

PhD candidates play a crucial role in university

Doing a PhD represents several years of supervised training, developing oneself to become a researcher capable of independently contributing to, and participating in, a scientific discipline with the skills needed for a further career.

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Contributing to a scientific discipline means that a PhD candidate is supervised to create scientific products of the highest possible quality, and does so in an increasingly independent manner. Participating in a scientific discipline entails presenting these scientific products to others, frequently discussing these with colleagues, and collaborating with representatives of that discipline. Participation also means enculturation in the norms and values of a discipline. In addition, society increasingly expects scientists to be able to explain the relevance of their work to an audience outside their own discipline. A scientific discipline is not limited to a single department, nor to a single university or even to a single country. PhD candidates should operate in an internationally oriented community. Doing your PhD is and should be a demanding challenge. Important skills are learned from dealing with this challenge; it is easy to make mistakes, but challenging to learn to recognize one's own mistakes. A good supervisor allows PhD candidates to independently develop and try their own solutions to problems, while reflecting on that process. A fine balance should be found between safeguarding the candidate from endangering progress and completion of the project in time, without predefining all the decisions that need to be made.

In addition to the academic development, which should be prioritized, PhDs and their supervisors should identify personal training needs to be included in the training and supervision plan. Participation in projects besides the thesis, in teaching, and in administrative tasks, invest in training young academics the skills required for their future careers.

PhD candidates play a crucial role in uni-

versity, the scientific progress, as well as in teaching, and should therefore be regarded employees of a university. Integration into the scientific community contributes to the professional development of PhD candidates. Skills that all PhD graduates have in common include research- and analytical skills, the

conception, planning, and management of a large and long-term project, the organization and presentation of complex information, and perseverance. All PhDs are about scientific research, but the developed skills can be applied in future careers in academia, as well as in business. With PhD candidates working on fixed term projects, they should be stimulated to anticipate their future career already at early stages during the PhD. By realizing how to apply their general skills to future plans, PhD candidates should be fully prepared for the next step in their careers. |