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Guide for Mentors Postgraduate University Study Media and Communication

SVEUČILIŠTE
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POSTGRADUATE UNIVERSITY DOCTORAL STUDY

Media and Communication

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Preface

Doctoral education has a special place in the European research space. It is based on conducting research, and that is exactly why it is significantly different from the first and second cycle of higher education. The third education cycle enables doctoral candidates to do individual research they will use to take responsibility and focus their own research on the well-being of mankind and on pushing the boundaries of research knowledge, whereby they are guaranteed freedom of thought and expression and freedom of defining methods of problem solving in accordance with acknowledged ethical principles and practices. For that very reason, mentoring deserves a central place in the process of doctoral education: it represents a foundation for writing a quality doctoral dissertation as well as for the development of a good Doctor of Science.

The Fifth Salzburg Principle refers precisely to mentoring that needs to be a joint effort with precisely defined rules, regulated obligations of a chief mentor, mentoring team, doctoral candidate, research group and institution.

Doctoral candidates need to be provided with flexibility and independence in their scientific maturation as well as with a high level of individual doctoral education. At the same time, it is necessary to bear in mind that the path of progress

of each individual is unique, and therefore the mentor's role is of central importance for doctoral candidates' progress and development. For that very reason, this guide is intended as an aid to the more efficient organisation of mentoring during doctoral studies in order to provide the scientific offspring with the best possible advisory services on their road to achieving the highest aim.

Mentoring is a relationship between mentors and doctoral candidates in which both are focused on doctoral candidates' academic, scientific-research and personal development. Since mentors are more experienced, they have a key role in the above-mentioned relationship. They take responsibility by giving doctoral candidates support in fulfilling study obligations and excelling in the successful defence of the doctoral dissertation, that is, in acquiring appropriate knowledge, skills and competences in their research in both the national and European research space.

This guide shows mentors how to respond to the challenges of the environment in a proper and constructive way. If professors have mentoring experience in guiding doctoral candidates, they certainly have an advantage. However, if they don't have it, they can use this document as an aid to managing all those tasks they have been assigned.

1 Individualised progress monitoring during the study programme and the development of competences

The basic prerequisite for the successful introduction of young scientists to scientific-research work and their career pursuit is based on setting up the quality system of individual support. The Doctoral Study Media and Communication pays particular attention precisely to the individual approach to each doctoral candidate, which is accomplished through two forms of support: assigning a study adviser and assigning and appointing a mentor.

The obligations of study advisers and mentors are laid down in the Regulations on Postgraduate University (Doctoral) Studies at University North, the Postgraduate University Doctoral Study Programme Media and Communication as well as other internal acts associated with the Council for Doctoral Studies. Besides quality, expertise and experience in the field covered by mentors, personal competencies in supporting doctoral candidates are equally important.

1.1. STUDY ADVISER

During the Postgraduate University Doctoral Study Media and Communication, the first encounter between the mentor and doctoral candidate takes place by the time of enrolment in the second year of study. In accordance with the study programme and the Regulation on Postgraduate (Doctoral) Studies at University North doctoral candidates are assigned a study adviser upon enrolment, i.e. no later than the end of the first semester, whereby the first mentoring relationship is established. Study advisers are assigned by the Enrolment Committee in accordance with the research plan and application documents delivered by doctoral candidates, i.e. information gathered by the Committee during an interview with candidates regarding their previous knowledge, tendencies, focus of research and professional profile. Study advisers are employees of University North who participate in the teaching process during the study programme and are elected to a scientific-teaching title.

Their role is extremely important since they are responsible for the proper introduction of doctoral candidates to the content of the doctoral study programme, courses, research seminars, discussion

groups, workshops on transferable skills, scientific research and other activities defined by the study programme. Consultations take place as needed, but no less than once a month. The relationship between study advisers and doctoral candidates should lay a solid foundation for doctoral candidates' successful progress, which is confirmed by the Council for Doctoral Studies accepting doctoral candidates' personal development plan no later than the end of the first year of study.

One of study advisers' most important tasks is referring to doctoral candidates to a corresponding mentor according to their interests.

1.2. MENTOR

Mentors are experienced and successful experts who are ready to take responsibility for supporting less experienced colleagues in their scientific development and career. Accordingly, a mentor needs to be a person who is able to lend complete support to the personal and professional development of young researchers, must understand the complexity of the mentoring role and know all its dimensions.

At the same time, the mentor needs to be a coach, protector, connector and adviser and he or she needs to have four key mentoring characteristics: professional competences and experience, interpersonal competences, communication skills and satisfying personality characteristics (Vidović, Brajdić Vuković, Matić 2014:18).

