



PhD Education in Vienna

BY LUCAS ZINNER, June 2019

Context in Austria.



The doctorate and the University Act

UA § 1: "The promotion of young researchers involves the development of abilities and qualifications both in the area of scientific and artistic content as well as in the field of methodological skills with the aim of contributing to the social challenges in a changing society."(translated)

UA § 51 (2) no. 12: Doctoral studies serve to **enable independent scientific work**, as well as the development and promotion of the next generation of researcher." (translated)

Context in Austria.

University development plan 2019-2024

"Building on the relevant international standards published as recommendations by the EU Commission or the EUA ..., doctoral studies at universities ... are to be further developed." (translated, p 28)

System objective #5: Promotion of young scientists

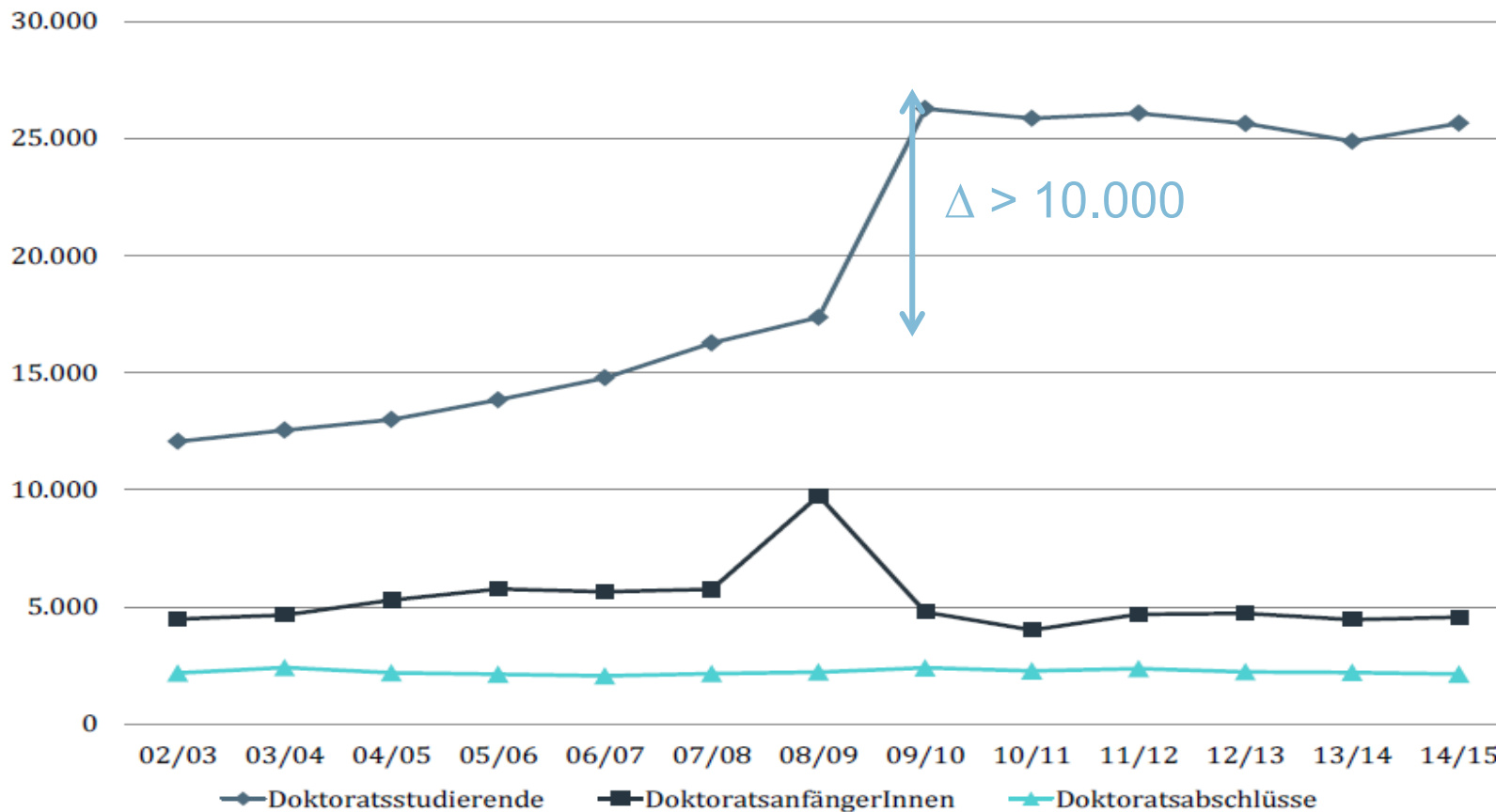
Implementation objective b:

