



Guidelines for effective doctoral supervision at Charité

**A practical guide
for supervisors**

Foreword

Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin strives to provide the best possible conditions for research and researchers. This includes the training and promotion of the next generation of researchers, in particular that of doctoral candidates, whose research projects represent an important step towards a research- or science-based career.

Good supervision is essential to successful doctoral study. This document is aimed at anyone with responsibility for supervising doctoral candidates at Charité. In addition to providing information on doctoral studies at Charité, it is also intended to provide useful suggestions and encourage supervisors to reflect on their own performance. This guidance does not replace any of Charité's other regulations pertaining to doctoral studies. Rather, it is intended as a practical guide to all those who, by agreeing to supervise doctoral candidates, have accepted the challenge and responsibility of training the next generation of researchers.

Each section provides a highlighted summary of relevant information and recommendations. Most sections also provide a 'checklist' feature, which you can use to help you plan your supervision.

This guidance includes ideas and suggestions from a range of stakeholders, including those familiar with the Medical Faculty's day-to-day operations and Charité's ombudspersons for doctoral affairs. This document also includes recommendations from other institutions, such as UniWiND¹ (the German University Association of Advanced Graduate Training), QualitätsZirkel Promotion (QZP)², Freie Universität Berlin³, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin⁴, Leibniz University Hannover⁵, and the Bielefeld Graduate School in History and Sociology⁶.

Berlin, 6 July 2020

Prof. Dr. Axel R. Pries

-
- 1 *Betreuung Promovierender. Empfehlungen und Good Practice für Universitäten und Betreuende*. [Doctoral Supervision. Recommendations and good practice for universities and doctoral supervisors] UniWiND-Publikationen Bd. 4/2014 [Vol.4/2014].
 - 2 *Gemeinsam die Promotion gestalten. Handlungsempfehlungen für Betreuende*. [Shaping a Doctorate Together – Guidelines for Supervisors] 4. Auflage 2018 [4th edition].
 - 3 *Leitlinien für die gute Betreuung von Promotionen*. [Guidelines for Good Doctoral Supervision] November 2014 [November 2014].
 - 4 *Leitlinien der Promotionskultur an der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin*. [Guidelines: Towards a culture of doctoral education at HumboldtUniversität zu Berlin]. Juni 2012 [June 2012].
 - 5 *Leitlinien für eine gute Betreuung von Promovierenden*. [Guidelines for good supervision of doctoral candidates] Oktober 2013 [October 2013].
 - 6 *Leitfaden für die Betreuung von Promotionen*. [Guidelines for the Supervision of Doctoral Dissertations]. Juni 2014 [June 2014].

Contents

1. What should you consider before becoming a supervisor?	1
2. What are the doctoral degree options available at Charité?	3
3. What does the Doctoral Agreement entail?	7
4. What are the roles of the different supervisors?	9
5. What are the responsibilities of doctoral supervisors?	11
6. How do you build and maintain an effective supervisory relationship?	14
7. How is the doctoral degree process structured?	17
8. What are the essential issues to observe regarding 'good research practice' (research integrity)?	19
9. Where can you get help? Sources of advice and relevant contacts at Charité	22

1. What should you consider before becoming a supervisor?

When you become a doctoral supervisor, you also become the doctoral candidate's mentor. There is a reason why the German language refers to a doctoral supervisor as a 'Doktorvater' [doctoral father] or 'Doktormutter' [doctoral mother]. It goes without saying that the candidates you supervise can – and, to a large extent, should – conduct their work independently. After all, a doctorate serves as proof of a candidate's ability to conduct in-depth research (section 35 subsection 1 of the Berlin Higher Education Act/§ 35 Abs. 1 BerlHG), and the award of a doctoral degree (and title) confirms that the candidate has provided the necessary proof. The responsibility of the supervisor, nevertheless, is to provide guidance and support along the way, enabling the doctoral candidate to blossom into an independent researcher. As a supervisor, you will view your candidate's research project as your own – at least to a certain extent – and you will wish to act accordingly. The resources you will need to bring to this undertaking are time, commitment, and an interest in the project.

➤ *Before you accept the role of supervisor, you should ask yourself whether you are able – and willing – to spare the necessary resources.*

Giving your time and energy will be much easier if there is a sufficiently close fit between the subject area of the doctoral research and your own research interests. What this means in practice is that you and the doctoral candidate will need to find a sensible middle ground between too much freedom and too much structure. Doctoral candidates need both. To what extent will be determined by their prior research experience and the degree of challenge presented by the subject of research.

➤ *In order to determine the correct ratio required by a particular doctoral student, it will be helpful for both parties to articulate their expectations and find a mutually agreeable solution. You may even consider asking the doctoral candidate to estimate how much supervision they may require. You will also need to evaluate which theoretical and practical skills are needed for a particular project, which of these the candidate already has and where they still have knowledge gaps and therefore require training.*

In order to be able to provide a doctoral candidate with targeted support, it is useful to know which career path they intend to take – even if there is a chance that these preferences may (and more likely than not, will) change. Someone who aims to pursue an academic career in science is likely to have different priorities to someone who decides on a career outside the scientific field.

Last but not least, a candidate's supervision needs will also depend on issues pertaining to their cultural and gender backgrounds. Experience has shown that there is considerable potential for conflict arising from culturally derived differences in candidates' expectations vis-à-vis the role of the supervisor, the supervisory relationship and the mode and manner of communication.

You may find the following checklist⁷ helpful when deciding whether to accept a supervisory role:

⁷ This checklist has been adapted from the 'Guidelines for the Supervision of Doctoral Dissertations (2014)' published by Bielefeld Graduate School in History and Sociology. The original checklist was adapted to reflect the specific environments at Charité and within the field of medicine. [https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/\(en\)/bghs/Beratung_und_Service/Promovierende/Guidelines-for-the-Supervision-of-Doctoral-Dissertations.pdf](https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/(en)/bghs/Beratung_und_Service/Promovierende/Guidelines-for-the-Supervision-of-Doctoral-Dissertations.pdf)
Accessed on 02.09.2019, 5:17 PM.

CHECKLIST 1:

- What are your wishes and expectations with respect to the supervisory relationship, and what are the wishes and expectations of the doctoral candidate?
- Is there sufficient/adequate fit with regard to...
 - the doctoral candidate’s proposed research topic?
 - the level of time needed to provide adequate supervision?
 - expectations regarding the time needed to complete the doctorate?
 - expectations regarding the nature and scope of the doctoral thesis/dissertation (monograph, by publication)?
- What career goals is the candidate pursuing with their doctoral studies?
 - Career within the academic setting
 - Career outside the academic setting
- What form should the supervisor-candidate relationship take and how should it be conducted?
 - Face-to-face meetings
 - Regular phone conversations
 - Email exchanges
- How should the candidate prepare for exchanges and what follow-up actions will be required?
- How often should meetings/exchanges be scheduled?