As previously mentioned, the first encounter between doctoral candidates and mentors in the context of the Doctoral Study Media and Communication will take place by the time of enrolment in the second year of study. Mentors take over doctoral candidates' personal development plan from study advisers, which marks the start of one of the key periods for doctoral candidates' further development and progress during the study programme. According to the above-mentioned development plan, mentors should list fields or topics they consider appropriate for candidates' research and listen to doctoral candidates' interests at the same time. Candidates and mentors also need to make a plan for enrolling in workshops on transferable skills and discussion groups that are

intensively organised during the second year of study, which however can be useful for research as well for the development of competences. The conversation between mentors and doctoral candidates about their experiences with previous mentors and advisers is also important. Mentors should encourage doctoral candidates to think about their own expectations and the time they have for the doctoral study programme. Mentors can request candidates to submit their expectations and plans in writing. Besides transparency in the relationship between mentors and doctoral candidates, it is important to take the minutes of all arrangements. In that way, misunderstandings in communication can be avoided, whereas consultations assume an official character.

After the general topic has been agreed on, mentors refer doctoral candidates to basic literature in the field they will do research on with particular regard to doctoral candidates' skills of searching sources, including data bases. If it is necessary, mentors need to refer doctoral candidates to the staff of the University Library that can assist them with all important questions and dilemmas related to the ways and possibilities of searching literature. Mentors need to ensure that doctoral candidates have a certain amount of time to do research on the general topic and set a deadline for giving feedback in the form of the initial outline of a research proposal. Adhering to communication rules and meeting deadlines provide the foundations for continuing successful cooperation.

Mentors' tasks involve*:

- encouraging doctoral candidates to question their own research interests and find innovative research questions and methods
- engaging doctoral candidates in their own research projects taking into consideration their research interests
- guiding doctoral candidates on how to write a doctoral dissertation, monitoring the quality of doctoral candidates' work, encouraging doctoral candidates to disseminate the results of their own research work

- promoting various forms of the additional training and education of doctoral candidates, which involves referring to additional sources of information, encouraging and assisting in participating in seminars, summer schools, conferences and university trips which are part of doctoral education and the profiling of young researchers' identity
- assisting doctoral candidates in establishing relationships with potential associates or providing them with the opportunity for networking
- giving necessary social and emotional support during doctoral education, especially in the demanding stages in the process of writing a doctoral dissertation
- stimulating a cooperative atmosphere and quality communication during the mentoring process which involves skills relevant for encouraging and directing critical reflection; active listening, asking questions and giving feedback in a constructive and stimulating way
- leading doctoral candidates to professional independence and responsible decision-making, which also means transforming the mentor-mentee relationship in the initial stage into a colleague-colleague relationship in the final stage
- encouraging to talk about potential problems in communication, difficulties or breakdowns encountered in the process. In doing so, mentors need to be aware of differences in status between them and doctoral candidates or they need to take responsibility for the quality of communication in conversations about so-called 'difficult topics'
- periodically (at least once a year) providing feedback on doctoral candidates' work
- submitting an annual report on doctoral candidates' work to the Council for Doctoral Studies in form 3. In case of a negative report, doctoral candidates need to be familiar with it before submitting it to the Council for Doctoral Studies, and they have a right to comment on it.

*according to: <http://psihologija.ffzg.unizg.hr/uploads/fd/00/fd00efa805cd3ede58ace0a2948ec021/Smjernice-za-mentorstvo.pdf>

2 Progress during the study programme

As from the moment of appointment, mentors and doctoral candidates face years of hard work done by mentors themselves. Doctoral candidates' study obligations are defined by the decision on enrolment, i.e. the Study Programme Media and Communication according to which doctoral candidates and mentors need to plan individual and joint activities. Generally speaking, the dynamics of the mentor-doctoral candidate relationship, as well as their behaviour, can be presented through three stages: establishing a mentoring relationship, focusing on orientation in a work environment and planning activities; developing and maintaining the mentoring relationship oriented towards supporting the development of professional competences; ending the mentoring relationship which tends to encourage to assume professional responsibility and achieve independence (Vidović, Brajdić Vuković, Matić 2014:20).

2.1. PLANNING AND FULFILLING OBLIGATIONS DURING DOCTORAL STUDIES

In the initial stage, it is important to carefully plan and monitor doctoral candidates' progress according to their obligations. The success of doctoral candidates' progress depends on their abilities, whereas the development of their abilities is partly attributed to mentors themselves. Therefore, it is important for mentors to evaluate doctoral candidates' knowledge, skills and competences for the purpose of determining abilities they lack to conduct doctoral research. In doing so, particular attention needs to be paid to their knowledge of the methodology of scientific research and academic writing as well as to a basic knowledge of the information-communication area of science.

