

## PHD SUPERVISION GUIDELINES

These guidelines aim to give each stakeholder of a PhD project an overview of the tasks and responsibilities lying ahead of them in the phases before, during and after the PhD programme. A PhD dissertation is an individual intellectual project to be carried out in the framework of clearly defined goals and requirements. Clarity and transparency are necessary regarding the objectives pursued and the means implemented for their attainment. All parties should ensure that PhD candidates can conduct their research in an environment conducive to a respectful, open and supportive working relationship. In line with the Charter of the Institute (available [here](#)), the research environment must be safe, equitable and free from harassment and discrimination. Regardless of their respective roles or position, all parties should treat each other with dignity, confidence and respect.

### PhD candidates:

As early-stage professional researchers, the PhD candidates should:

- Comply with all regulations, policies and guidelines available [here](#) and [here](#), particularly with respect to the conduct of research (including academic integrity, requirements for ethics approval, plagiarism and copyright) and health and safety in the workplace (including research undertaken outside the Institute e.g. fieldwork);
- Be responsible for selecting supervisor(s) by the end of their first semester; submit them a written proposal if asked to do so, discuss prospects of co-supervision with them, inform them of the selected courses, and discuss with them the possibility to obtain a minor in another discipline if they wish to do so;
- Be regularly in contact with supervisor(s), attend and come prepared to all scheduled meetings (at least once every semester) with supervisor(s);
- Be responsible for presenting ongoing work in a timely fashion and to prepare a research plan and timetable for the programme, paying due heed to fixed deadlines (courses, MPT defence, final defence and corrections);
- Complete periodical progress reports in conjunction with the supervisor(s) and the internal committee member in order to monitor progress and highlight any unexpected problems which can then be addressed;
- Inform the supervisor(s) about unexpected and/or prolonged absences or academic status adjustments (such as leave of absence authorised by the Director of Studies Office), and alert them to any issues or events that might impact on their ability to progress on the research;
- Inform their supervisor(s) of their preference for the selection of the internal committee member for the *Mémoire préliminaire de thèse* (MPT) which must be defended by the end of the third semester, and maintain their supervisor informed of any discussion with colleagues before finalizing this selection;
- Inform the supervisor(s) of changes in the PhD topic, methodology or other contingent reasons that may lead the PhD candidate to ask for an internal

- committee member or the final dissertation defence who is different from the internal committee member who evaluated the MPT; keep the supervisor(s) informed about any ongoing discussion with the concerned parties;
- Provide a clear timetable about filed job applications so that the supervisor(s) have enough time to prepare and send letters of recommendation where required;
  - Participate in and contribute to the Institute research culture, including the research seminars organized by their department, as well as the research events organised by the Centres whose thematic topic may be relevant to their research;
  - Maintain good working relations with other PhD candidates and participate in the creation of a culture of inclusiveness and professionalism;
  - Keep the supervisor(s) informed in advance about research collaborations, teaching assistantships and research assistantships, and ask for advice of the compatibility of such side projects with the PhD project;
  - Inform the supervisor, Director of Studies Office and the HR department of any additional job contract they might sign in addition to their scholarship, teaching assistantship and research assistantship and ensure that the former complies with the existing regulations;
  - Inform the supervisor(s) with a proper justification if they are not comfortable with the choice of one or more member(s) of the dissertation committee.
  - Ensure that the submitted dissertation manuscript complies with the Institute's requirements.
  - Interact with the supervisor(s) in a respectful and professional way.

### Supervisor(s):

The supervisor(s) are mentors and/or role models. They should ensure that the PhD candidates are free to conduct independent and autonomous research activities, and that they obtain adequate support for carrying it out. They should provide guidance, time and support to their PhD candidates when they search for an academic or professional job.

While it is important to acknowledge the specificity of each PhD candidates/supervisor(s) relationship, the supervisor(s) should:

- Supervise in principle between 2 and 10 dissertations at a time;
- Comply with the relevant regulations, policies, guidelines of the Institute available [here](#);
- Draw the PhD candidates' attention to all relevant policies including, but not limited to, those on the conduct of research, ethical requirements (including internal rules of Institute and, if applicable, of the country where the research is conducted), safe working practices, intellectual property, plagiarism, copyright requirements, authorship ([here](#));
- Provide guidance about the choice of a topic, the basic structure of a research project, an appropriate research method, a realistic plan of work, the standard expected, the literature and available sources, etc.,
- Discuss the appropriate format for the dissertation (e.g. research monograph or a body of research papers, published or publishable in internationally recognized, peer-reviewed journals) and agree on the style and layout to be used in written work;
- Monitor, evaluate and report on the PhD candidates' progress according to the rules and timelines applicable in the Department in accordance with general guidelines adopted by the Director of studies Office;