Increasing the level of education by further developing the quality requirements in terms of content and expanding the administrative and organisational support for doctoral candidates (= "structured doctoral programmes")

Challenges in Austria. Input output dilemma



Grafik 2: Entwicklung der Anzahl von Doktoratsstudierenden, DoktoratsanfängerInnen und Abschlüssen von Doktoratsstudien



> 26.000 Candidates

15.000 (before 2008)

5.000 Beginner

2.400 Graduates

Doktoratsstudierende (exklusive Incoming-Mobilitätsstudierende) der Wintersemester 2002/03 bis 2014/15.

DoktoratsanfängerInnen (exklusive Incoming-Mobilitätsstudierende) der Studienjahre 2003/04 bis 2014/15.

Doktoratsabschlüsse (exklusive Incoming-Mobilitätsstudierende) der Studienjahre 2002/03 bis 2014/15 (Privatuniversitäten bis 2013/14).

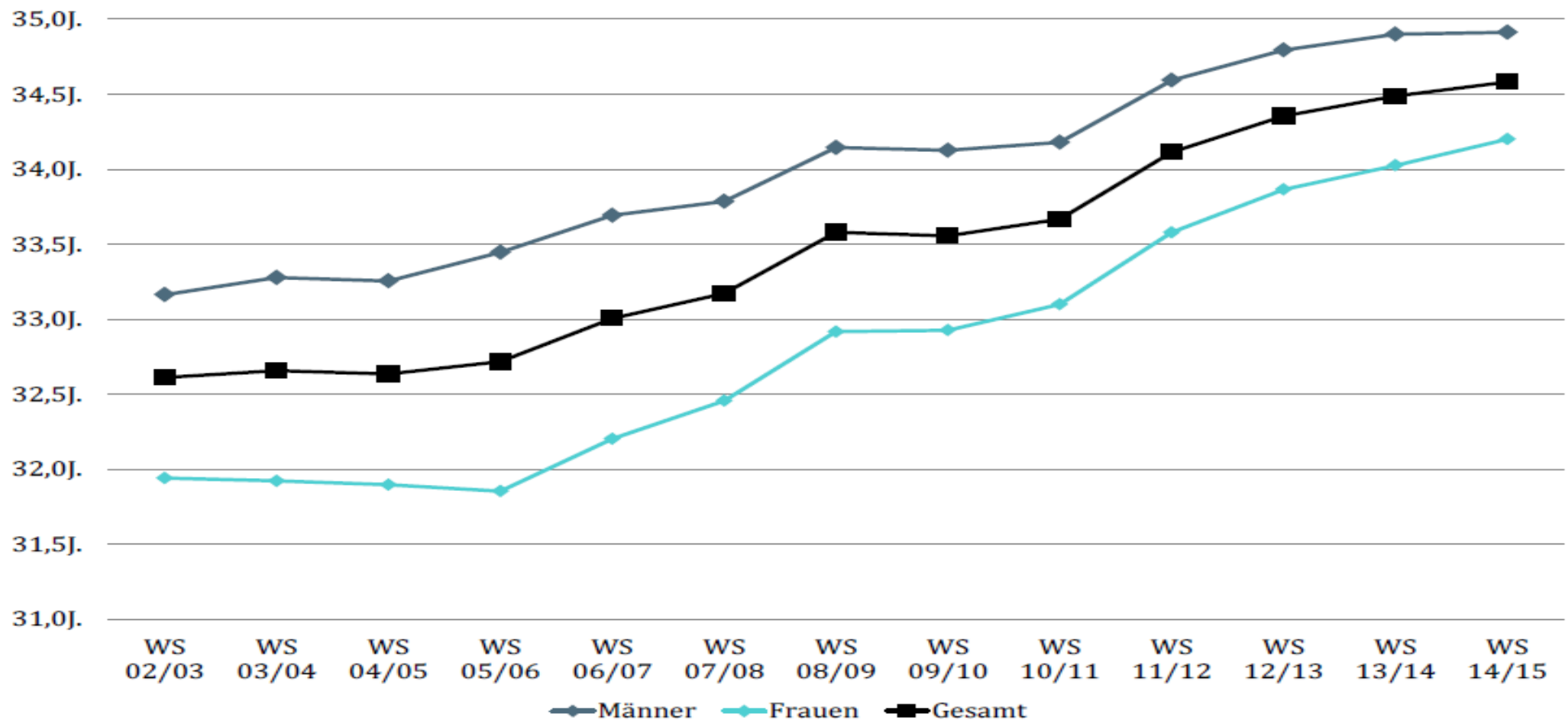
Quelle: Hochschulstatistik (BMWF, Statistik Austria). Berechnungen des IHS.