2.2. SUBMISSION AND PUBLIC DEFENCE OF THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION TOPIC

By having fulfilled most obligations during their studies, doctoral candidates start preparations for the submission of the doctoral dissertation topic. In this stage, it is necessary to conduct extensive research on all relevant sources of the research topic with a probability of the successful verification and explanation of the expected contribution of the doctoral dissertation. Mentors' role in the

process of preparing the doctoral dissertation topic is key. However, it is also useful to hold consultations with a teacher/teachers in the field of Science Research Methodology as well as teachers in other courses in the module Methodology. This stage implies more frequent communication between mentors and doctoral candidates so that that difficulties could be overcome on time.

Besides research, doctoral candidates work at the same time on the text of the doctoral dissertation. A part of research can also be conducted at a foreign institution, depending on a certain part of study obligations. Mentors need to give doctoral candidates support in choosing a foreign or domestic collaborative institution for conducting research, define a period of time they will spend at the institution and make clear plans for their research stay. Furthermore, it is important to familiarise doctoral candidates with the possibility of gaining a scholarship that can be used for funding their research stay, consider all funding possibilities they have at their disposal as well as measures they need to take in order to make the funding possible. In case there is difficulty in finding a corresponding institution, a Vice-Rector for International Cooperating should offer cooperation and assistance. Mentors should encourage doctoral candidates during doctoral studies to participate in professional development programmes with the aim of acquiring professional competences.

2.3. PUBLISHING A SCIENTIFIC PAPER

Mentors are obliged to encourage doctoral candidates to write a scientific paper. Doctoral candidates can publish the scientific paper by themselves or in co-authorship with mentors in international conference proceedings or in a recognised international publication. In doing so, mentors need to draw doctoral candidates' attention to conferences and publications suitable for fulfilling study obligations. They need to jointly define the topic, paper structure and questions. Mentors should support their doctoral candidates in presenting their own research concepts and research results at doctoral conferences, expert forums, workshops or in discussion groups at

national and international level in order to get feedback and gather experiences in contact with different academic cultures.

2.4. WORK ON THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Mentors and doctoral candidates discuss the volume of the text that mentors will later receive and read as well as the dynamics of delivering the text. In this stage, tremendous importance is placed on mentors' readiness for redirecting and providing feedback, for honesty, openness, compliments as well as criticism. Main instruments for monitoring doctoral candidates are individual consultations that should be held at least once a month. It is advisable to include doctoral candidates in group consultations during which doctoral candidates show development in their research to mentors and other doctoral candidates. Group consultations enable doctoral candidates to publicly present their scientific, personal and work problems. Since they are processes that involve the constant evaluation of doctoral candidates' work, this stage is exhausting for both sides. Given that doctoral candidates still do not see a clear goal at this moment, they are likely to face a crisis, especially in case of mentors' unsatisfactory feedback. Mentors' frequent criticism can cause negative reactions and make doctoral candidates give up, whereas other doctoral candidates can think of it as stimulation and encouragement to keep working. In that context, major importance is placed on mentors' abilities to balance and understand doctoral candidates' reactions.

More often than not, intensive work on the dissertation causes fatigue in both doctoral candidates

and mentors, and therefore endurance and patience in particular are of essence. Building trust and a quality relationship allows doctoral candidates to accept remarks and criticism as encouragement. In the final stage of writing the doctoral dissertation, which at first can last longer than expected, it is important to elaborate all the structure elements of the doctoral dissertation. This is the stage of the final evaluation of doctoral candidates' work, and therefore it is necessary to evaluate research work and decide if the results achieved in the process are really sufficient enough to write the doctoral dissertation successfully or if extending the deadline would contribute to quality in an adequate way. This is followed by the stage of writing the final version of the doctoral dissertation in which mentors and doctoral candidates try to clarify and critically consider in the form of a final examination whether the questions in the doctoral dissertation have been properly dealt with and whether appropriate methods have been applied. Is the text clearly structured and are the results convincingly presented? Has an appropriate scientific contribution been made and is it possible to assess the scope of the authenticity of the scientific achievement of the specific doctoral dissertation?

Completing doctoral studies is most often a first step in a career at a university or some other scientific institute. As early as the initial stage of writing the doctoral dissertation, it is desirable to plan and find opportunities to build doctoral candidates' career and refer them in that context to seminars and workshops.



3 Drawing up a timetable of activities

Doctoral candidates and mentors' obligations are defined by the study programme and the decision on enrolment, and they are planned at semester level by the end of studies, which is why drawing up a detailed timetable of activities is extremely important. Drawing up a plan timetable refers to requests and ways of fulfilling obligations expected from doctoral candidates, such as participating in workshops on transferable skills, in teaching activities, in discussion groups, attending a foreign university, participating in workshops on the popularisation of science, participating in the work of a doctoral conference, submitting the doctoral dissertation and participating in work at an international scientific symposium, participating in research project and

writing and publishing a scientific paper.