COMMENTS



2

2. What are the doctoral degree options available at Charité?

At Charité, candidates can choose one of two doctoral degree options: they can either opt for a structured degree program or pursue a traditional (individual) doctorate.

In addition to the doctoral degree programs per se, structured doctoral programs also include Research Training Groups, Collaborative Research Centers (SFBs) and similar facilities. For an overview and additional information, please refer to the relevant online information:

https://www.charite.de/en/teaching_learning/promotion_habilitation/

Each program has its own curriculum, which is centered around and adapted to the relevant research areas. Each program also has its own admissions procedures. Should you have any questions in relation to these matters, please contact the relevant program-specific office for advice.

A traditional (individual) doctorate involves the candidate pursuing a doctoral project under the guidance and supervision of two or three supervisors. The 2017 (revised) Doctoral Degree Regulations introduced new rules, which were intended to harmonize the requirements and conditions pertaining to both traditional and structured doctorates. This includes the introduction of compulsory supervision by a team of supervisors for all traditional (individual) doctorates, as well as the requirement that all doctoral candidates must complete a training course in addition to their doctoral research. Doctoral candidates must provide the Office of Doctoral Studies with proof of attendance and completion of this taught component when submitting their theses (dissertations) and initiating the doctoral examination procedure.

In contrast to the structured doctoral programs, traditional (individual) doctorates do not follow a prescribed curriculum. Rather, the candidate and their supervisor will consult on and agree a candidate-specific curriculum. This will address the candidate's existing expertise and gaps in knowledge, as well as relevant requirements specific to the candidate's proposed research, their career aims and so on.

➤ *As supervisor, this means that you will need to work with the candidate to develop a personalized curriculum. Please note that guidance is available and should be followed. For further information, please refer to the web pages provided by the Office of Doctoral Studies: https://promotion.charite.de/en/doctorate_environment/curriculum/*

3

It is a common mistake to confuse the differences which exist between traditional doctorates and structured programs with the differences between what is referred to as 'Standard Track' and 'Advanced Track'. There are clear distinctions which should not be conflated. The terms 'individual doctorate' and 'structured program' refer to the environment in which the doctoral project is conducted. The terms 'Standard Track' and 'Advanced Track' refer to the nature of the doctorate (and title) pursued, and the oral and written components required to complete them.

The 'Standard Track' leads to the award of the degrees 'Doctor of Medicine (Dr. med.)', 'Doctor of Dentistry (Dr. med. dent.)' or 'Doctor of Medical Sciences (Dr. rer. medic.)'. The latter is a qualification which was introduced specifically for graduates from outside medicine and dentistry, i.e. for graduates with degrees in natural sciences or engineering. Charité does not award the title 'Dr. rer. nat.' This title can only be awarded by the faculties of Freie Universität Berlin (FU) and Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (HU).

The Standard Track's written component must be either in the form of a monograph or in the form of at least one publication as lead author in a peer-reviewed journal plus a synopsis, the purpose of which is to explain how the publication relates to the wider context of the candidate's doctoral research. Candidates must provide proof of 'doctorate-accompanying' courses and training equivalent to 5 ECTS credit points at the point of initiating the doctoral examination procedure.

The 'Advanced Track' leads to the award of the degrees 'Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)' and – for candidates with degrees in medicine or dentistry – 'Medical Doctor – Doctor of Philosophy (MD/PhD)'. In the state of Berlin, holders of the degree 'Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)' may use the title 'Dr.', but without any added qualifiers such as 'med.', 'phil.', 'rer. nat.' etc. (other federal states may have different rules. It is therefore advisable to contact the relevant state's ministry with responsibility for the higher education sector). The 'Advanced Track' is open to candidates pursuing traditional (individual) doctorates and to candidates enrolled on doctoral programs (most doctoral candidates enrolled on programs decide to pursue the 'Advanced Track'). Should you have any questions, please contact the office responsible for the relevant program.

The 'Advanced Track' is aimed at particularly high-achieving candidates who intend to pursue a career in science or academia. All candidates wishing to enroll on a doctoral degree leading to the degree titles 'PhD' or 'MD/PhD' will be subject to a selection process. This will be either a program-specific selection process or the selection process administrated by the Doctoral Committee for all candidates enrolled on traditional (individual) doctorates leading to either a 'PhD' or 'MD/PhD'. Every year, the Doctoral Committee sets two application deadlines, usually in February and August. A limited number of places are available every year. To apply, candidates must submit a proposal which includes a project plan, project schedule, course schedule and a statement confirming how they will finance their studies. Based on this, the Doctoral Committee will also evaluate the project's financial viability, design and feasibility. For further information, please refer to the web pages provided by the Office of Doctoral Studies:

https://promotion.charite.de/en/procedure/regulations_2017/selection_procedure_phd_mdphd/

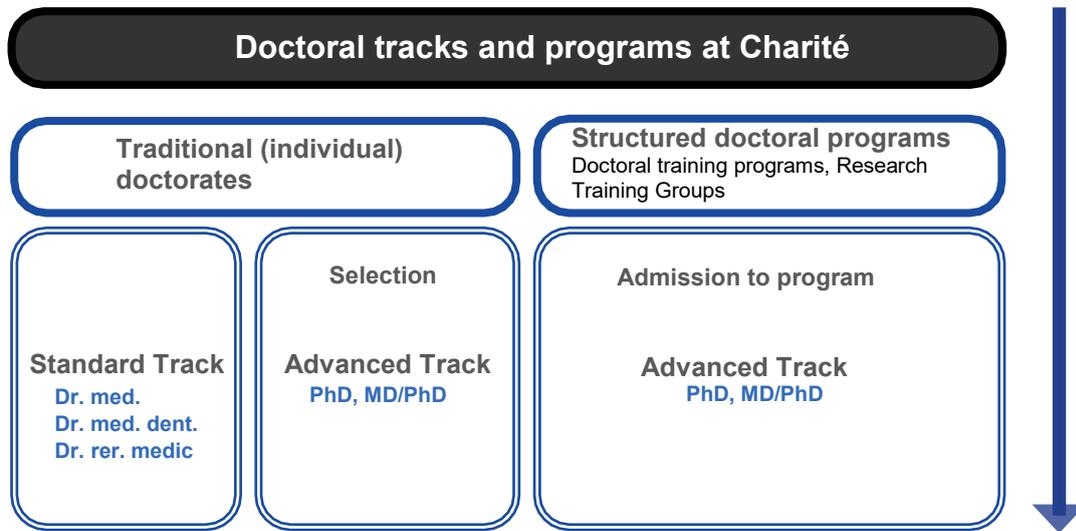
4

➤ *Your knowledge and experience place you at an advantage. You should use this advantage to ensure your candidate can submit a concise, coherent and convincing proposal. Please discuss with your candidate which application deadline they should work toward and provide advice and support during the proposal-writing process.*

