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Vienna Doctoral School
Cognition · Behavior · Neuroscience
from Biology to Psychology and the Humanities

Vienna
Doctoral
Schools

Handbook for Doctoral Candidates



Vienna Doctoral School
Cognition · Behavior · Neuroscience
from Biology to Psychology and the Humanities

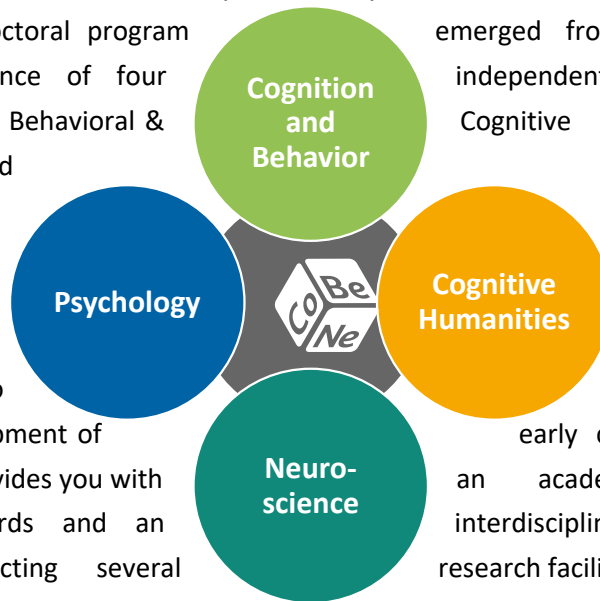
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1. Welcome from the Directors and CoBeNe Office

The Vienna Doctoral School in Cognition, Behavior and Neuroscience (VDS CoBeNe) from Biology to Psychology and the Humanities warmly welcomes you at the University of Vienna!

The VDS CoBeNe doctoral program emerged from an integrative and interdisciplinary alliance of four independent research areas: Psychological Science, Behavioral & Cognitive Biology, Cognitive Humanities and Neuroscience. We offer our doctoral candidates the opportunity to receive individual training through independent research, supervised by research group leaders committed to excellence, fostering the individual development of early career researchers. The doctoral program provides you with an academic education of international standards and an interdisciplinary research environment connecting several research facilities throughout Vienna.



emerged from an integrative and interdisciplinary alliance of four independent research areas: Cognitive Biology, Cognitive Neuroscience. We offer candidates the opportunity to receive individual training through independent research, supervised by research group leaders committed to excellence, fostering the individual development of early career researchers. The doctoral program provides you with an academic education of international standards and an interdisciplinary research environment connecting several research facilities throughout Vienna.

The VDS CoBeNe executive team consists of the doctoral study program leader (DSPL) and three vice DSPLs. The first contact point for doctoral candidates are the CoBeNe Office members who execute all administrative matters and ensure a smooth implementation of the VDS CoBeNe PhD program across disciplines.



Prof. Martin Voracek (Department of Cognition, Emotion, and Methods in Psychology) study program director (DSPL) and speaker for the CoBeNe discipline **Psychology**.



Prof. Thomas Bugnyar (Department of Behavioral and Cognitive Biology) as vice DSPL for the program discipline **Behavioral and Cognitive Biology** (BeCogBio).



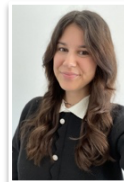
Prof. Jutta Müller (Department of Linguistics) vice study program director of the research field **Cognitive Humanities** (CogHum).



Prof. Thomas Hummel (Department of Neuroscience and Developmental Biology) and vice DSPL for the research field **Neuroscience.aa**



Dr. Katja Hellekes
VDS CoBeNe Office, coordinator



Tamara Tapaj, Bsc
VDS CoBeNe Office



Dr. Julia Reiter
VDS CoBeNe Office

2. Structure of VDS CoBeNe

The Doctoral School of Cognition, Behavior and Neuroscience consists of the VDS CoBeNe Office, the Steering Committee and Scientific Advisory board.