Challenges in Austria.

Development of candidates average ages



Grafik 4: Entwicklung des Durchschnittsalters der Doktoratsstudierenden nach Geschlecht



Doktoratsstudierende (exklusive Incoming-Mobilitätsstudierende) der Wintersemester 2002/03 bis 2014/15.

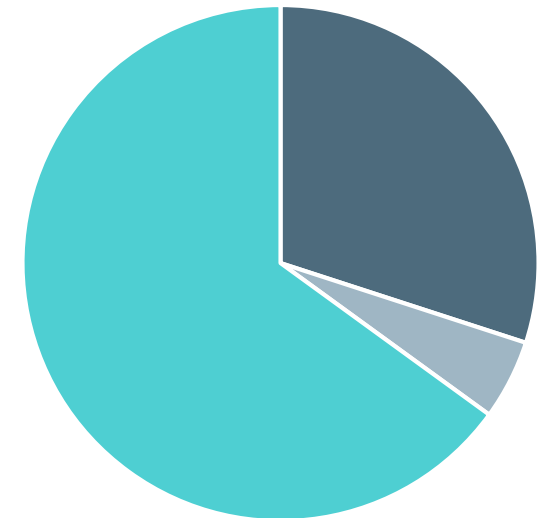
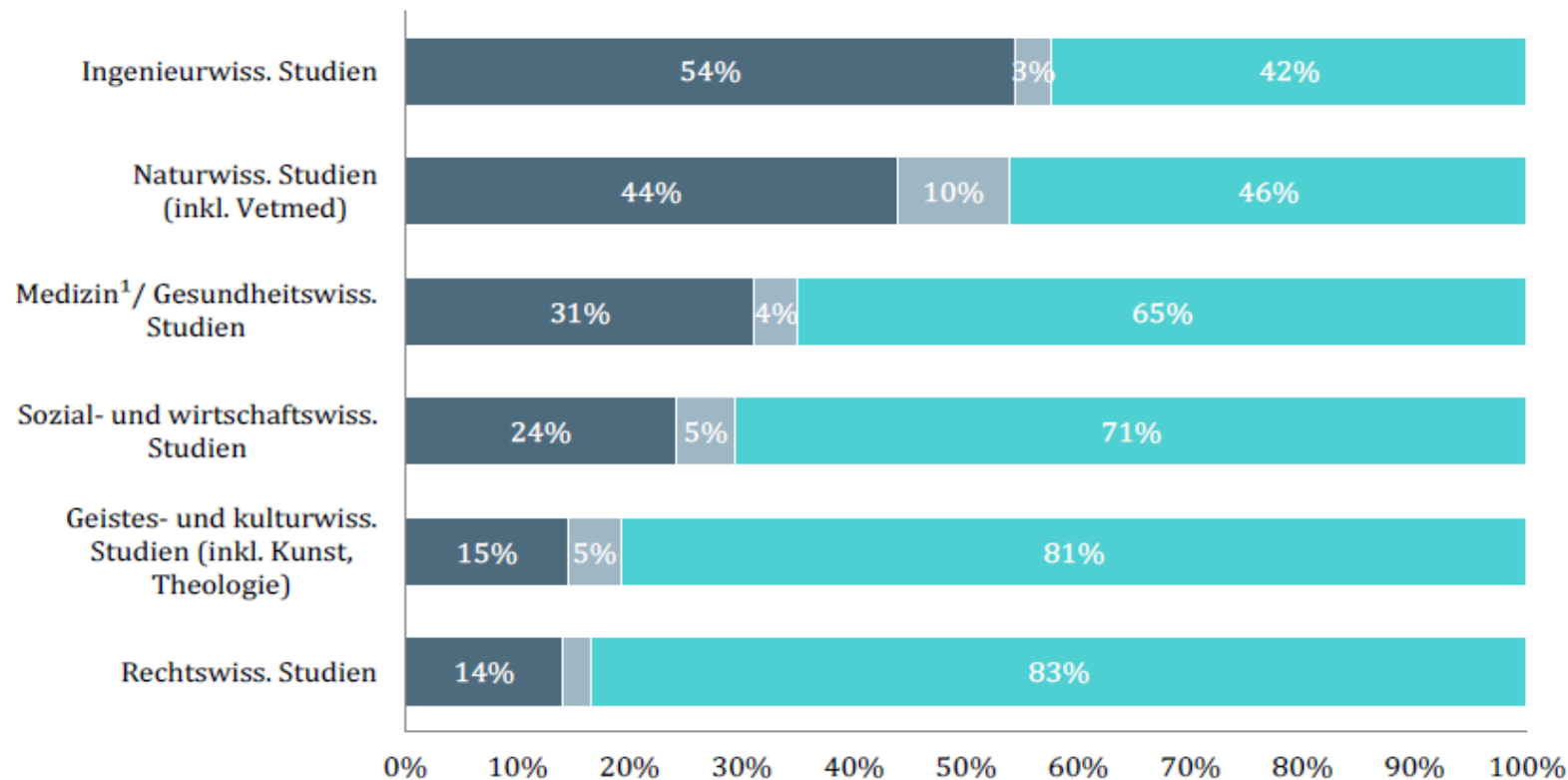
Stichtag für die Altersberechnung ist der 31. Dezember. Zur Berechnung werden abgerundete Altersangaben in Jahren verwendet.