With regard to the financing of doctoral studies, we would like to draw your attention to scholarships currently offered by Charité and the BIH. For further information, please consult the website of the Academic Grants Committee: <https://nachwuchs.charite.de/en/>

Candidates on the 'Advanced Track' usually pursue a doctorate by publication. Candidates will need to submit three publications (at least one of which with the candidate as first author and published in a peer-reviewed journal) plus a synopsis, the purpose of which is to explain how the publications relate to the candidate's research work. As an alternative, candidates who have published in a top journal as first author have the option of submitting this publication alongside a synopsis discussing how it relates to their research work. Candidates must provide proof of ECTS credit points worth of relevant courses/training at the point of initiating the doctoral examination procedure. Candidates may opt to submit a monograph but will need to submit an informal application outlining their reasons (which must be approved by the Doctoral Committee). If the doctorate is in a subject area in which monographs are standard (e.g. subject areas related to history or cultural studies), this should be highlighted as part of the candidate's informal application to the Doctoral Committee.

The following diagram provides an overview of the doctoral tracks and programs available at Charité.



Failure by the supervisor and candidate to openly discuss their respective expectations regarding the type and scope of the written component may cause problems later on. Some candidates, for instance, wish to submit their theses in the form of an academic monograph, but their supervisor insists on a thesis by publication. If supervisor and candidate have agreed on a thesis by publication, the next step should be to discuss which journals would qualify for this purpose. Journals are known to vary in terms of their likelihood of publishing articles from certain subject areas. This is something you should keep in mind when discussing and agreeing a publication strategy with the candidate. Given that the publication forms part of a doctoral thesis/dissertation, it is of course acceptable for the publication strategy to represent a certain level of challenge. However, this challenge must be realistic and achievable to ensure the doctoral candidate does not fail due to inflated expectations regarding the publication of results. Unfortunately, it is common for differences in expectations regarding the parameters and feasibility of publications to lead to serious conflict between supervisor and candidate.

5

➤ *Make a point of raising all relevant questions pertaining to publications at the beginning of the doctorate. Agree on a publication strategy following discussions with the candidate and the other supervisors! Ideally, you will then record the outcome of these discussions in writing and distribute it to all involved.*

The following checklist may serve as a useful guide, and a reminder of points raised and decisions agreed upon.

CHECKLIST 2:

- Which doctoral degree/title is the candidate working towards?
- In the case of an 'Advanced Track' doctorate:
will the candidate undertake their research project as part of a traditional (individual) doctorate or a doctoral training program?
 - In the case of a traditional (individual) doctorate: which application deadline will the candidate aim for?
 - In the case of a doctoral training program: which program would be suitable?
 - What are the selection and admission requirements and procedures for the relevant program?
- In the case of a 'Standard Track' doctorate: will the candidate aim for a thesis/dissertation by monograph or by publication?
- If the aim is a thesis/dissertation by publication: which journals would be suitable given the nature of the anticipated findings?

COMMENTS



3. What does the Doctoral Agreement entail?

The Doctoral Agreement constitutes an agreement between the supervisors and the person wishing to study for a doctorate. It states the subject of the research, the nature of the supervisory relationship, the type of doctoral degree (title) pursued and the type of doctoral thesis/dissertation required. A template is available, which must be used. It is available for download from https://promotion.charite.de/en/links_downloads/ ('Links & Downloads' section).

By signing the Doctoral Agreement, the candidate and supervisors enter into a formal supervisory relationship. Under this agreement, both parties have a number of rights and responsibilities. All signatories to the Doctoral Agreement have the right to terminate the agreement at any time (this must be done in writing, and the notice of termination sent to both the Office of Doctoral Studies and all other signatories). However, while the supervisory relationship exists, the Doctoral Committee and all relevant administrative offices will be guided by it and consider it binding on all involved.

➤ *You should therefore think carefully about what you wish to record in the Doctoral Agreement, such as the frequency or number of meetings with the candidate. All agreed content will be binding on all involved, thereby ensuring that all parties to the agreement can rightfully expect the other party/ies to fulfill the commitments they entered into.*

Please note that section 'A. The work' contains two boxes to be completed, namely those pertaining to 'Working title/theme'; 'Essential hypotheses'; 'Steps/investigations'; and 'Factors with the potential to cause delay'. Please ensure these contain meaningful information which will enable the Doctoral Committee to assess whether and to what extent the described research meets the requirements of a doctoral project.

Once the Doctoral Agreement has been signed by you, the other supervisors and the candidate, the candidate will be able to register with the Office of Doctoral Studies. Each doctoral research project must be registered with the Office of Doctoral Studies before the research commences. (Section 6.1 of the Doctoral Degree Regulations//§ 6 Abs. 1 Promotionsordnung). To register, the candidate may need to present other documentation in addition to the Doctoral Agreement, such as proof of completion of a Bachelor's or Master's degree, or a certificate of matriculation confirming enrollment on a degree in medicine or dentistry at Charité. Additional information can be found on the website of the Office of Doctoral Studies:

https://promotion.charite.de/en/procedure/regulations_2017/registration_and_enrolment/

➤ *Completion of the Doctoral Agreement can prove particularly challenging for international doctoral candidates, regardless of the fact that an English version is available. Please take the time to provide the doctoral candidate with the necessary support. Should you have questions, please contact the Office of Doctoral Studies or the Welcome Center (see Section 9 – 'Where can you get help?').*

Once the registration with the Office of Doctoral Studies has been completed, the doctoral student will be issued with a confirmation of registration and the original copy of the Doctoral Agreement will be returned to them. They may then need to take the approved Doctoral Agreement to the Office of Student Affairs and complete the process of enrollment (matriculation). In certain circumstances – see below – matriculation is an obligatory step. All of the information available can be found on the web pages of the Office of Student Affairs:

https://www.charite.de/en/teaching_learning/application_admission/doctoral_degrees/