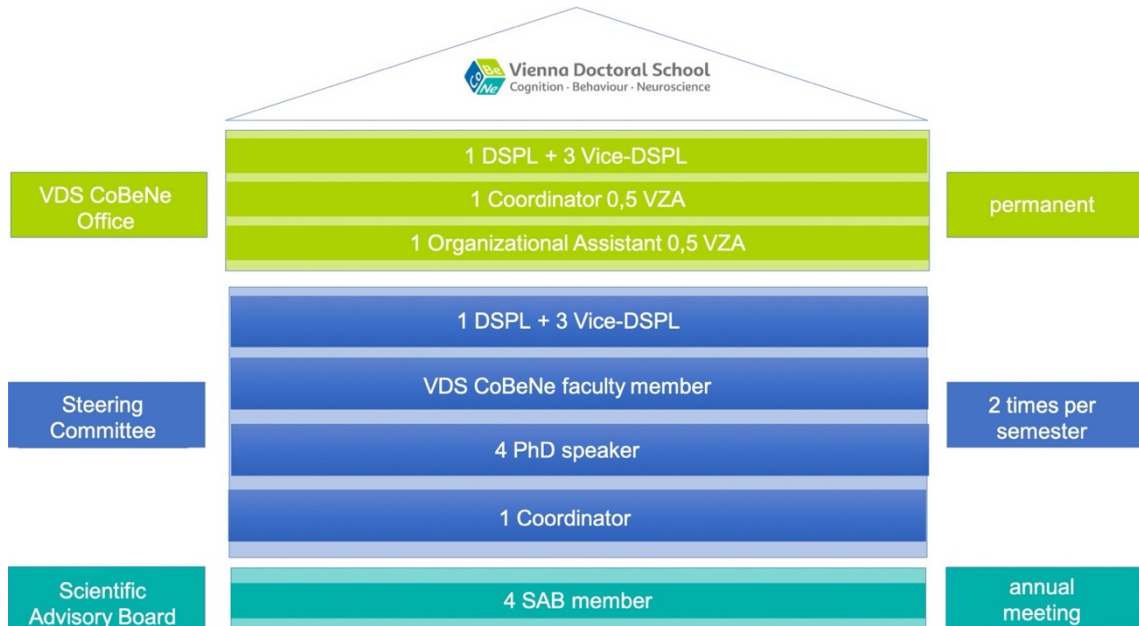


Figure 1. Governance Structure of the VDS CoBeNe. Consists of CoBeNe Office (permanent), Steering Committee (meets twice per semester) and scientific advisory board.

The **VDS CoBeNe office** (coordinator and assistance) is responsible for the program administration, execution as well as dealing with organization of the doctoral candidates throughout the PhD process. The **steering committee** consists of the DSPL and three vice-DSPLs, two faculty members and one PhD representative for each discipline, and the coordinator (in total, 17 members). It is overseeing the strategic design, implementation, and execution of the VDS CoBeNe program and budget. At the same time, it ensures internal and external communication. The **scientific advisory board (SAB)** is represented by four international experts in cognitive science and neuroscience and was appointed by the CoBeNe steering committee in order to advice on the development of the VDS CoBeNe and to act as judgment body in problem cases concerning CoBeNe members. **Prof. Onur Güntürkün**, Faculty for Psychology, Institute for Cognitive Neurosciences, Department of Biopsychology Ruhr-Universität Bochum. **Prof. Raffaella Rumiati**, Head of the Neuroscience and Society Lab (iNSuLa) Scuola Internazionale Superiore di Studi Avanzati, Trieste. **Prof. Peter König** Institute of Cognitive Science, Research Group Neurobiopsychology, University Osnabrück. Prof. Russell Foster Sleep & Circadian Neuroscience Institute (SCNi), Nuffield Department of Clinical Neurosciences OMPI, Sir William Dunn School of Pathology, University of Oxford.