Quelle: Hochschulstatistik (BMWF, Statistik Austria). Berechnungen des IHS.

Challenges in Austria. Financed vs non-financed



Grafik 12: Rahmenbedingungen der Dissertation nach Studiengruppe



Diss. im Rahmen der ET employed
 Diss. über Stip. finanziert² scholarship
 Diss. weder im Rahmen der ET noch über Stip. finanziert no financial support

¹ Bei medizinischen Doktoratsstudien handelt es sich um das Dr.-Studium der medizinischen Wissenschaft, nicht um die ärztliche Ausbildung des Studiums Human- und Zahnmedizin.

² SelbsterhalterInnen-Stipendium, Studienabschluss-Stipendium, DOC-Stipendium oder eine andere Förderung, die mind. 75% der Gesamteinnahmen ausmacht. Quelle: Studierenden-Sozialerhebung 2015.

Context in Austria.
Candidates' satisfaction, e.g.



Satisfaction with selected aspects depending on the financing situation	Employed candidates	Candidates with scholarships	Candidates without financial support
Supervision	72%	78%	54%
Opportunity to exchange with peers	69%	73%	50%
Access to research infrastructure	80%	60%	43%
Embedded in research activities at the department	70%	49%	31%
Support during the publication process	51%	44%	29%

Source: Student Social Survey 2015



Structured doctoral education is defined as...

...the establishment of procedures or structures and commitment which, on the one hand, **ensure the quality of the research**, on the other hand ensure an **optimal and adequate scientific supervision** of the candidates, with the aim of securing independent, high-quality academic research by the candidates, embedding them best possible into the institutional research environment and leading them to a completion through active **supervision**. (translated, Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy)



Performance agreement 2019-21

- *"Over the past decade, doctoral schools have established themselves internationally ... as best practices for the organisation of doctoral training at European universities ... They are at the centre of the institutional strategy in the area of promoting young researchers across narrow disciplinary boundaries, providing the organisational framework, setting quality standards for their native doctoral programmes and ensuring that they are adhered to."* (translated, p 26)
- In the present performance agreement period, the establishment of doctoral schools at the University of Vienna will ... set a further milestone towards visibility as an internationally attractive research centre. The medium-term goal ... is to include all doctoral candidates of the university in support structures.
- Target: until Oct. 2020 50% of all candidates should be in doctoral schools



Different layers for measures

Legal framework

- University Act
- University regulations
- Curricula (and sometimes internal procedural guidelines)

Organizational level

- Doctoral school(s): form the organizational and stable framework
- Doctoral programs: deliver the content

Individualized level

- Support structures and feedback mechanisms



Structure through schools and programmes

- Programs have a mission.
- Programs ensure scientific socialization.
- The scientific support is provided in the programs.
- Programs secure a critical mass and promote peer culture and self-organization forms of the doctoral candidates.
- Programs are the first level of quality assurance from the selection of doctoral candidates to monitoring with appropriate feedback mechanisms.
- Programs are geared to international/disciplinary standards.
- Programs drive the content and are thus profiling for the faculties.