➤ *If the doctoral candidate is not an employee of Charité and is not enrolled as a student of medicine or dentistry at Charité, they will need to enroll as a doctoral student (Section 25 of the Berlin Higher Education Act/§ 25 BerlHG). (Doctoral candidates employed by Charité may register as doctoral students should they wish to do so). The purpose of this rule is to ensure that all doctoral candidates are members of Charité – be it as employees or as students.*

CHECKLIST 3:

- What should be recorded in the Doctoral Agreement?**
 - Desired doctoral degree/title
 - Nature of written component
 - Other supervisors
 - Planned project – subject, research hypotheses, research steps, delaying factors
 - Validated methods and methods yet to be validated
 - Frequency of supervision meetings

- Has the project been registered with the Office of Doctoral Studies?**

- If yes, have you and the other supervisors received a copy of the approved Doctoral Agreement for your records?**

- Will the candidate need to enroll (matriculate) as a doctoral student or is matriculation optional for them?**

- If matriculation is obligatory: have you advised them of this fact?**

COMMENTS



4. What are the roles of the different supervisors?

First, second and third supervisors

At Charité, each doctoral project is supervised by a team of two or three supervisors. For 'Standard Track' doctorates, a team of two supervisors is compulsory, but the addition of a third supervisor is recommended. For 'Advanced Track' doctorates, a team of three supervisors is compulsory.

The roles and responsibilities of the supervisory team can and should be divided up among its members. 'Should' because the division of labor and responsibilities and the inclusion of other supervisors can only be beneficial to the doctoral project. The decision regarding the way in which this is organized within the team is, to a large extent, that of the members of the supervisory team. You are, however, advised to heed two rules of thumb:

➤ *Firstly: The first supervisor is the primary or lead supervisor, while the second and third supervisors provide support. Secondly: It is impossible to delegate all supervisory responsibilities!*

Regardless of the specifics of the case, you should always strive to build a consensus with your co-supervisors regarding the person(s) to whom specific responsibilities are delegated and what actions need to be taken should one of the supervisors leave Charité or (unexpectedly) become unavailable. Experience has shown that non-adherence to these principles can result in conflicts which will leave the doctoral candidate at risk of slipping through the cracks.

➤ *Come to a mutual agreement with your co-supervisors as to each supervisor's roles and responsibilities and the way in which the supervisory team should operate. The terms 'supervisory team' is meant to reinforce the ideas of 'team' and 'teamwork'.*

The fact that the first supervisor is also the lead supervisor means, among other things, that they act as the key point of contact for the doctoral candidate, the Doctoral Committee and Student and Academic Services. They are 'first supervisor' in name only. This also means they cannot delegate all of their responsibilities to other members of staff or the other supervisors.

Whether you are in a position to accept the role of 'first supervisor' at Charité is determined by the provisions of Charité's Doctoral Degree Regulations and Statutes. The rule of thumb is as follows:

- Tenured professors of Charité, Freie Universität Berlin and Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin,
- PD's and adjunct (außerplanmäßige) professors of Charité,
- and Independent junior research group leaders (e.g. the DFG's Emmy Noether Program, ERC Starting Grants) selected via competitive selection procedures

can take on the role of first supervisor at Charité. Under certain circumstances, other groups of academics, including senior professors (Seniorprofessoren), honorary professors and tenured professors from other universities, can take on the role of first supervisor at Charité. Should you fall into one of these categories, please feel free to contact the Office of Doctoral Studies. However, please ensure you read the relevant information prior to contacting us. This information is available on our website: <https://promotion.charite.de/en/supervision/>

CHECKLIST 4:

- Have you checked with the Office of Doctoral Studies whether you are able to accept the role of (first) supervisor at Charité?**
- If you (are to) act as first supervisor (and want to), will you be able to commit the necessary resources to the task?**
- Are you maintaining regular and reliable contact with the other supervisors who form part of the supervisory team?**
- Is there consensus among the members of the supervisory team as to each member's responsibilities?**
- Has the team's agreed position been discussed and agreed with the doctoral candidate?**

10

COMMENTS



5. What are the responsibilities of doctoral supervisors?

The Faculty Council's 'Guidelines for the supervision of doctoral projects at Charité' (4 September 2017) provides a concise and binding overview of the responsibilities of supervisors. An excerpt of this guidance is provided below. The full text of these guidelines can be downloaded from the following web page:

https://promotion.charite.de/en/links_downloads/

If you accept the role of first supervisor of a doctoral candidate, you will first need to address the following issues:

- **Recognition of international degrees:** If the doctoral candidate did not complete their university degree in Germany, you will need to arrange for the candidate's degree qualification to be evaluated by the Central Office for Foreign Education – ZAB (within the Office of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs, KMK). A Statement of Comparability issued by the ZAB confirms that the degree obtained is equivalent to a qualifying degree obtained in Germany. An exemption applies if the degree in question is already listed in the KMK's anabin database. For further information, please refer to the web pages provided by the Office of Doctoral Studies
https://promotion.charite.de/en/supervision/recognition_of_international_degrees/
- **Personalized curriculum:** If the doctoral candidate wishes to pursue a traditional (individual) doctorate, you will need to provide guidance regarding appropriate training and/or courses which should form part of their personalized curriculum. It is advisable to review (and if necessary, revise) the agreed program at regular intervals to ensure that there is a good fit between the candidate's training and their project work. For further information, please refer to the web pages provided by the Office of Doctoral Studies:
https://promotion.charite.de/en/doctorate_environment/curriculum/
- **Ethical opinion:** Prior to the start of the research, you will need to establish whether the doctoral research requires an ethical opinion from the competent ethics committee or authority – in Berlin, this is the State Office for Health and Social Affairs. For more information, please consult the web pages provided by Charité's Ethics Committee:
<https://ethikkommission.charite.de/en/>
- **Animal research:** If the doctoral research involves the use of animals, you will need to ensure it has obtained approval from the competent authority. This should be taken into account when deciding on the project's schedule, to ensure it allows sufficient time for the relevant approval to be processed by the authority.

