How and why to do a PhD in Heidelberg?

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Director Graduate Academy
Heidelberg University

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Who are we?

The Graduate Academy serves as

- A central point of contact and support for young researchers (PhD and postdoctoral level) and their mentors.
- A dedicated provider for efficient and effective tools for tailormade career development towards supporting the transition into academic careers and facilitating the identification of ambitious career opportunities outside of academia.
- A facilitator to enable the transfer of science into society.
# Information Services and Consultancy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information services &amp; consultancy</th>
<th>Mayte Dächer</th>
<th>Elif Avcu (EZ)</th>
<th>Daniel Davies</th>
<th>N.N.</th>
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# Sponsorship for Doctoral Candidates

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<tr>
<th>Sponsorship for doctoral candidates</th>
<th>Janelle Ramaley</th>
<th>Chiara Rottaro</th>
<th>Melanie Spiegelhalter</th>
<th>Saltanat Amantayeva</th>
<th>Silke Hoffmann</th>
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# Career Development Support

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<th>Language &amp; writing skills</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Melanie Niese</td>
<td>David Jara</td>
<td>Helke Hillebrand</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sarah Herzog</td>
<td>Marike Telgen</td>
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<td>Silke Hoffmann</td>
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# Communication & Events

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<tr>
<td>Dr. Claudia Falk</td>
<td>Alicia Kopsch</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pablo Naranjo</td>
<td>Nanina Föhr</td>
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<td>Helke Hillebrand</td>
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<td>Silke Hoffmann</td>
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Our mission

Serving excellent PhD candidates carefully attended to by 12 different faculties across campus!
Our target audiences in numbers

- About 1200 doctorates per year
  - Diversity matters: About 30% international PhD candidates
  - Gender balance: About 50% female and male graduates
Our target audiences in numbers

- About 8500 doctoral candidates steady state
- Four major Graduate Schools
  (Life Sciences, Mathematics, Physics, Humanities & Social Sciences)
- More than 40 structured PhD Programs
  (DFG, Excellence Cluster, EU-ITN, LGFG (MWK), participation in
  IMPRSs and Helmholtz International Graduate Schools, else)
- About 500 early postdoctoral researchers

Heidelberg University in international comparison

Heidelberg University ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> in Germany - Shanghai Ranking 2020
University ranks 57<sup>nd</sup> worldwide and 18<sup>th</sup> in Europe (August 27, 2020)

Heidelberg University ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> in Germany - QS World University Ranking 2021/2022
University ranks 63<sup>th</sup> worldwide and 18<sup>th</sup> in Europe (June 9, 2021)

Ruperto Carola among the world’s top 50 - THE Ranking 2020/2021
University ranks 42<sup>nd</sup> worldwide, 12<sup>th</sup> in Europe and 3<sup>rd</sup> in Germany (September 2, 2020)

Heidelberg University ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in Germany – THE Global University Employability Ranking 2020
University ranks 44<sup>th</sup> worldwide and 18<sup>th</sup> in Europe (November 19, 2020)

http://www.uni-heidelberg.de/university/rankings/
Who are YOU?

Where are you from?

What are you passionate about?

What do you most enjoy doing?

What is your way to enjoy academia?

What is your career dream?

What do you expect from doing/gaining a PhD?
What’s in for you?

1. Graduate Academy services
2. Managing a PhD
What do we offer today?

Core activities Graduate Academy:

- Information services & consultancy (Beratung)
- Sponsorship for doctoral candidates (Förderung)
- Career development support (Seminarprogramm/ Karriereentwicklung)
- Writing and text production support G/E (Sprachberatung und Textproduktion D/E)
- Service on demand for faculties & structured programs: Supporting the advancement of excellent PhD framework conditions (e.g. *heiDOCS*)
Graduate Academy offerings (I)

- Consultations
- Welcome events
- Seminar and workshop program (about 50 courses p.a. in D & E)
- Primers for Predocs
- Digital (e-learning) resources
- Language and text production support
- German language courses
- Summer Schools (SHS, LERU, HISS)

Themes
- Personal skills / Self management
- Communication skills
- Digital future – technologies - skills
- Open Science
- Transfer & Entrepreneurship
- Research Ethics
- University teaching
- Enabling tools

NEW!
Graduate Academy offerings (II)

- Cotutelles: Negotiating contracts for dual affiliations incl. supervision with international partners

- Brochure Kiosk – see http://www.graduateacademy.uni-heidelberg.de/downloads/ (Graduate Academy downloads)

- Newsletter (please subscribe on our homepage)

- Bulletin board (seeking partners for research, scientific or language co-operations; https://www.graduateacademy.uni-heidelberg.de/aktuelles/index_en.html#board)

- Jour fixe Doktorandenkonvent

- Coordinating the Ombudsprogram for doctoral candidates
Sponsorship for doctoral candidates – status quo

- Fellowships for doctoral candidates (Landesgraduiertenförderung; LGF)
  - Individual 3-year fellowships
  - Completion fellowships (3-6 month)
  - Small-scale PhD programs (Promotionskollegs)

- Short term fellowships (heiDOCS; DAAD STIBET)
  - Travel stipends (courses, conferences, collaborations, field trips)
  - Stipends for printing costs (contribution)
  - Short term fellowships towards completion of PhD

- Support towards identification of suitable (external) fellowships for (international) doctoral candidates

- Support towards establishing a meaningful application/exposé writing
How to manage a PhD?
What is a PhD?

