



# LERU's view on holistic doctoral supervision

*Recommendations from the LERU Policy Group on Doctoral Studies*

Dr. Helke Hillebrand, Director Graduate Academy, Heidelberg University  
Dr. Claudine Leysinger, Head Graduate Campus, University of Zurich





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**Joint effort by the members of the Doctoral Studies policy group**

- Emphasis on a **forward-looking** and **aspirational** way to reflect **visionary practices** for doctoral supervision within LERU institutions
- **Development** of the core tenets of the paper in 2-3 online discussion sections
- The propositions of this paper reflect the **collaborative process**
- **Consultation** of the paper by the larger LERU community



## Setting the scene for productive doctoral supervision

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Doctoral researchers should be supported in a most holistic fashion possible

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We want to facilitate their growth into future leaders in all sectors of society inside as well as outside academia

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Holistic doctoral supervision may take cultural change in-sync with every institution's local conditions, vision and structure

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Communication is key, and all stakeholders need to do their share

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Training supervisors is a chance for every institution to teach them the institution's core and cultural values



## The aim of the paper

*Create awareness among research-intensive universities for their responsibility to nurture an appropriate culture for successful supervision.  
The doctoral degree is a unique differentiator for these universities.*

- Highlight supervision as central aspect of doctoral education
- Underscore the crucial role of research-based universities for doctoral education
- Bring into focus best practices of supervision after many years of improving framework conditions for the doctorate
- Presenting knowhow and principles from LERU institutions that foster good practice in supervision
- Nurture a culture for mutually productive supervision and training of supervisory skills
- Showcase the universities' pivotal role for a knowledge-based society by leveraging the potential of beneficial supervision for doctoral education
- Producing forward-looking principles aiming to inspire other higher education institutions when developing their conditions for successful doctoral education

## Holistic view on supervision: doctoral researchers are the future leaders in all sectors of societal relevance

### Key components of mutually productive supervision:

- Clear expectation management from the beginning (incl. recruitment)
- Positive institutional culture
- Appreciative individual communication
- Beneficial structural conditions
- Research assessment considers investment in supervisory tasks
- Create awareness among the supervisees of their responsibility in this relationship
- Training opportunities for supervisors as well as supervisees







## University leaders take ownership in disseminating principles of holistic supervision

*Universities provide supervisors with the necessary skills and resources to support doctoral researchers:*

Comprehensive  
and motivational  
onboarding of  
newly hired staff

Transparency on  
rules, guidelines  
and individual  
space

(Mandatory)  
supervisory training  
at all career stages

Strengthen the role  
& visibility of the  
service providers  
on campus

Communicate a  
clear vision on the  
institution's  
leadership culture



## Core messages

1. *Ab initio* a consistent and realistic **expectation management** between all the stakeholders
  2. **Professional recruitment** starting at the doctoral level, fostering a diversity-friendly and inclusive environment in research and training
  3. Proper **recognition of supervision responsibilities** as part of formal performance assessments
  4. Broadening responsibilities by establishing **supervisory teams**
  5. Call for **trustworthy communication** between all stakeholders
  6. Monitoring and fostering the **well-being** of doctoral researchers
  7. Encouraging **meta-disciplinary skills** training
  8. Recognising the **relevance of support structures**
  9. **Separating** the supervision process from thesis evaluation
- ▶▶▶ **Empathic leadership, availability, and responsibility characterise good practice in supervision.**



## Core message in a nutshell

*LERU universities propose the nurturing of an improved institutional culture of appreciation characterised by **effective communication** and **reliable expectation management** towards a more impactful and consistent supervision process.*



# What else?



- 1 *It takes a village to raise a PhD*
- 2 *It takes two to tango*



## Questions for supervisors

- Can you think of an inspiring role model for a supervisor? Or of the most wanted characteristics of a productive and successful supervisor?
- Have you ever received supervisory or leadership training? And if so, what was helpful?
- A more personal one: what do you need to feel comfortable in a supervisory or leadership role?
- Do you take time to (regularly) reflect your supervisory style, your tenets?



## Questions for all

- How do you rate your own supervision experience throughout your PhD? And what was your best experience at the time?
- What is in your eyes a deadly sin in the context of supervision?
- What would be your recommendation to an organization seeking to improve their supervision culture - what kind of “quick win” would you have in mind?
- What makes – in your eyes – a good supervisor?