- Discuss with the PhD candidates the level of contact needed, for example through regular meetings (at least once every semester); ensure as far as possible that this line of communication remains clear and open;
- Ensure that no conflict of interest or a potential conflict of interest exists with the PhD candidates and, if so, inform and consult the department chair with a view to finding an appropriate solution;
- Give advice on the schedule proposed by the PhD candidate for the completion of successive stages of the doctoral curriculum (courses, MPT, final defence, corrections) so that the MPT first, and then the whole dissertation may be submitted within the scheduled time;
- Request written work as appropriate and return that work with constructive feedback in reasonable time (in particular before the submission of the MPT and of the final manuscript);
- Give advice and remain open to suggestions from the PhD candidate with regard to the choice of an internal committee member (or eventually co-supervisor) for the MPT, as well as to the selection of outside readers for the final dissertation defence
- Inform the PhD candidates in advance of any proposed periods of absence either on research and sabbatical leave, and in these periods of absence, provide contact details so that supervisory contact may be maintained with the candidates;
- Provide guidance in fieldwork in case of field-based research;
- Direct the PhD candidates to other experts in the discipline, if appropriate, and advise on relevant conferences, symposia, colloquium, CUSO workshops<sup>1</sup>, as well as on publications in scientific journals or with publishing houses;
- Be available to read drafts and provide prompt and accurate written comments on those drafts, particularly in the final stage of drafting;
- Maintain transparent communication with the PhD candidates about the assessment on whether the draft dissertation is ready or not to be defended;
- Provide guidance on the preparation of the oral defence once the authorization to defend is granted;
- Provide advice concerning career opportunities, additional qualification needs and the right steps to take towards a future career (targeting conferences, entering and managing networks, understanding the code of academia, etc.);
- Write and send recommendation letters in a timely manner, so that the PhD candidate does not miss job opportunities;
- Promote the PhD candidates' interest in terms of publication opportunities and respect ethical academic standards.
- Interact with the PhD candidates in a respectful and professional way.

The co-supervisors involved supervise the PhD candidates on an equal footing and thus have the same responsibilities. In the case of a minor, the co-supervisor should introduce the PhD candidates to the fundamentals of the discipline and provide support in understanding the methodologies and expertise specific to their field of study. The role of each party may be formalised in a written agreement, if this is felt to be appropriate.

#### **Internal Committee Member:**

The internal committee member should in no way substitute herself or himself for the supervisor(s). Supervisor(s) and internal committee member should regularly consult

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<sup>1</sup> The CUSO, an association of universities in French-speaking Switzerland, organises workshops on transversal skills which are available to the Institute's PhD candidates (more information [here](#)).

with each other and provide feedback to the PhD candidates. As evaluator at the defences of the MPT and the final manuscript, he or she should:

- Correspond with the supervisor(s) and PhD candidates if need be for clarification/resolution of methodological and content issues during the dissertation process;
- If he or she becomes aware of significant problems or weaknesses (e.g., in the student's writing, research-related skills, or personal life), refer the PhD candidate to appropriate resources and, if appropriate, share these concerns with the PhD supervisor in a timely fashion;
- Read the MPT and the final manuscript and provide PhD candidates with meaningful feedback while giving special attention to the part related to his or her field of expertise;
- Approve the final draft of the MPT and the dissertation defence and produce a report before each oral defence;

#### **External Committee member(s):**

Chosen by the supervisor(s) in concertation with the PhD candidates prior to the defence, the external member(s) of the dissertation committee should:

- Provide an external view and his or her expertise on the area of the dissertation - if chosen before the official submission of the dissertation, he or she has no formal obligation to meet with the student or to offer supervision;
- Read the final manuscript and provide a review of the strengths and weaknesses of the dissertation and recommend revisions (as appropriate) within the time limits prescribed by the regulations;
- Make a recommendation in due time on whether the PhD candidates should proceed to the defence.
- Participate in the defence and take part in the final deliberation.
- At his or her discretion, provide the PhD candidates with a letter of recommendation, introduce them in his or her network and give his or her feedback on a possible publication of their work.