**PhD / Ph.D. / Dphil / Doctorate**

- **BR**
- **AM**
- **Latin**
- **Germanism**

**Doctor of philosophy - Definition**

- **Oxford Dictionary**: the highest college or university degree, or someone who has this.

- **Wikipedia**: is the highest university degree that is conferred after a course of study by universities in most English-speaking countries.

- **Amazon.de**: an academic that has learned more and more about less and less until they know everything about nothing.
What does a PhD entail?

The degree is conferred for producing **independent, original research** that expands the limits of current knowledge (can be published in a peer-reviewed journal).

- Identifying a PhD-worthy **research question**
- Pursuing original independent **research**
- Writing a **dissertation** (thesis) about the new findings
- **Submitting** the dissertation
- **Defending** the thesis (against experts in the field)
- **Publishing** the findings
- Being **promoted** to PhD (award of the title)
- Using the **title** Doctor (as awarded!!!)

- In non-English-speaking countries, variants such as "Dr. phil.“, “Dr. rer. nat.”, “Dr. med.” are in use.

- In English spoken countries often abbreviated "Dr" or "Dr." or with post-nominal letters such as "Ph.D.", "PhD", or "DPhil" (depending on the awarding institution).

- Never use both, the title and post-nominals, at the same time!
What is special about doing a PhD?

- You are not a student any more
- At Heidelberg University: PhD research is the first phase of a professional research experience and NOT(!) a third cycle of studies
- Independence (various degrees of)
- Life in a sandwich position
- Preparing for growth and leadership
What is expected from me when entering into PhD research?

Exhausted or ready for taking off?
What is expected from me when doing PhD research?

- Passion to perform
- Taking pleasure in (interdisciplinary) thinking, in writing and in contributing
- A profile matching a supervisor‘s / mentor‘s expectations regarding the requirements of a specific project
- Enthusiasm, curiosity, dedication, creativity, diligence ...
- Becoming a valuable team member!

* where excellence originates ...
Why to do a PhD?
Good reasons (not) to do a PhD…

- Excited about learning and solving problems
- In love with thinking, writing & freedom of thought
- Enthusiastic about doing research
- Genuinely interested in the subject area
- Want to set the stage for life-long learning
- Want the title
- Deemed important for my career aspirations
- Want to become a professor

- Interested in the training programme
- Admire my supervisor
- Curious about the university doings

- I was always a successful & diligent student
- No better job in sight
How to prepare for a PhD? (I)

- Talk and listen to your peers
  - [https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-018-07332-x](https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-018-07332-x)
    Article by recent PhD graduate Lucy A. Taylor sharing the advice she and her colleagues wish they had received (06/11/2018): Twenty things I wish I’d known when I started my PhD.

- Test your abilities (validated tests only!)
  - [https://www.academics.de/angebote/promotion-test-soll-ich-promovieren](https://www.academics.de/angebote/promotion-test-soll-ich-promovieren) Academics in collaboration with Heidelberg University (Institute for Psychology) developed a test for assessing personality traits, skills and qualifications relevant for a successful PhD (see also link on GA-web).
  - [https://myidp.sciencecareers.org/](https://myidp.sciencecareers.org/) A free, web-based career-planning tool that was created to help PhD candidates and postdocs in the sciences define and pursue their career goals.
  - [https://www.bachelorprint.de/promotion](https://www.bachelorprint.de/promotion)
    Checklists by Schneider & Molitor (on-line or book) - basis for the 2004 nation-wide THESIS-Study

- Talk to your previous academic advisor(s) & mentor(s)
How to prepare for a PhD? (II)

- What is the subject area/research question you are interested in?
- Identify your “doctorfather” or “doctormother”
- Agree on a PhD-worthy research topic
- Set-up your personal funding plan
- Get a copy of your faculty’s “Promotionsordnung” – become acquainted with the specific rules and regulations
- Sign a “supervision agreement”
- Register with heiDOCS – and create your personal copy of the on-line PhD file
- Apply for admission as a PhD candidate with your faculty
- Register with Heidelberg University as a PhD-candidate (Immatriculation for PhD candidates)
- Focus on your research and your skills portfolio!
How to finance a PhD?

- Your PhD is financed by integration into your (university) supervisor’s team:
  - Departmental position, (most likely) integrated in research and teaching at your department
  - Third party funding available to your supervisor
  - You pursue an “external” PhD

- You are pursuing a job outside of your PhD project
  - You hold a contract somewhere within the university (e.g. “Geprüfte Wissenschaftliche Hilfskraft”)
  - You have a job elsewhere

- You hold a fellowship/ you are preparing to apply/ applying for a fellowship

- You are naturally born rich 😊
How to structure a PhD?