Steering committee

DSPLs: Thomas Bugnyar (BeCogBio)
Thomas Hummel (Neuroscience)
Jutta Müller (Cog Hum)
Martin Voracek (Psychological Science)

VDS CoBeNe faculty members

Leonida Fusani (BeCogBio)
Manuel Zimmer (Neuroscience)
Sonia Kleindorfer (BeCogBio)
Claus Lamm (Psychological Science)
Jana Nikitin (Psychological Science)
Franz-Markus Peschl (Cog Hum)
Raphael Rosenberg (Cog Hum)
Kristin Tessmar-Raible (Neuroscience)

PhD representatives

Anna Miscenà (Cog Hum)
Julia Reiter (Psychological Science)
Daria Nagel (BeCogBio)
Stephan Lechner (Neuroscience)

3. VDS CoBeNe disciplines and dissertation fields

Research questions in the interdisciplinary scope of CoBeNe deal with the influence of social and ecological factors on human and non-human cognition and behavior, understanding its underlying cognitive, emotional, physiological, and neuronal bases, and probing their evolutionary origins and development.



Psychological Sciences. The objectives range from the foundations and mechanisms of relevant psychological processes to the evidence-based application and transfer of the insights gained therefrom. A particular emphasis is put on obtaining insights into the effects of societal, social, and technological change on human experience and behavior. In this vein, we explicitly consider social responsibility (and therefore academia's "third mission") to be one of our objectives.



Behavioral and Cognitive Biology. Within CoBeNe, the program stands out for its evolutionary approach with the focus on whole organisms interacting with their environment. They integrate various conceptual and methodological approaches from biology (e.g., physiology, ecology, and neuroscience), communication research (e.g., bioacoustics, linguistics, and musicology) and psychology (e.g., comparative and developmental psychology).



Neuroscience. Understanding brain functions across different levels of complexity is one of the biggest challenges in the life sciences. The aim of this program is to illuminate the organization and activity of nervous systems from an interdisciplinary perspective using diverse animal models and a broad range of experimental approaches. The research disciplines encompass nervous system evolution, neuronal circuit development and physiology, information processing and behavior, as well as long-term neuromodulation.



Cognitive Humanities is an emerging interdisciplinary field currently developing a wide range of approaches in the respective disciplines. The combination of Cognitive Humanities in the Doctoral School CoBeNe is groundbreaking in that it provides a platform for interdisciplinary cooperation within the humanities to profit from the concepts of neighboring disciplines - from philosophy to art history and linguistics.



4. PhD Process

The doctoral study programs at the University of Vienna are integrated in the doctoral schools and supported by the Study Service Centers (SSC) and the Center for Doctoral Studies.

4.1. Admission to the study program (SPL54) at the University of Vienna

Applicants must hold a master's degree in the intended field of research or one which is closely related to it. Before enrolling into the doctoral study program 54 (SPL54, CoBeNe) at the University of Vienna, applicants have to be accepted by a [supervisor from the VDS CoBeNe Faculty](#). An indication of willingness to supervise by the potential supervisor has to be handed in during the enrolment process. Additionally, a number of documents related to the dissertation project need to be submitted (for [Center for Doctoral Studies](#)). Your application will be reviewed by the responsible director of doctoral study program. Please note that the processing of your application can take several weeks. In the interdisciplinary and interfaculty scope of the CoBeNe doctoral study program 54 currently eight dissertation fields are established and depending on your research focus, one of the following curricula applies (see green box).

The curriculum provides information on the qualification profile, the requirements for admission, the structure of the doctorate and the number of ECTS credits which PhD candidates have to earn during their doctoral studies. It is the bases of the doctoral studies and needs to be selected in the admission process. The application takes place online via [u:space](#) and is possible throughout the year.

Admission
Information about the admission process, deadlines and requirements can be found at the [Center for Doctoral Studies](#).

Please note that you have to renew your admission every semester. This has to take place within the regular admission period. For admission at the University of Vienna you have to pay the correct amount of the prescribed [tuition fee/Students' Union fee](#) in time. It can take up to seven days until the money is received in u:space, so make sure to pay at least a few days before the deadline.

Please note that admission to the doctoral program does not automatically mean employment at the University of Vienna.

Financed doctoral positions, so-called praedoc positions or externally funded are advertised through the job center. Most vacancies are also advertised through the [CoBeNe website](#).

