

GRAZ DECLARATION

from the PhD candidates point of view

ORPHEUS PhD candidates Workshop "*Standards for PhD Education in Europe - Implementation and Ameliorations from the PhD Candidates point of view*" organized by the Medical University of Graz held on October 18-19, 2013 focused on Supervision, Training and Assessment. Due to the increased globalization the importance of setting standards, discussing problems and challenges openly and without prejudice is necessary.

The participants of the workshop support the ORPHEUS-AMSE-WFME Standards. However, the participants recommend more precise and distinct guidelines to further improve and standardize PhD education. The points stated in this consensus document are the results of different experiences, opinions and the national regulations as well as the research environment of the participants.

SUPERVISION

- » There should be a "Training and Supervision Agreement", signed by the PhD candidate, the Supervisor and the Head of the Institution/Dean of Studies, stating rights and duties of all involved parties.
- » Each PhD candidate should have a Supervision Committee* including:
 - Supervisor (at least PhD or equivalent)
 - Internal co-supervisor at the research facility (at least PhD or equivalent)
 - External co-supervisor from another department/university
- » The Supervision Committee should meet regularly (at least once a year) during the PhD program and evaluate the scientific development of the project and candidate. They document and report to the Dean of Doctoral Studies/Head of the PhD school. They should create a comfortable environment for candidates to give feedback about the supervision, while the supervisor is not personally present.
- » The supervisors have to be qualified and experienced to provide adequate scientific advice.
- » There should be regular meetings (minimum once a week) between the PhD candidate and at least one of the supervisors.
- » The PhD candidate and the supervisors need to define projects which are primarily assigned to one PhD candidate, where he/she has the major responsibility to pursue and present the project. This should be intended to lead to a first-author paper.
- » There should be obligatory minimum formal training for supervisors focusing on leadership, guidance, university regulations and PhD candidate training and development.
- » The supervisor and the PhD candidate are both responsible to ensure that the PhD candidate finishes his/her project in time (according to the ORPHEUS Standards 3-4 years full-time research or equivalent). If not so, the supervisor and the PhD candidate have to justify this in front of the department/doctoral school. It has to be ensured that the PhD candidate may continue his/her research, when reasonable.

* Supervision Committee monitors the progression of the PhD candidate throughout the whole period of the PhD training.

** Assessment Committee is evaluating the thesis and the defense of the PhD candidate.

- » If the cooperation between the PhD candidate and supervisor is inadequate, the PhD candidate has to have the opportunity to change supervision within the university and still keep his/her position as a PhD candidate. There has to be the option to talk confidentially with a neutral party that is recognized by the university (e.g. ombudsman).

TRAINING

- » At the start of the PhD program, there should be an introduction course that enables PhD candidates to get familiar with the research facilities and fellow PhD candidates.
- » During their PhD training, candidates must have the opportunity to acquire transferable skills to allow them to fulfill the needs of academic and non-academic positions.
- » PhD candidates should be encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities (e.g. organizing meetings, student representation). These activities are documented in a portfolio.
- » PhD candidates should have the opportunity to teach, supervise undergraduate students and get proper training for it.
- » PhD candidate representatives should be full members in all decision-making bodies related to the PhD programs.
- » PhD candidates have to have a minimum of one first-author publication based on original research in a peer-reviewed SCI-listed journal in order to graduate. A total of three publications (or more) should be aimed for.
- » The PhD candidate has to be responsible to write a draft for the first-author manuscript for publication, where supervisors give advice and correct the work.
- » Writing the thesis is a part of the PhD program and should be funded as such.
- » PhD candidates should have the opportunity to present their results themselves at international conferences and meetings of the field of research at least twice during their PhD program.
- » PhD programs should encourage international mobility within the training period.
- » In general, training should be in English.

ASSESSMENT

- » To make it accessible to the international scientific community, the thesis should be written in English. An abstract may be included in the local language.
- » The members of the Assessment Committee** should not have any conflict of interest with other persons involved in the PhD project.
- » The written thesis should be assessed by a minimum of two reviewers, at least one from abroad.
- » The oral defense should be public and in English.

Participants of the PhD candidates Workshop support the above statements with their signature. The statements represent their personal opinions, not the opinion of their university per se.

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