral Examination

The doctoral examination (Rigorosum) is the final examination in the doctoral programme. First, the candidate gives a presentation of her\*his research results, followed by an oral defence of the PhD thesis in front of the examination committee. The specific format is detailed in the Statutes of the Doctoral School.

---

### **Contact Information**

Coordination Office Doctoral Studies:  
[doctoralstudies@tugraz.at](mailto:doctoralstudies@tugraz.at)