#### **Department Chairs:**

In order to maintain an environment within the Department which is conducive to a research culture, Department Chairs should:

- Supervise the selection of PhD candidates and decide on the financial aid at the Admission and Financial Aid Committee;
- Officially welcome PhD candidates at the beginning of their studies and introduce them to their peers and to the Department Faculty;
- Communicate very clearly about the existence about conflict-litigation units, for instance the Code of Conduct Advice and Support Team ([here](#));
- Ensure that PhD candidates find a supervisor by the end of the first semester as required by the regulations in place;
- Provide support, within the limits of available resources, to PhD candidates' professional activities; ensure that they can access financial resources made available by the department in a fair and transparent manner;
- Give PhD candidates the opportunity to present the progress of their research at an event (conference, colloquium, round tables, etc.) or seminar organized or sponsored by the Department, in front of a community of recognized and

competent researchers, with, if possible, external professors or researchers, within the framework of a quality approach;

- Highlight PhD candidates' achievements (publications, awards, conference participation, extra-curricular projects, etc.) on the department's website;
- Ensure that all PhD candidates have a webpage by the end of their first year, where all the relevant information regarding their PhD topic, supervisor(s), is properly indicated;
- Organize yearly meetings during which faculty can report on the individual progress of the PhD candidates they supervise, so that no PhD candidate is left in a difficult situation without giving the department a chance to collectively address the issue;
- Consult with PhD departmental representatives in a regular manner, so as to become aware of structural or individual problems that PhD candidates may face, and secure some time within departmental meetings to discuss PhD issues with faculty and PhD representatives;
- Serve a critical role in the mediation of any conflict that may occur between supervisor(s) and PhD candidates, in accordance with the procedures laid down in the PhD Implementation Guidelines available [here](#).
- Ensure that all PhD candidates receive proper compensation for additional work done to the benefit of the department.

#### **Director of Studies Office:**

In charge of the application of the Academic Regulations and the Implementation Guidelines of the PhD programmes available [here](#), the Director of Studies Office should:

- Ensure that the admission of PhD candidates meets the eligibility criteria of each programme;
- Welcome PhD candidates at the beginning of the academic year;
- Communicate very clearly about the existence of conflict-litigation units, for instance the Code of [Conduct Advice and Support Team \(here\)](#);
- Ensure that professors respect the limits set in these guidelines as regards the minimum and maximum number of dissertations to supervise.
- Participate at the PhD Admission and Financial Aid Committee;
- Advise the PhD candidates on any questions they may have regarding their studies;
- Consider duly motivated applications for co-supervision, and in case of approval, make sure of the agreement of both supervisors in writing;
- Check with the PhD Programmes Secretariat that PhD candidates obtain the required credits for their curriculum in time;
- Propose adjustments (extension, leave of absence, interruption of studies) in case of unforeseeable circumstances preventing PhD candidates from pursuing their studies;
- Propose skills workshops to PhD candidates;
- Approve the PhD dissertation committee, on the basis of a proposal from the supervisor(s);
- Decides on the definitive elimination of PhD candidates who do not meet the requirements of their curriculum or do not comply with the regulations;
- Take appropriate sanctions in case of plagiarism or cheating;
- Chair the Opposition Committee in case of appeal against a decision taken against PhD candidates.

### **Director of Research Office:**

Consistently with its mission of providing PhD candidates with a series of services related to their research activities, the Director of Research Office should:

- Participate at the PhD Admission and Financial Aid Committee;
- Inform PhD candidates about opportunities and programmes offered by CUSO;
- Advise PhD candidates on postdoctoral opportunities (including the FNS postdocmobility, doc.ch fellowships) and on research career opportunities in general;
- Advise PhD candidates regarding ethical concerns in exceptional cases when the expertise of PhD supervisor(s) may need to be supplemented with external advice;
- Organise mediation or directly decide cases (through the Ethics Committee) involving ethical misconduct and/or coauthorship conflicts between PhD candidates, or between PhD candidates and members of the Institute's research community more broadly;
- Offer information or training sessions on various topics (academic careers, FNS instruments, ethics, etc.);
- Interview PhD holders who have just defended their dissertation to present their work, either in written form as part of a News or as a podcast for the ABD Stories series;

### **PhD programmes Secretariat:**

- Answer questions that PhD candidates may have regarding administrative procedures;
- Ensure that doctoral candidates meet deadlines set by the regulations and inform the Director of Studies Office if needed;
- Inform the Director of Studies Office of any breach of regulations, guidelines or Code of Conduct;
- Ensure that candidates comply with the requirements of their curriculum and inform the Director of Studies if needed;
- Organise the MPT and final dissertation defences, as well as colloquium if the manuscript is not deemed admissible;
- Receive the final manuscript, produce the diploma and final transcript and ensure that it is deposited in the library;
- Invite PhD candidates to participate in the graduation ceremony.

Approved by the Academic Committee, on 7 December 2021 and  
by the Collège des professeur.e.s on 14 December 2021.