**Individual PhD**

**Typical characteristics**
- Single supervisor
- Thesis subject solely agreed upon with supervisor; may or may not be embedded in broader context
- No obligatory course work
- No formal definition for time-to-submission

**Structured PhD**

**Typical characteristics**
- Multiple supervisors/mentors (thesis advisory committee (TAC))
- Research topic is embedded in a doctoral program [Promotionskolleg (5-10), Graduiertenkolleg (up to 25), Graduiertenschule (≥ 100)]
- Requires formal application/admission
- Overarching funding/funding rules
- Programs define (disciplinary) training curricula
- Programs are set for 3-4 years of PhD research until submission
- Regular performance reviews

co-tutelles, research abroad; conferences & summer schools; meta-disciplinary skills training & Graduate Academy
How to structure a PhD?

**Individual PhD**

- Participate in welcome events (department, GS, GA, else)
- Get to know your peers and colleagues
- Network in an interdisciplinary fashion
- Go to lectures, PhD seminars, else...
- Get organized: Make sure to have regular meetings with your supervisor(s), compile your strategic questions, foster your critical thinking
- Get acquainted with basics in project management, research ethics & good scientific practice, avoiding plagiarism, mental health, statistics, …
- Keep talking & writing - about your research, your career aspirations, your doubts, your disappointments, your successes
- Seek opportunities for teaching in your field and for presenting your work
- Try out applying for funding – travel, conferences, research stays, …
- Continuously work on your portfolio of qualifications and skills
- Don’t forget to strive for submission!

**Structured PhD**

- Network and broaden your horizons
How to structure a PhD?

Graduate Academy
- A central service for early-stage researchers:
  - Fostering attractive framework conditions
  - Providing meta-disciplinary skills training
  - Offering career orientation and career development support

https://www.graduateacademy.uni-heidelberg.de/

Heidelberg Graduate Schools
- HGSFP Physics
  - https://hgsfp.uni-heidelberg.de/
- HBIGS Biosciences
  - http://www.hbigb.uni-heidelberg.de/
- HGS MathComp
  - https://www.mathcomp.uni-heidelberg.de/home
- HGGS Humanities and Social Sciences
  - https://www.hggs.uni-heidelberg.de/

Structured PhD Programs

Individual PhD Training

the structured module for individual PhDs
Heidelberg Graduate Schools

Watch out for upcoming information sessions by the Graduate Schools at Heidelberg University!
How do I know I am ready to graduate?

SIGNS YOU’RE READY TO GRADUATE

WHEN A FORM LETTER CALLS YOU “DOCTOR” AND YOU DON’T REACT.

Dear Dr. We write to inform you that the ...

Huh.

WHEN YOUR PROF. ASKS YOU TO TAKE ON ANOTHER PROJECT AND YOU SAY “NO.”

Allison, can you- No!

WHEN YOU START WINNING ARGUMENTS WITH YOUR P.I.

See? Mmm, yes, you’re right.

WHEN THE YOUNGER STUDENTS ARE GENUINELY SURPRISED TO SEE YOU IN THE LAB.

Oh. Hey. You’re here. What?

www.phdcomics.com
What is expected from me after the PhD?

What is a PhD good for?

What will you gain?
Resilience
Endurance
Critical thinking
Self esteem
Intrinsic motivation
Can do-attitude
Courage
Leadership skills
Respect
Friends for life
...

What will society expect from you?
Resilience
Endurance
Critical thinking
Initiative
Motivation and advice
Accountability
Courage
Insightfulness
Trustworthiness
...

DON’T QUIT!
## Entering the labor market with a PhD

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<th>What will be easier?</th>
<th>What will be harder?</th>
<th>What are myths?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Avoiding routine</td>
<td>Securing your first position</td>
<td>Making more money</td>
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<tr>
<td>Life long learning</td>
<td>Over qualification risk</td>
<td>Broader choice of jobs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work-life integration</td>
<td>Work-life balance</td>
<td>Job security</td>
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<td>Freedom of thought</td>
<td>Higher expectations</td>
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<td>Taking responsibility</td>
<td>Visibility</td>
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<td>Visibility</td>
<td>You follow the job market</td>
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<td>Securing leadership positions</td>
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How to manage a PhD?

Happiness, satisfaction, resilience, work-life balance

Great –
- keep going,
- nurture
- and enjoy!

Fix it –
- talk to people
- identify sinks
- keep observing!

Drastic change is much needed –
- talk to people
- think about plan B!
Whom to contact if anything goes pear-shaped?
Avoid the fly  ♻️
turning into a big white elefant…

Talk *(selectively!)* to

- your supervisor
- your 2nd supervisor/mentor/TAC members
- your peers or the postdoc you work with
- the student representative(s)
- the PhD program coordinator
- us – contact the Graduate Academy
- the department head / Dean of Graduate Studies
- the equal opportunity office (Gleichstellungsbüro)
- the ombudsperson

... and start talking early on; communication is key!
Get in touch – stay in touch!

There is always space for YOUR ideas:

To PhD or not to PhD?
—
if this is the question, please, do not hesitate to make an appointment!

http://www.graduateacademy.uni-heidelberg.de/
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