Dissertation fields in the VDS CoBeNe

- [Psychology, focus Social Sciences, Dr.phil \(796 310 298\)](#)
- [Psychology, focus Natural Sciences, Dr.rer.nat. \(796 605 298\)](#)
- [Psychology, focus Humanities, Dr.phil \(792 298\)](#)
- [Biology, PhD \(794 685 437\)](#)
- [Molecular Biology, PhD \(794 685 490\)](#)
- [Cognitive Science, Dr.phil \(792 425\)](#)
- [Art History, Dr.phil \(792 315\)](#)
- [Linguistics, Dr.phil \(792 327\)](#)

Most vacancies are also advertised through the [CoBeNe website](#). For more information about early career researchers funding programs see the website of the [DLE Research Services and Career Development](#).

4.2. Become VDS CoBeNe member

With your UniVie admission as a PhD candidate, the VDS CoBeNe office will guide you through the most important cornerstones of your PhD life cycle.

In order to become a school member of the VDS CoBeNe you need to read and sign our Code of Good Practice VDS CoBeNe (see also appendix).

We offer regular [welcome and information meetings](#) for new candidates in order to support you at the beginning and give you the most important guidelines. In this meeting, we will introduce the doctoral program and doctoral school in general and go through the whole PhD life cycle. You are welcome to prepare questions you are interested in.

4.3. Prepare your exposé

Every project has to be planned from the beginning on in order to be completed successfully – also and especially in scientific work. The research proposal (exposé) plays a major role when planning your research and doctoral thesis project. It is a thematically and methodologically concise description of your doctoral thesis project. Moreover, the research proposal is an important planning instrument that helps you to structure your perennial dissertation project and to realize your doctoral thesis step by step. The clearer you define your research questions, approach and goals, the easier you will manage the realization.

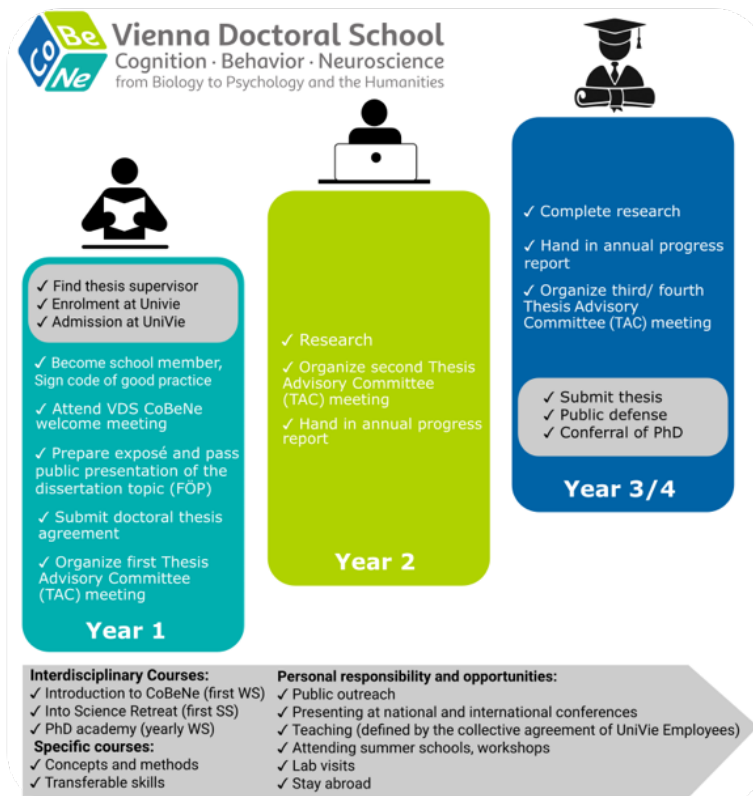


Figure 2. CoBeNe PhD Process. Year 1. After your enrolment at the UniVie and becoming member of the VDS CoBeNe, the public presentation (FÖP, fakultätsöffentliche Präsentation) has to be planned. When your dissertation topic and your supervisor(s) have been approved, you specify the requirements of your dissertation in the doctoral thesis agreement. Herein you list how you will achieve the required ECTS points (24 or 30 depending on the curriculum), e.g., the interdisciplinary course. Organize your first Thesis advisory committee (TAC) meeting. In year 2 and 3 you will proceed with research and update specifications of the dissertation agreement in the annual progress reports. Organize the second and third TAC meeting. In the last year, complete your research, write and submit the thesis and defend your PhD.