Naturally, the responsibilities of the role go beyond the four issues discussed. This is why you will find below an excerpt from the 'Guidelines for the supervision of doctoral projects at Charité' (issued 4 September 2017), which was briefly mentioned at the beginning of this section:

"By accepting the supervision of a doctoral project in the Faculty of Medicine at Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin as a primary supervisor, the supervisor also, in consultation with the other supervisors of the project, takes on the following obligations and duties in particular, whereby they may delegate parts of the supervisory work to a representative:

1. He/she offers advice on the choice of an appropriate topic, ensuring that the demands and scope of the project allow for a successful conclusion within three years. As far as possible, publishable results should be expected. In the case of interdisciplinary topics, he/she bears responsibility for subject-appropriate supervision, e.g. by suggesting suitable further supervisors.
2. In the case of an advanced track doctorate, he/she supports the doctoral candidate to create a course plan for the attendance of events which have a meaningful relationship to the doctoral topic.
3. He/she is responsible for the doctoral student's training, insofar as it is required for the chosen topic or the necessary methods and investigative techniques.

- 4.** He/she is responsible for regular meetings with the doctoral student, according to the regular cycle defined by the doctoral agreement, wherein he/she is informed about achieved results and any difficulties which may have arisen. He/she thereby regularly reviews the progress of work on the project and any adjustments to the timetable which may be necessary. He/she will promptly inform the doctoral candidate if any major implementation problems are foreseen. The aim is to avoid the need to retrospectively fundamentally revise discussed and completed sections of the dissertation, which would excessively delay successful completion of the doctoral project. During supervision, he/she ensures that the character of the dissertation as an independently completed piece of work is not jeopardised.
- 5.** He/she is responsible for informing the doctoral candidate regarding the principles of good scientific practice and compliance with the relevant guidelines for citing authors and publications
- 6.** He/she is responsible for ensuring that any authorisations, ethics approvals or the like are obtained in good time and available.
- 7.** He/she is responsible for appropriate statistical and biometrical supervision of the research project, where this is necessary with a view to the research project's topic.
- 8.** He/she is responsible for ensuring that the doctoral candidate has access to the equipment required for successful implementation of their research project.
- 9.** He/she is responsible for ensuring that, if the doctoral candidate is employed by him/her, they are, whenever possible, only given tasks which have a meaningful relationship to the doctoral project.
- 10.** He/she is responsible for ensuring that, if the doctoral candidate is employed by him/her, they have sufficient opportunities to work on their doctoral project as well as scope for independent research.
- 11.** He/she continually supports and advises the doctoral candidate with regards to their doctoral project. Among other aspects, this includes information on suitable means of discourse (conferences, congresses etc), publication, financing and idealistic and objective support, or on competitions and scientific awards.
- 12.** He/she undertakes to suggest exclusively independent and neutral assessors for the assessment of the written doctoral thesis.
- 13.** Together with the doctoral student, he/she is responsible for proper storage of the primary data for a period of ten years.
- 14.** In the event of an appeal to the representative for matters relating to doctoral studies, he/she undertakes to work cooperatively and in a solution-oriented manner towards settlement of the conflict

Secondary and tertiary supervisors contribute in an advisory function and should, in consultation with the primary supervisor, participate in supervisory tasks where it is reasonable and expedient with regards to successful completion of the doctoral project. The supervisors continually inform each other on all matters relevant to the facilitation and successful completion of the doctoral project.”

Experience has shown that regular laboratory or research group meetings can provide useful opportunities for the doctoral candidate to present an update on their progress. Under certain circumstances, these types of meetings may also qualify for ECTS Credit Points. Please contact the ‘Doctorate Environment Coordination Office’ for information prior to organizing such meetings.

https://promotion.charite.de/en/doctorate_environment/

CHECKLIST 5:

- Does the doctoral candidate hold an international degree and, if so, has a Statement of Comparability been obtained from the ZAB?
- Is the doctoral candidate pursuing a traditional (individual) doctorate? If so, have you discussed which courses/further training events should be included as part of their doctoral studies (personalized curriculum)?
- Does the research require an ethical opinion? If so, has one been obtained?
- Does the research involve the use of animals? If so, has an approval been obtained?
- Have arrangements regarding adequate biometric/statistical support been confirmed?
- Will regular laboratory or research group meetings be held (preferably including the presentation of up-to-date results)?

COMMENTS

6. How do you build and maintain an effective supervisory relationship?

Time and availability are key to good supervision: your main role will be to provide expert guidance to the doctoral candidate. This is only possible if you are willing and able to give the time needed for discussion, advice and support. Similarly, the doctoral candidate will need time and space for independent work on their doctoral research – protected time, so to speak. Without protected time, they will be unable to produce independent work.

➤ *You must ensure that the doctoral candidate's day-to-day work as part of your research group leaves sufficient time for independent research and writing. This is particularly important if they are also employed as a member of your group.*

The provision of advice and support should certainly not be limited to scientific and/or subject-specific

- aspects of the work.

Other aspects to be covered might include:

- Career paths and development opportunities
- Involvement in the preparation, organization and delivery of teaching events
- Involvement in scientific/research communities and networks

Career paths and development opportunities: Not only doctoral students intending to pursue careers in research will benefit from early career advice and information regarding steps they will need to complete within academia and/or non-university research institutions. Your experience and expertise will also be of value to young researchers who wish to pursue careers within the clinical field or in research management. This includes realistic feedback regarding the prospects offered by different career options. Not everyone will achieve their dream of becoming a professor or achieving tenure. In fact, once suitable alternatives are taken into account, this option may no longer seem appropriate or even desirable. Wherever appropriate, please ensure that your advice includes information about opportunities and measures pertaining to equal opportunities – diversity is key.

➤ *Regular interactions between you and the doctoral candidate do not have to take the form of coaching or professional career advice sessions (and this may be beyond what you are willing and able to provide). Regular interactions will be beneficial in and of themselves, not least because they help to draw attention to plans for after the completion of the doctorate and highlight actions which may be required in preparation.*

Those requiring assistance with these issues should feel free to make use of a range of initiatives and other points of contact available within the Berlin area:

- At Charité, advice and support are available from the Office for Women's Affairs and Equal Opportunities (<https://frauenbeauftragte.charite.de/en/service/>)
- SPARK-BIH offers a range of services including mentoring with a translational focus (<https://www.spark-bih.de/>)
- Humboldt Graduate School (HGS) has a careers advice service and runs a mentoring program (<https://www.humboldt-graduate-school.de/de/services/mentor>)
- The services provided by Charité's 'mother' universities, HU and FU, are administered via their career advice centers: HU Careers Center (<https://www.hu-berlin.de/de/hu/verwaltung/ccww/career-center>)
FU Careers Service (<https://www.fu-berlin.de/sites/career/index.html>)
- The Career Development Initiative is an initiative primarily run by students (<https://www.humboldt-graduate-school.de/de/services/mentor>)

Lectures and classes: If the doctoral candidate is interested in pursuing a university-based career, their working life will center around the preparation and delivery of teaching components. Experience teaches us that good teachers are not born, they are made. Both formal training in (higher education) teaching and practical experience will be essential. Preferably, these should be started during the doctorate. You should strive to include the candidate in teaching duties, provide them with opportunities to gain practical experience and support them to plan, deliver and improve their teaching.

