Key Principles of Good Doctoral Supervision @univienna

Doctoral education is a journey of discovery, challenge, and growth. At the heart of this journey is the relationship between doctoral candidates and their supervisors, built on trust, mutual respect and a shared commitment to academic excellence. Yet, navigating the complexities of doctoral supervision requires more than research expertise.

Supervisors play a vital and multifaceted role in shaping the doctoral experience. They provide guidance grounded in honesty, care, and awareness of institutional policies. Revisiting goals and celebrating milestones is essential. Equally important is offering practical insights into academic and non-academic career paths. Above all, inspiring a passion for research and a sense of purpose lies at the core of effective supervision.

At the University of Vienna, doctoral research occurs in diverse contexts – ranging from funded positions to unfunded studies, and from individual projects to collaborative groups or fieldwork. This diversity enriches the academic environment but adds complexity to supervision, demanding flexibility and context-sensitive approaches. Also, supervision models vary and include single supervision, co-supervision, with or without Thesis Advisory Committees, each offering distinct perspectives, support, and responsibilities.

These Key Principles complement, not replace the formal *Code of Good Practice for Doctoral Schools*. They represent a shared commitment to good doctoral supervision and clarify the standards outlined in the *Code*. They serve two purposes:

1. Information: They should provide clear, accessible guidance for all involved in doctoral education.
2. Inspiration: They are meant to be a source of inspiration for effective and caring supervision at the University of Vienna.

1. Set expectations but be ready to adapt

Recruitment and Selection

Objective: Identifying the best match.
Ideas:

- Assess each applicant's potential/competence for independent research (and feasibility of their proposed project).
- Conduct thorough interviews and provide constructive feedback to shortlisted job applicants. Support new supervisors during their first recruitment phase. Seek support and offer support to new supervisors during their first recruitment phase.
- Actively publicize your research areas and specific expertise to attract suitable candidates.

Building and Maintaining Supervisory Relationships

Objective: Establishing a supportive and effective relationship with candidates that adapt to their evolving needs.
Ideas:

- Recognize and respect the diversity of backgrounds, experiences, and

perspectives

- Clearly communicate expectations (i.a. at the start of the program) addressing both academic and relational aspects (communication, response time etc.) Be prepared for meetings and expect the candidate to be prepared.
- Be available for a "quick chat" for immediate academic issues (within reasonable limits and with respect for mutual availability) and regular individual meetings to provide systematic feedback.
- Ask for feedback on the supervisory relationship by the candidate and be open to it.

Keeping Research Progress on Track

Objective: Monitoring and supporting candidates' progress to ensure completion of their degrees in a reasonable time.
Ideas:

- Motivate and guide candidates towards clear goals and regular milestones to maintain steady progress, while encouraging intellectual curiosity and flexibility in their research journey.
- Provide profound, honest and respectful feedback on the project's progress and the candidate's development. The candidate should leave a meeting with (renewed) enthusiasm and heightened confidence – and a clear action plan.
- Use supervision sessions to review progress, address obstacles, and adjust project timelines as needed.

2. Listen, Reflect, and Share

Collaborating with Co-Supervisors

Objective: Ensuring effective team supervision by setting clear roles and expectations.
Ideas:

- Define and document each supervisor's roles and responsibilities from the start, clarify expectations with both the co-supervisors and the candidate.
- Hold regular meetings to address any emerging issues. Consider supervisor-only meetings and foster open communication between co-supervisors.

Collaborating/Relationship with TAC

Objective: Considering the TAC as support of the supervisor's work
Ideas:

- Be open to the TAC's feedback and incorporate the TAC's feedback into supervision.

Supporting the Research Project

Objective: Guiding candidates through the research process, providing direction on theoretical, methodological, and ethical aspects.
Ideas:

- Facilitate discussions to clarify candidates' understanding of research by addressing any misconceptions early on.
- Offer guidance on the development of the research project, theoretical frameworks, and methodologies.
- Introduce candidates to good scientific practice (e.g. ethics, permits, authorships, data management).
- Ensure that fully funded candidates can devote sufficient time to their own research.
- Ensure access to the relevant infrastructure and inform and support applications for funding (scholarships, travel grants etc.)

Encouraging Writing and Providing Constructive Feedback

Objective: Helping candidates develop academic writing skills and providing feedback that enhances their work.
Ideas:

- Encourage candidates to start writing early on to build a foundation for academic writing.
- Actively encourage participation in academic writing trainings to develop a structured and scholarly writing style.
- Deliver timely, specific, clear, actionable and honest feedback to promote progress and boost candidates' confidence in their writing. Providing suggestions and being generous with (your) ideas.

3. Think beyond the Thesis

Providing Personal and Professional Support

Objective: Supporting the candidate's well-being and career development throughout their doctoral journey.
Ideas:

- Provide a respectful and safe workplace and contribute to it.
- Recognize when personal issues may be affecting academic progress and encourage candidates to seek support from relevant institutional resources.
- Be responsive to candidate's needs, assessing your communication skills and setting inspiring visions.
- Establish social cohesion in your group/project/among your candidates and colleagues.
- Introducing candidates to (international) academic and professional

networks helping them gain visibility and expand their career opportunities.

- Ensure that fully funded candidates can devote sufficient time to career development and encourage candidates to participate in transferable skills trainings and other career development measures.
- Encourage candidates to get actively involved in community/Doctoral School activities and/serve as mentors.

Facilitating Completion and Examination

Objective: Preparing candidates for the submission and examination process.
Ideas:

- Support the candidate in the finalization of the thesis, ensure it meets submission standards.
- Prepare candidates for the examination and advise on likely outcomes.
- Guide candidates in selecting appropriate examiners and in preparing for the defense.
- Be up to date with relevant policies, procedures and ensure candidates are also informed.

Supporting Dissemination of Research

Objective: Encouraging candidates to share their research outcomes with the wider community.
Ideas:

- Set expectations for publication, emphasize the value of research dissemination.
- Actively model and encourage publication practices, including co-authorship if appropriate.
- Encourage and support science/research communication activities.
- Assist candidates in developing a post-doctoral publications plan to ensure their work reaches its intended audience.

Engaging in Reflective Practice

Objective: Continuously improving supervisory practices and contributing to the development of supervisory best practices.
Ideas:

- Regularly reflect on your supervision approach, identifying strengths and areas for improvement.
- Engage in professional development opportunities focused on strengthening supervisory skills.
- Share insights and successful practices with peers to contribute to the broader supervisory community and maintain high standards.