4.4. Public Presentation at the faculty (FÖP)

Within the first year, Doctoral candidates must present their dissertation project within the framework of a [faculty public presentation \(FÖP, fakultätsöffentliche Präsentation\)](#). Since the approval is highly important for the progress of your doctoral project, it is recommended to start planning of your FÖP early on. If your presentation was successful, your topic and the supervisor(s) get approved by the (Vice-) DSPL right after the presentation. If your topic is not approved you have the possibility to withdraw your application, adapt your

research proposal, and reapply for the approval of your topic.

§ According to §15 (8) [study law part of the statutes](#) of the University of Vienna and according to the curriculum, the dissertation project has to be submitted by the end of the first study year at the latest.

The public presentation is chaired by the (Vice-) Leader of the Doctoral Study Program (DSPL) and attended by members of the doctoral advisory board and your supervisor(s). They will provide feedback to your research projects and evaluate if the projects meet the scientific standards and if it can be realized successfully in a reasonable timeframe. Your 15 - 20 minutes presentation will be in person or virtual, organized by the VDS CoBeNe in collaboration with the SSC and followed by questions from the advisory board and (Vice-)DSPL. The meeting will last about 45 minutes in total.

TIP! Visit the public presentations of other PhD fellows!

To register for your FÖP please find a [suitable date](#) for you and your supervisors and hand in the following documents to the [CoBeNe Office](#): Exposé, ([SL/D11](#)), ([SL/W1](#)), ([SL/W4](#)), only if required.

4.5. Doctoral Thesis Agreement

Four weeks after your successful public presentation, you have to specify the working terms of your dissertation. For this, you and your supervisor(s) have to agree on the terms and requirements of the PhD project: The doctoral candidate, supervisor(s) and the (Vice-)DSPL agree by signing the doctoral thesis agreement.

Specification in the Dissertation Agreement:

- All participants' rights and obligations
- Detailed description of the thesis project
- Time schedule and specification of financial aspects
- Extent of supervision (frequency of meetings)
- Requirements that have to be fulfilled
- Select ECTS specified by the curriculum

4.6. Annual Reports

Doctoral candidates need to submit the annual progress report every year after handing in their dissertation agreement, where you report your progress, necessary adaptations and the next steps for you PhD project. Submission of the annual progress report either to vds.cobene@univie.ac.at (for Life Sciences) or ssc.psychologie@univie.ac.at (for Psychology & Cognitive Humanities PhD candidates).

Contacts of your Study Service Center (SSC) PhD candidates in the Life Sciences (biology, molecular biology) are administrated via the SSC Life Sciences, contact person: ernst.castellitz@univie.ac.at. The documents of PhD candidates in psychology and cognitive humanities are processed by the SSC Psychology/email: ssc.psychologie@univie.ac.at.

4.7. Thesis advisory committee

The Thesis Advisory Committee (TAC) will act as a review panel and also allows for discussion of any problems, scientific or otherwise. The TAC shall evaluate the PhD candidate's progress and give external advice to the PhD candidate and his/her supervisor(s). Moreover, the TAC offers formalized support, and a 'protected space' to resolve possible conflicts between PhD candidates, supervisors, and other research/training team members.

4.7.1. Composition

The Thesis Advisory Committee (TAC) consists of the PhD candidate, the supervisor(s), two mentors and a chair (VDS CoBeNe office representative). At least one of the mentors should be a CoBeNe faculty member who is familiar with the topic but not involved in the PhD research. The second mentor could be an advanced postdoc or professor from another discipline and/or university as we would like to support networking.

4.7.2. Meeting organization

The TAC meeting (60 minutes) is organized once per year by the candidate. It can be planned as a single event or embedded in an already existing meeting (e.g., jour fix, annual talk) at the department or working group, but needs a 'protected space' of about 30 minutes for the TAC members only. The TAC will meet once per year until completion of the thesis.