➤ *Doctoral students can obtain credits for any teaching delivered under your supervision. These credits will count towards fulfilling the compulsory training component of the doctorate. For further information, please refer to the web pages provided by the Office of Doctoral Studies: <https://promotion.charite.de/promotionsumgebung/anerkennung/>*

Scientific/research communities: Encourage the doctoral candidate to engage in networking and introduce themselves to the wider scientific community through presentations. Options here include attendance at suitable conferences, the presentation of their own work and the publication of the first articles based on their doctoral research (even if these are to be presented in the form of a monograph). In this context, it will be helpful to discuss and agree the types of events which might be suitable, the appropriate format of potential contributions and the point at which a finding or result is sufficiently substantial to warrant dissemination to the wider scientific community. There is of course a need to balance effort and benefit. As doctoral students may not be able to make this type of judgment (particularly early on in their doctorate), they will rely on the advice and support of their supervisors.

➤ *As soon as the candidate's doctoral research project is up and running and has successfully completed the initial phase, it will be helpful to sit down together to draw up a conference or publication schedule.*

As doctoral students vary widely in terms of their skills, interests, needs and goals, it would be unhelpful to be prescriptive as to the amount of time that should be spent on any particular task or issue. The following may, however, serve as a useful guide:

➤ *At all times, you should have a rough idea of the stage the candidate's project has reached, which significant conference presentations they have already delivered and how they are progressing with the compulsory taught component of their doctoral curriculum. This will only be possible if you implement a structured program of regular interactions with the candidate, as this will ensure that you are kept updated on all relevant milestones (please refer to Checklist 6 below).*

CHECKLIST 6:⁸

- What stage of progress has been reached? Have the agreed interim goals been achieved? (Review and, if necessary, revise project plan and schedule).**
- What has gone well since the last meeting? What has not? What conclusions should be drawn from this in relation to future work?**
- What experiments, results, text passages, working papers, presentation manuscripts etc. need to be discussed?**
- How should courses from the compulsory taught component be organized during the following semester?**
- Which conferences would be suitable events at which to present the doctoral project and/or parts of the work involved?**
- What actions should be taken to further the candidate's professional development? What steps need to be taken to develop career opportunities?**
- When will the next supervision meeting be held? What stages of the work need to be completed by then?**
- What other issues need to be covered?**

COMMENTS

16

⁸ This checklist has been adapted from page 13 of the 'Guidelines for the Supervision of Doctoral Dissertations (2014)', published by Bielefeld Graduate School in History and Sociology. The original checklist was adapted to reflect the specific environments at Charité and within the field of medicine. https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/bghs/Beratung_und_Service/Promovierende/Leitfaden-fur-die-Betreuung-von-Promotionen.pdf Accessed on 05.09.2019, 10.37 AM.



7. How is the doctoral degree process structured?

In grossly simplified terms, the path to a doctorate at Charité can be divided into seven separate stages. For comprehensive information and all relevant forms, please refer to the web pages of the Office of Doctoral Studies: <https://promotion.charite.de/en/procedure/>

1. **Registration:** The doctoral candidate will be obliged to register with the Office of Doctoral Studies prior to commencing work on their doctoral project. To register, they will need to present a completed Doctoral Agreement and proof of a qualifying degree (usually proof of completion of a Master's degree). Candidates will also need to provide proof of their Bachelor's degree. The Office of Doctoral Studies requires these documents as they must ascertain whether the candidate has completed studies equivalent to the 300 ECTS credit points stipulated by the Berlin Higher Education Act (a Bachelor's degree will usually be equivalent to 180 ECTS credit points, a Master's degree 120 ECTS). If the candidate holds an international degree, they will need to obtain a Statement of Comparability, which is issued by the KMK's Central Office for Foreign Education (ZAB). Please refer to the information in section 5 above. Exemptions exist for medicine and dentistry students enrolled at Charité. To register, these students will need to present proof of matriculation.
2. **Written component (thesis/dissertation):** This can be in the form of a monograph or one or more publications presented alongside a synopsis, the purpose of which is to explain how these relate to the research. For more information, please see section 2.
3. **Initiation of the doctoral examination procedure:** Once the candidate has completed their thesis/dissertation, they can submit this to the Office of Doctoral Studies and request the initiation of the doctoral examination procedure. The candidate will need their supervisors to issue a joint statement which confirms the quality and merit of the doctoral thesis/dissertation (votum informativum). You will find a template for this in the 'Links & Downloads' section of the Office of Doctoral Studies' website. The candidate will also need their supervisors to provide them with the details of six or more potential reviewers, at least four of whom must be external. The candidate will also need to provide proof of completion of their structured doctoral program or proof of participation in compulsory training courses. The latter is issued by the Doctorate Environment Coordination Office. For further information, please consult: https://promotion.charite.de/en/doctorate_environment/process/
4. **Review of thesis/dissertation:** If, upon initial review, the Doctoral Committee determines that the candidate's written work is of a sufficient standard to merit admission to examination, they will approve the request for initiation of the doctoral examination procedure and arrange for the formal review of the thesis/dissertation. The Committee will select two of your suggested reviewers. As the candidate's supervisor, you will not be involved in this formal review and evaluation process. The roles and responsibilities of supervisors and reviewers are distinct and separate at Charité.
5. **Oral examination (viva):** Once both reviewers have returned their reports and provided both reviewers have assigned a 'rite' (pass) grade, the oral examination (viva) will be scheduled. This will either take the form of two 30-minute examinations or one 'disputation' (viva) in front of an examination panel. Candidates examined via 'disputation' (viva) will receive separate grades for their presentation and the subsequent discussion. The overall grade will reflect the two reviewers' grades and the two oral examination grades. The length of the 'disputation' will depend on the type of doctoral degree involved and may range from approximately 30 to 60 minutes. The examination panel will include members of the Doctoral Committee or their deputies, as well as experts from the relevant discipline or subject area. As with the review process, supervisors may not act as examiners.

