

Infoletter for PhD Student Supervisors at the MUI

First, read the Infoletter for PhD Students so that you are aware what is expected from them.

Registration process

- Make sure to meet the **registration deadlines, 15. April or 15. November.**
→ This deadline allows processing of the application. **The real deadline is always on the 30th!**
- **Non-EU students have to be registered much earlier: 15. February or 15. September.**
→ These are the hard deadlines, but the application does not have to be complete then.
- Ask the PhD student if she/he has read the information displayed at the **MUI-Homepage** (<https://biomed-phd.i-med.ac.at/>) and whether she/he has retrieved the most recent forms for:
 - **Admission to the PhD/Doctor of Philosophy** and
 - **Study agreement/Registration**
- Apart from the supervisor **two thesis committee members** are required, one additional member is optional. Ideally, **committee members should have a habilitation or be (Ass. or Assoc.) Prof.**
- All thesis committee members should be from the respective field or even PhD-program.
- ONLY ONE, but not both (or all three) of the thesis committee members may come from the same institute as the supervisor who is chair of this thesis committee.
- **Description of the objectives of the PhD project** and research of the supervisor should be clear and as concise as possible.
- **Add courses on page 4 of the form**, if the student should get a preliminary admission first, which are thought to be required before the student starts – if none suggested, leave this half page empty.
- Ask the front office or the coordinator for any questions which may arise concerning the forms.
- **Make sure that the registration documents are complete** (e.g., funding source, signature of director of department/institute), before the program coordinator is approached for her/his final signature.

During the study

- If the student has any questions on her/his salary statement, she/he has to ask the supervisor and possibly eventually the (Vice) rectorate for Personnel.
- **Remind the student that student fees including “ÖH Beitrag” have to be paid every semester. Failure to pay study fees on time will automatically lead to exmatriculation.** Exmatriculation cannot be reversed, not even by the Vice Rector. Remind non-EU students that they can apply for an exemption of tuition fees.
- **The latest dates for the PhD-defensio** - to stay exempt from next student fee payment - **are 20th March or 20th October**, to allow some days for administrative processing of your documents. If too close to the deadline, **rather pay your fee – you will get a refund, if you make it in time!**
- **After being enrolled for 4 years, the students will have to pay the tuition fee of ~400 Euro per semester**, so try to make sure that the PhD is completed by then.
- **Non-EU students can apply for an exemption from payment of the tuition fee** by using the form provided under “Application and forms” by attaching a statement of the supervisor and by paying the regular student fees.

- Encourage the student to **attend the annual PhD Life Science Meeting**, and to present his/her work there and interact with the scientific community!

Thesis Advisory Committee (TAC) Meetings

- **Remind the student that she/he has to give a mandatory annual progress report**, and that she/he is responsible:
 - to find a suitable date with all TAC members
 - invite all TAC members and give them a reminder
 - bring the correct form, i.e. most recent version
 - submit the signed “Thesis Committee Meeting” form to the back office **within one week**
- One main function of the TAC meeting is to **evaluate the progress of the PhD thesis project and discuss the best possible ways forward**.
- **Organize two confidential session** to provide an open space for discussing any aspects and challenges of the PhD experience. **One confidential session takes places between the student and the TAC members (excluding the PhD supervisor) and the other confidential session is between the supervisor and the TAC members (excluding the PhD student).**

Lectures (this applies to all lecturers, not just the supervisors)

- Make sure to assess your students **with marks for their courses/lectures**, “successful participation” is not enough as evaluation.
- If uncertain about time/location or sudden termination of a lecture, consult the coordinator, not the front or back office.
- Let the attendance list circulate for student signatures and send it fully signed by at least **5 students** to get your full lecture remuneration (in money or credited hours).
- Make sure to **submit all required data on your lecture/course into the i-med system**.

Changes within the thesis

- Remember that **important changes have to be announced** – make sure that the student has retrieved the correct form.
- use the **form for changes regarding supervisor, composition of PhD thesis committee, doctoral program or topic**, as all these changes require notification and approval of the Vice Rector for Study Matters.
- This form is **optional concerning minor changes in the topic**, if the broad field of research remains the same.

End of second year

- Think about a **stay abroad**, e.g.
https://www.i-med.ac.at/international/Outgoing/outgoings_erasmus.html
- **Send your student to the back office or the program coordinator with credit calculator & original print outs** for completion of all requirements: in the end the student must have the **minimum amount of ECTS points in each category!**

Before submission of the thesis

- A **final PhD thesis committee meeting** must have taken place. The committee will propose potential reviewers and examiners.
- Remind the thesis committee to issue a statement, if no first author publication results from the study.
- When choosing **reviewers, remember that “major” co-authors (and of course the supervisor) are not allowed**. A co-author on the PhD-thesis publication is a major co-author, a co-author of a review five years ago (and only once or twice) can be classified as eligible.
- Members of the thesis committee (if not co-authors) can be internal reviewers, and ideally **should have a habilitation or be (Ass. or Assoc.) Prof.**
- Discuss with the student the (self-)plagiarism! Recommend the **“Directive for a PhD-thesis at the MUI” on the PhD homepage**, which has a list of useful guidelines and tips (<https://biomed-phd.i-med.ac.at/applications-forms/>) for writing the PhD-thesis. In the PhD-thesis, the following statements/data are not allowed: any personal data, such as your date of birth, your study number (Matrikelnummer), signature, family status, home address or hobbies (you actually do not need a CV at all).
- Discuss with your student whether to block parts of your thesis for patent issues.
- **Before printing, send an electronic version to PhD-program coordinator**, as she/he has to sign the “submission of a doctoral thesis” form, to verify that your thesis is formally correct.

PhD-defensio

- Allow **at least two months for the review** (the reviewers are entitled to use even more time) and also allow **at least two weeks after the review** has been submitted to the back office before your PhD-defensio.
- It is impolite and usually does not help pushing the involved staff to speed things up.
- The examination board consists of **3 examiners** (ideally the external reviewer is one of them) and the chair. When choosing the **examination committee**, remember that the supervisor can only serve as the chair, but cannot function as an examiner. The role of supervisor as the chair is optional or may be assigned to another faculty member of the doctoral school. Examiners should ideally be either **members of thesis committee or reviewers of the PhD-thesis** and have a **habilitation or be (Ass. or Assoc.) Prof.** The examiners and the chair must be accepted by the Vice Rector.
- **Invite the external reviewer as examiner!** There are funds to cover travel costs.
- For the **PhD-defensio an extended discussion will follow the presentation of your PhD-thesis (20 - 30 min)** until the questions of the reviewers and examiners are addressed (max. 90 min). The general audience may be invited first to ask questions before the examination board enquires, starting from the topics of the talks and then mining deeper and getting broader, whereby the student should be challenged and not praised.
- The **grade “with distinction” is the exception (<10%), not the rule**. When both reviewers (the internal one and the external one) have given the grade “1”, the examination board has to bear in mind that if they give a “1” both for the talk and for the PhD-defensio the grade “with distinction” will automatically result.