4.7.3. Structure of the TAC meeting

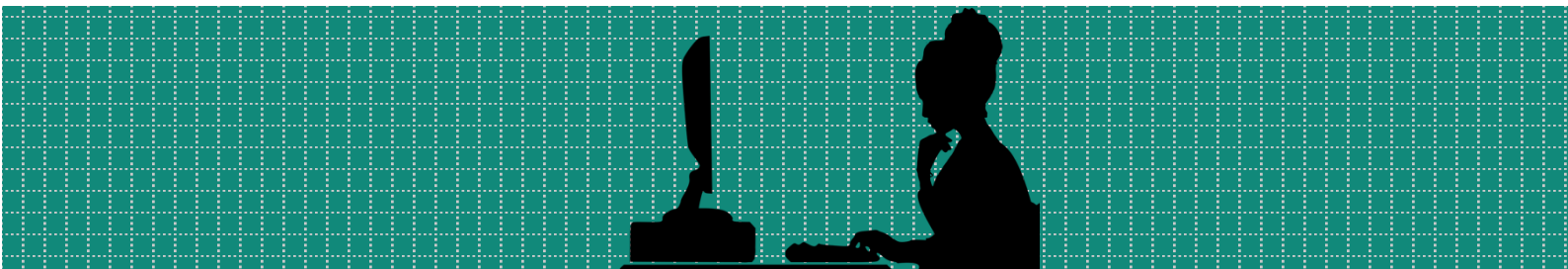
- Presentation (max. 15 min.), includes introduction, key proof-of-principle experiments and results, timeline and achievements. The presentation should focus on key points the committee needs to discuss and assess for the project.
- Discussion (max. 20 min.) about the project, the progress, the finalization.
- 'Privatissimum' with PhD candidate (incl. questions about the project and the working conditions, support if necessary)
- 'Privatissimum' with supervisor(s)
- Summary and feedback

4.7.4. Checkpoints

- What are the PhD candidate goals, achievements and problems?
- Are expectations and progress perception of PhD candidate and supervisor(s) aligned?
- Are resources and support in place?
- Is the PhD candidate on a good track to become an independent scientist?
- Is the proposed time schedule realistic?
- Is the proposed plan for publications and/or the dissertation aligned with the supervisor(s)?

4.7.5. The TAC offers:

- Monitor project progression
- Individual feedback and recommendations
- Support in administrative issues by the CoBeNe Office
- Referral to other supporting entities if needed



5. PhD education

The VDS CoBeNe educational program is designed to:

- reflect the range of its fields
- allow in-depth training in the specific research field, and
- to experience training in transferable skills and scientific exchange

Furthermore, it is designed to allow a high degree of flexibility in terms of what to get the credits for, e.g., specific training in concepts and methods, transferable skills, or presenting at national and international conferences, but in any case, adhering to the individual curricula and required ECTS points.

5.1. CoBeNe interdisciplinary seminars & events

The CoBeNe interdisciplinary seminars and events shall foster interdisciplinary thinking and enhance peer exchange. We offer:

- Introduction to CoBeNe seminar
- Into Science seminar retreat
- PhD Academy

The goal is to raise awareness about similarities and differences in the conceptual and methodological approaches within and between disciplines.

5.1.1. Introduction to CoBeNe

The goal of this seminar is to provide PhD candidates an overview of the research disciplines, concepts, and methods offered within the VDS CoBeNe. Faculty members from the four core disciplines will introduce their fields, summarize the main topics and approaches, and explain state-of-the-art research with informative examples, highlighting conceptual and/or methodological cross-connections between disciplines. The learning outcome shall be (a) knowledge about the CoBeNe disciplines at University Vienna and (b) awareness of the current research foci pursued and methods used. The seminar takes place in a blocked format each winter semester ([see CoBeNe homepage for program and registration information](#)).

5.1.2. Into Science Seminar

Within the first phase of the PhD, CoBeNe PhD candidates are encouraged to participate in the "Into Science" seminar retreat, offered in the summer semester. The aim of this seminar is to teach skills and competencies that are essential for a successful PhD and to build a strong peer group. PhD candidates will be confronted with the challenges of an early career researcher and reflect and discuss possible coping strategies. In the seminar, PhD candidates will develop and improve their skills in critical thinking and insight, science communication and independence. This seminar is recommended for every CoBeNe PhD candidate, but there is only a limited number of places. See announcements on [CoBeNe homepage](#).