- 6. Publication:** There are a number of options available for the publication of the candidate's thesis/dissertation. A monograph can be published either as a book or via an online repository (FU Berlin). The latter requires a bound reference copy to be delivered to the Medical Library. The latter option (repository and bound reference copy) is the required form of publication for all dissertations by publication. Should the journal publisher refuse to consent to a print copy, the online depository version will contain links to the relevant publication(s). For further information on these issues, please contact the Medical Library's Thesis/Dissertation Office:
https://bibliothek.charite.de/en/publishing/how_to_publish_a_dissertation_or_habilitation_thesis/dissertations/
- 7. Award of doctoral degree certificate:** The award of the doctoral degree certificate marks the completion of the doctoral degree. The candidate may only use the title of Doctor once the degree has been conferred. Charité's Doctoral Degree Regulations do not permit the use of 'preliminary' titles such as 'Dr. des.'. If necessary – e.g. for submission to funding bodies – the Office of Doctoral Studies will be able to issue a statement confirming that all required components of the doctoral degree have been completed and that the candidate is merely awaiting conferment of the degree itself.

Should you have questions regarding doctoral degree procedures and, in particular, regarding your own responsibilities as part of this process, please contact the Office of Doctoral Studies in a timely fashion to avoid unpleasant repercussions and unnecessary delays to the candidate's progress.

CHECKLIST 7:

- Has the votum informativum been drafted and agreed with the other supervisors?**
- Have the proposed reviewers been discussed and agreed with the other supervisors and, where appropriate, the doctoral candidate?**



8. What are the essential issues to observe regarding 'good research practice' (research integrity)?

Good research practice comprises more than the correct referencing of sources. The principles of good research practice set standards for the conduct of responsible research and the integrity of researchers. The latest, updated version of the German Research Foundation's (DFG) 'Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Research Practice', which was issued in August 2019, provides a useful introduction. It states:

*"Scientific integrity forms the basis for trustworthy research. It is an example of academic voluntary commitment that encompasses a respectful attitude towards peers, research participants, animals, cultural assets, and the environment, and strengthens and promotes vital public trust in research. The constitutionally guaranteed freedom of research is inseparably linked to a corresponding responsibility. Taking this responsibility into full account and embedding it in individual conduct is an essential duty for every researcher and for the institutions where research is carried out. The research community itself ensures good practice through fair and honest attitudes and conduct as well as organisational and procedural regulations."*⁹

Charité is bound by its own 'Statute Ensuring Good Scientific Practice' and implemented a comprehensive system to ensure compliance. This consists of ombudspersons elected by the Faculty Council, a standing committee for the investigation of research misconduct (Permanent Inquiry Panel) and a dedicated Research Integrity Office:

https://www.charite.de/en/research/research_support_services/office_for_research_integrity/

19

All doctoral students must attend a compulsory lecture on Good Research Practice (Research Integrity) and provide proof of attendance when requesting the initiation of the doctoral examination procedure. Without proof of attendance, requests for initiation of the doctoral examination procedure will not be approved. All submitted theses/dissertations will be analyzed using anti-plagiarism software. Any instances of suspected research misconduct will be investigated fully.

While all of these measures are necessary, they are adjuncts rather than safeguards. Whether or not the principles of good research are upheld depends on: a suitable culture of research integrity within research groups and facilities; the promotion of examples of good local practice to raise awareness; and the acceptance of research integrity as a core responsibility of all researchers. As a supervisor, you have a key role in this regard: you must, at all times, strive to instill in the doctoral candidate the appropriate ethical values regarding the conduct of research, the responsible handling of data and collaboration with other researchers. You must explain the fundamental principles of good research practice and, as part of your supervisory role, ensure that these are implemented. This applies to all individuals involved in a doctoral project – regardless of their role. The pressure to produce publishable results can lead to behavior that is incompatible with the principles of good research practice.

Experience has shown that conflicts between supervisors and doctoral candidates are often linked to problems from the category of breaches of good research practice. In short: if there is bad communication within the research group or between supervisors and candidates, or if this communication has broken down entirely, one of the potential consequences is that data and results might be published without the consent of the other party/ies – occasionally even without the other party/ies being named. It is worth noting, however, that it is often possible to resolve a potential breach of good research practice amicably once the underlying conflict between supervisor(s) and candidate have been resolved.

⁹ DFG Guidelines (2019), Preamble, p. 7. The document can be accessed here: https://www.dfg.de/foerderung/grundlagen_rahmenbedingungen/gwp/

In this context, we would like to draw your attention to three specific issues which have been shown to play a big part in good research practice-related conflicts between doctoral candidates and their supervisors:

- Joint use of written work and data
- Use of jointly generated data and results
- Authorship of publications

It can sometimes be helpful to agree on standardized reporting templates (boilerplate texts) to be used within a particular research group – for instance for the description of methodology and/or equipment. This is a perfectly acceptable solution, provided this is made explicit at the relevant point in the doctoral thesis/dissertation. This is particularly important if these sections have been used in other doctoral theses/dissertations or other publications. The same of course applies to the joint generation or use of data.

The ombudspersons' reports (unfortunately) confirm that the last point – regarding authorship – regularly causes quite considerable problems. This is why we took the decision to quote Guideline 14 of the DFG Guidelines in full.

“An author is an individual who has made a genuine, identifiable contribution to the content of a research publication of text, data or software. All authors agree on the final version of the work to be published. Unless explicitly stated otherwise, they share responsibility for the publication. Authors seek to ensure that, as far as possible, their contributions are identified by publishers or infrastructure providers such that they can be correctly cited by users.

Explanations:

The contribution must add to the research content of the publication. What constitutes a genuine and identifiable contribution must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and depends on the subject area in question. An identifiable, genuine contribution is deemed to exist particularly in instances in which a researcher – in a research-relevant way – takes part in

- *the development and conceptual design of the research project, or*
- *the gathering, collection, acquisition or provision of data, software or sources, or*
- *the analysis/evaluation or interpretation of data, sources and conclusions drawn from them, or*
- *the drafting of the manuscript.*

If a contribution is not sufficient to justify authorship, the individual's support may be properly acknowledged in footnotes, a foreword or an acknowledgement. Honorary authorship where no such contribution was made is not permissible. A leadership or supervisory function does not itself constitute co-authorship.