3 major reform steps : #1

1. 2009 first reform at the University of Vienna:

- »Introduction of Faculty Public Presentation and
- »Dissertation Agreement
- »Conversion to 3-year curricula
- »Establishment of the Center for Doctoral Studies

3 major reform steps : #2

2. 2018 UA allows definition of qualitative admission criteria for doctoral and PhD studies

»University of Vienna defines criteria in curricula

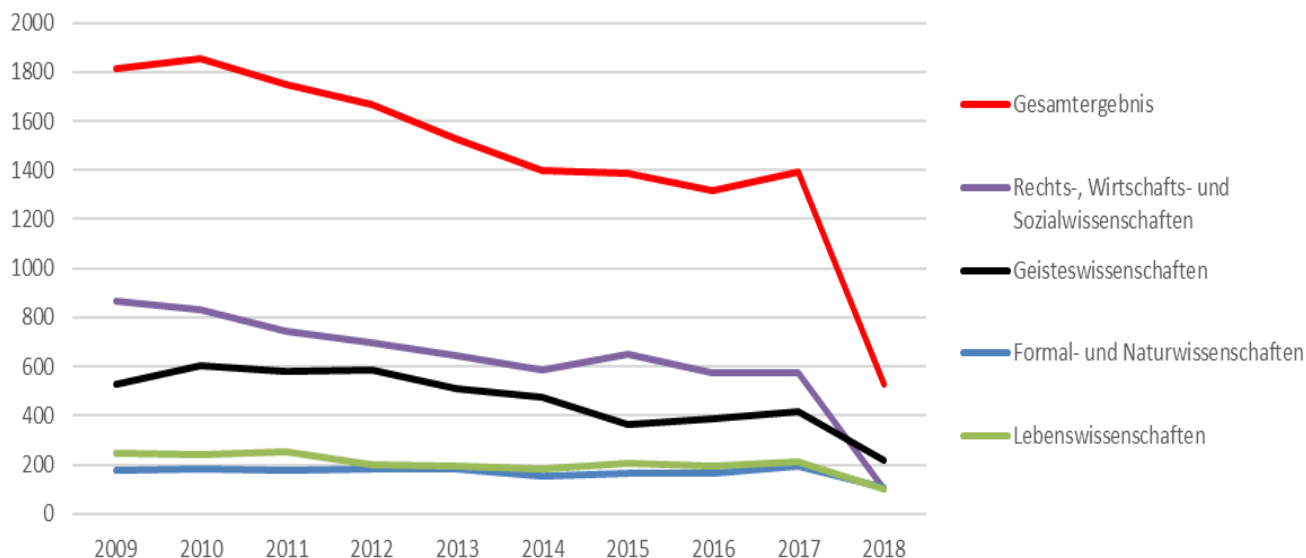
- CV
- letter of motivation
- First description of the research project
- a provisional commitment to supervision

»Admission unit is embedded in the Center



3 major reform steps : #2

2. 2018 UA allows definition of qualitative admission criteria for doctoral and PhD studies



Admission approx. 1,800 → 500
Total number approx. 10,000 → 5,200
We aim for approximately 700 admissions p.a. (and > 80% success rate, i.e. approximately 500 graduations p.a.) with a study duration of 4.5 years yields to a target of 3,000 candidates (steady state)

3 major reform steps : #3

3. 2019/20 Implementation of Doctoral Schools

- » The label "UniVie Doctoral School" is applied by the schools and awarded by the rectorate to schools that fulfil certain guidelines regarding structure, governance, etc.
 - Schools are applied for in consultation with the deans concerned.
 - The allocation is temporary and can be repeated.
- » Schools offer additional services compared to the "normal programme". This remains (for the time being) the same as before.
- » Schools are attractive and are advertised internationally:
 - Attractiveness of the services (rights/obligations) as a central assessment criterion of the application
 - Positions are advertised, transparent procedure for filling them

3 major reform steps: #3

3. 2019/20 Implementation of Doctoral Schools

» Schools are organised decentrally

- Each school has a leader and a leadership team. Proposed by dean(s). Leaders are research-active and academically recognised.
- Schools themselves determine the structure, governance, rights and duties within the framework of the guidelines and ensure that they are observed.
- Schools define their (disciplinary) educational programme
- Schools have their own administration or can fall back on existing support.
- Schools have their own annual indicator-based budget (for travel, visiting professors, etc.). Schools can also finance doctoral students from this budget.
- Schools report to the Vice-Rector for Research.

Quality Assurance steps during the PhD



Quality checks	Responsible	Timeline
Admission: formal requirements and interviews	Program Director	Before enrollment
Presentation of the research expose by candidate	Faculty	Latest after 12 months
Continuous supervision, ideally in teams	Candidate and Supervisor	ongoing
Annual progress reports	Candidate and Supervisor	After months 24,36,...
Software based plagiarism check	Program Director	submission
2 external reviews per dissertation	Program Director	
Public defence	Program Director and Faculty	





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