5.1.3. PhD Academy

This interdisciplinary CoBeNe PhD Academy connects like-minded, enthusiastic, early-stage researchers, presenting their PhD projects, methods and outcome in the multifaceted field of in a conference-like format with parallel sessions, key lectures and a lot of discussions.

- A conference open to all PhD candidates and supervisors affiliated with the Vienna Doctoral School CoBeNe, as well as Master students
- A chance for doctoral candidates to present their work to an audience of peers at any stage of their PhD
- An occasion for speakers to gain 4 ECTS
- A 2.5-day event bringing together researchers from the CoBeNe disciplines

Detail information about the registration process and reports on the last PhD academies can be found at the [CoBeNe homepage](#).

5.1.4. Transferable Skills

In the early stage of the research, candidates are encouraged to acquire additional transferable skills such as scientific communication, scientific writing and many others. [Trainings and workshops](#) are offered by the Research Services and Career Development.

5.1.5. Well-being for early career researchers

Academic work is a creative process which takes a great deal of self-motivation and often it is quite a solitary activity which requires a lot of discipline and persistence. This can make you feel insecure and can

drain your motivation. Group coaching is an opportunity to reach the goal of a successful career with a focus on your personal well-being. Schedules and more information on the [CoBeNe homepage](#).

5.1.6. PhD organized Summer School and Courses

The VDS CoBeNe invites CoBeNe PhD candidates to submit proposals for [PhD-Organized Summer Schools](#) integrating both academic and social components for junior researchers. The mid-term goal is to develop annual summer schools with a specific topic, targeting CoBeNe PhD fellows and affiliated international junior researchers.

We also encourage [PhD candidates to self-organize courses or seminars](#) interesting for our PhD candidates. Please contact vds.cobene@univie.ac.at if you want to organize something similar!

6. Funding possibilities

Here you can find information about funding possibilities for your PhD project, grants and fellowships as well as grants for studying abroad. For details regarding the eligibility, deadlines, application and selection process please follow the provided links.

6.1. PhD Seed Grants

The VDS CoBeNe Seed grant is intended to help PhD candidates with no or not much financial support from third party funds of their supervisors. The goal is to support conference presentations, fill knowledge gaps and produce research suitable for publication in academic journals. Currently the call is open throughout the semester until

the budget is spent. Each candidate can apply for a seed grant in the amount of 2000€ during each calendar year. The final decision about the grant is made by the (vice-) DSPL for each CoBeNe discipline. Eligibility and requirements are found on the [homepage](#).

6.2. Completion grants

With the dissertation completion grants the VDS CoBeNe supports junior researchers of all disciplines in the last phase of their PhD project. It is the aim of the fellowships that the PhD projects should be finalized and submitted within the funding period of up to six months. Multiple sponsorships by other institutions and/or the University of Vienna are excluded. The recipients are responsible for the possible taxation of the scholarship as well as the insurance during the period of the scholarship and are informed that in case of an annual net income of more than EUR 8.580,- this has to be taxed. If the stated general conditions are met, the final scholarship is considered "income from self-employed work". [See homepage](#) for application and submission deadlines, required documents and further details.

6.3. Summer School grants

The VDS CoBeNe invites CoBeNe PhD fellows to submit proposals for PhD-Organized Summer Schools to integrate both academic and social components for junior researchers. Find details on [CoBeNe homepage](#).

6.4. External funding for studying abroad

The following two grant possibilities support early career research in pursuing international independent research by financing research stays abroad.

- [Short-term grants abroad\(KWA\)](#)
- [Marietta Blau Grant \(ÖAW\)](#)

6.5. List of external fundings

- Open calls and awards: [Open Calls and Awards \(univie.ac.at\)](#)
- Funding list of the research services: [\(Jung-\)Wissenschaftler*innen \(univie.ac.at\)](#)

7. Rights and obligations of PhD candidates

In order to become a full member of the Doctoral School, everyone needs to sign the [Code of Good Practice](#). This can be achieved online, by entering basic information about the candidate as well as selection of the CoBeNe discipline. Please read carefully through our Code of Good Practice, the Addendum to Open-Science Practices and to Participation in Student Supervision.