Special care should be taken that the work and time plan are realistically and well structured through clearly defined goals for each stage. That facilitates the continuous process of checking work progress. It is a good practice to keep the work and time plan open for necessary modifications, whereas deviating from it is allowed only in exceptional cases (visit http://www.ttf.unizg.hr/doktorski/Zajedno_do_doktorata-Preporuke_za_mentore_doktorande.pdf) Doctoral candidates need to study the proposal of the plan, present their own ideas and expectations and adjust the proposed timeframes to those of mentors.

4 Consultations with doctoral candidates

Consultations are a constituent part of mentoring, and they can be held individually or with a group of doctoral candidates. Consultations take place on University premises (or outside in exceptional cases) or by means of communication technology, electronic mail, telephone conferences or audio-visual communication. In case that doctoral candidates' stay at an international university and their arrival require considerable expenses or they are for any other justifiable reason unable to participate in consultations, individual oral consultations in the presence of mentors and doctoral candidates are most effective, which is consistent with the activity plan. If during the process of writing a paper or performing other study activities unexpected situations arise, mentors need to be available for doctoral candidates in those situations as well.

Mentors need to ask doctoral candidates to always prepare for consultations and, to the extent possible, deliver beforehand a list of topics and questions they want to discuss. Mentors need to specify the topic of consultations with enthusiasm and dedication. In case doctoral candidates deliver a paper or a part of it, mentors need to draw their attention to the necessity to clearly structure the text which is orthographically and graphically correct.

Furthermore, in cases where doctoral candidates deliver a new version of the text, mentors need to draw their attention to the importance of the special marking of new parts of the text. The amount of

time required for reading and commenting is clearly predefined.

During consultations, mentor listens actively to doctoral candidates and ask them stimulating questions. They show a willingness to comment and praise, and they need to critically analyse doctoral candidates' texts or other activities presented during consultations. Comments should always be introduced along with positive suggestions, and it is therefore necessary to get started with compliments. It is important to present details that mentors like, whereas only after compliments should criticism be expressed as advice or a suggestion. Expressing negative criticism should be avoided in front of others for the purpose of avoiding a negative effect on the recipient. Criticising doctoral candidates should have the effect a desire for change instead of resistance (Čulinović Herc, Fabijanić Gagro, Kunda 2016:8).

Both criticism and compliments are expressed in short and clear sentences. At any moment, mentors need to be ready for additional opinion argumentation and a constructive discussion. After oral consultations, doctoral candidates should be asked to think about given recommendations and conclusions and deliver their summary in writing. If necessary, they can comment on whether instructions and conclusions have been correctly understood. These summaries in particular help mentors in avoiding misunderstandings and ensure better monitoring of doctoral candidates' progress.

5 Dealing with conflict situations

A crisis is likely to arise during the mentoring process. However, it should be thought of as a challenge rather than a problem. Certainly, when establishing this kind of relationship, principled difficulties are likely to arise, whether they refer to a scientific level (in case of research content, approaches, misunderstandings about arrangements, etc.), an organisational or personal level.

Both sides should make an effort to discuss problems as soon as possible and be objective and unemotional in doing so in order to keep information exchange possible and find solutions. Help and advice can be offered by colleagues who, in regard to their neutral position, can assess both sides properly and suggest possible solutions.

However, there are situations in which it is necessary to consider the possibility of ending the

mentoring relationship, for example in cases when a certain scientific paper starts deviating too much from its topic which is the mentor's field of interest. In case that such a situation is recognised on time, it is easier to deal with it if both sides agree as early as the initial stage to be in regular contact or if they define mutual objectives. If it is impossible to avoid changing the mentor, both sides should try to find a solution that is acceptable for everyone. (visit http://www.ttf.unizg.hr/doktorski/Zajedno_do_doktorata-Preporuke_za_mentore_doktorande.pdf)

Since mentoring is a demanding and hard job, mentors should be motivated during the entire process, honest with themselves and doctoral candidates and completely dedicated to the task they have accepted so that they can deal with mentoring challenges as successfully as possible.

6 Outcomes of successful mentoring

On the road to successful completion of doctoral studies, doctoral candidates and mentors should have a quality relationship which is based on mutual respect and tends to meet mutual and justified expectations. Doctoral candidates' professional and personal development is an indispensable part of mentors' experience.

Also, the mentoring relationship is an indispensable factor in the development of all those desirable outcomes mentoring support can result in, such as the developed identity of a scientist, new professional knowledge and skills, the acquisition of ethical principles in a scientific paper, building

self-respect, professional autonomy and responsibility, involvement in a professional community and networking, understanding academic and institutional culture, etc. In order to achieve the above-mentioned objectives, mentors need to get to know their doctoral candidates, encourage them to work independently, guide and motivate them: clearly express their viewpoints and work on finding a common solution; give objective and encouraging feedback on doctoral candidates; participate in the defence of the topic and the defence of the doctoral dissertation as well as celebrate with candidates the promotion of a new Doctor of Science.



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