Collaborating researchers agree on authorship of a publication. The decision as to the order in which authors are named is made in good time, normally no later than when the manuscript is drafted, and in accordance with clear criteria that reflect the practices within the relevant subject areas. Researchers may not refuse to give their consent to publication of the results without sufficient grounds. Refusal of consent must be justified with verifiable criticism of data, methods or results.¹⁰

We would urge you to take the DFG recommendations to heart, particularly because experience has shown that many serious conflicts could have been avoided if only these had been followed:

- *Make the doctoral candidate aware of the principles of good research practice! Ensure they understand quite clearly that good research practice is not a tedious box-ticking exercise but forms the heart of responsible research and the integrity of researchers.*
- *Ensure that you create a work culture within your research group and/or your supervisory relationship which encourages and facilitates open discussion of issues pertaining to good research practice!*
- *If the doctoral candidate wishes to produce publications or if they wish to opt for a dissertation by publication, you should raise at the outset (preferably when discussing a publication strategy) the issue of who should be named as a contributor, and how their contributions should be acknowledged!
You should document the result of this discussion and ensure that all relevant stakeholders have agreed! Please always remember that the relationship between supervisor and candidate is never an equal one – neither in terms of experience nor in terms of status or rank within the academic structure!*

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact the ombudspersons for Good Research Practice or the 'Office of Good Scientific Practice'.

CHECKLIST 8:

- Has the doctoral candidate attended the compulsory lecture on good research practice and obtained their proof of attendance? (Please note: Attendance is advisable even for doctoral candidates who could apply to have their module 23 credits accepted as equivalent)**
- Have you established a format or routine with the doctoral candidate (or within your research group) which provides regular opportunities for stakeholders to raise issues pertaining to good research practice?**
- Have you discussed the issues of authorship and identification of contributors as part of your discussions regarding a publication strategy? If yes, have you produced a clear record of these discussions and agreed procedures, and have you obtained the consent of all involved?**



9. Where can you get help? Advice available and relevant contacts at Charité

If you are hoping to find out where to turn with specific questions or issues, please consult the following list of various offices and contacts with their respective areas of responsibility (following the alphabetical order of the list in the German version):

The Office of Family Affairs: The Office of Family Affairs provides a comprehensive advice and support service on issues surrounding family life, children and work.

Contact:

+49 (0) 450 577 257

familienbuero@charite.de

<https://familienbuero.charite.de/en/>

Office for Women's Affairs and Equal Opportunities: The Office for Women's Affairs and Equal Opportunities provides information and support on issues pertaining to equal opportunities and diversity. The Office's services are aimed at both members of staff and students, with a particular focus on career planning, diversity and combining family and work.

Contact:

+49 (0) 30 450 577 252 (Office secretary)

sekretariat-fgb@charite.de

<https://frauenbeauftragte.charite.de/en/>

The Medical Library's Dissertations Department: The Dissertations Department administers the 'compulsory publication' process.

Contact:

+49 (0) 30 450 576 – 191 (Marion Kohl) or – 165 (Jörg Müller)

dissertationsserver@charite.de

https://bibliothek.charite.de/en/publishing/how_to_publish_a_dissertation_or_habilitation_thesis/

Doctorate Environment Coordination Office: The Coordination Office compiles the list of courses available to doctoral students and is responsible for issuing proof of completion of course components equivalent to between 5 and 30 ECTS Credit Points. The Office is also responsible for the transfer of course credits obtained prior to or outside the candidate's doctoral studies and which the candidate wishes to have recognized as fulfilling part of the overall credit point requirement.

Contact:

+49 (0) 30 450 570 298 (Dr. Silvia Pietschmann)

promotionsumgebung@charite.de

https://promotion.charite.de/en/doctorate_environment/

MediCoach: MediCoach provides advice and support for students (including doctoral students) requiring psychosocial support.

Contact:

+49 (0) 30 450 529 189

medicoach@charite.de

<https://medicoach.charite.de/>

Academic Grants Committee: The Faculty's Academic Grants Committee and its Office staff are the relevant contacts for questions and issues surrounding scholarships and funding programs.

Contact:

+49 30 450 624 046 (Dr. Anja Bondke Persson)

nachwuchskommission@charite.de

<https://nachwuchs.charite.de/en/>

Ombudspersons for Good Research Practice: The Ombudspersons for Good Research Practice are the relevant contacts for specific questions pertaining to the area of good research practice. The Ombudspersons will try to help in situations where a dispute/conflict arises, such as in authorship disputes or in instances of suspected falsification/fabrication of published data. They will do so by investigating the situation and establishing facts, providing advice, and by meeting with all involved parties. The Ombudspersons are independent, not bound by instructions in the exercise of their duties and have a strict duty of confidentiality.

Contact:

+49 030 450 576 – 055 (Dr. Martina Kaufmann), – 056 (Claudia Mathan), – 013 (Dr. Rike Zietlow)
gwp@charite.de
https://www.charite.de/en/research/research_support_services/office_for_research_integrity/

The Office of Doctoral Studies: The Office of Doctoral Studies is one of the offices administering student affairs. It operates on behalf of the Faculty Council's Doctoral Committee and is responsible for the administrative processes pertaining to doctoral degrees.

Contact:

+49 (0) 30 450 576 – 016 (Silke Hagenbruch), – 018 (Manuela Hirche), – 058 (Claudia Jaramillo)
promotionsbuero@charite.de
<https://promotion.charite.de/en/>

'Promotionskolleg' (Doctoral College): Charité's 'Promotionskolleg' offers a range of courses for doctoral students. All courses are based on peer-to-peer learning and can count towards overall ECTS Credit Point requirements. The Promotionskolleg tutors are also available for advice/consultations.

Contact:

+49 (0) 450 527 353
promotion@charite.de
<https://promotionskolleg.charite.de/en/>

Statistics advice: The Institute of Medical Biometrics and Clinical Epidemiology (iBikE) offers free statistical advice to doctoral students. Making use of this service will fulfill the requirements for a statistical feasibility certificate, which doctoral candidates wishing to submit a monograph will have to submit at the point of requesting initiation of the doctoral examination procedure.

Contact:

https://biometrie.charite.de/en/service_unit_biometry/free_consultation_service/

Ombudspersons for Doctoral Affairs: The Ombudspersons act as points of contact for both doctoral candidates and supervisors in cases of conflicts which cannot be resolved by those involved and threaten the successful completion of a doctoral degree. The Ombudspersons are independent, not bound by instructions in the exercise of their duties and have a strict duty of confidentiality.

Contact:

vertrauenspersonen-promotion@charite.de
<https://promotion.charite.de/en/counsel/ombudspersons/>

Welcome Center: The Welcome Center offers advice and assistance on questions and issues experienced by international researchers when they join Charité.

Contact:

+49 (0) 30 450 570 – 076 (Pamela Glowacki), – 077 (Franziska Grimm)
international-scholars@charite.de
<https://welcome.charite.de/en/>