

Tätigkeitsbericht der Studienvertretung Doktorat an  
der TU Wien laut §19a HSG und §20 HTU-Satzung

Activity Report of the Programme Representation of  
Doctoral Candidates at TU Wien in Accordance with  
the Austrian Law Regulating the Representation of  
Students (§19a HSG 1998) and the Articles of the  
Students' Representation at University Level (§20  
HTU-Satzung)

Studienvertretung Doktorat

Budgetjahr 2019/2020 (1.7.19 - 30.6.20)

## **Abstract**

The activities of the representatives of the doctoral candidates at TU Wien during the period from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020 are briefly summarised. They include counselling, meetings, workshops for doctoral candidates and much more. A short financial overview is given in this report.

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# 1 Introduction

In accordance with the Austrian Law Regulating the Representation of Students (Hochschülerinnen- und Hochschülerschaftsgesetz 1998, shortly HSG [**HSG**]) the main task of the Programme Representation of Doctoral Candidates (Studienvertretung) is the representation of the interests of all doctoral candidates at the TU Wien (see §18 HSG). In our case this comprises the counselling of doctoral candidates, participation in the curricular committee for the doctoral programme (Studienkommission für die Doktoratsstudien), contact to professors and the works council (Betriebsrat), writing official statements (Stellungnahmen), organising workshops, providing infrastructure and much more. The costs for workshops, infrastructure for counselling, etc. are covered by a part of the students' union fee (ÖH-Beitrag) [**HSG**] [**HTU**]. Due to the fact that every doctoral candidate has to pay this fee, we want to report the expenses and the activities of the programme representation, as stated in §19a HSG 1998 and in §20 HTU-Satzung (articles of the students' representation at university level [**HTU**]).

It is generally agreed upon that the representation of the doctoral candidates cannot reasonably be done by only five people as given by law [**HSG**]. The five elected students' representatives (Georg Janisch, Jakob Maderthaler, Michael Leitzenberger, Ulrich Knechtelsdorfer, Matthias Steinböck [**WAKO**]) have decided to work and make decisions together with all committed predocs. Due to this decision, all activities of the Programme Representation of the Doctoral Candidates have taken place within the Fachschaft Doktorat, which consists of approximately 10 predocs including the five official students' representatives. The members of the Fachschaft Doktorat are working as volunteers and thus without payment for their work within the Fachschaft Doktorat. All decisions of the Programme Representation have been made during the Jours Fixes of the Fachschaft Doktorat, where every doctoral candidate at TU Wien can participate. Hence the term "Fachschaft Doktorat" is used in the following instead of "Programme Representation of the Doctoral Candidates".

## 2 Activities

This section is the summary of the activities of the Fachschaft Doktorat during the period from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020. Because of Covid-19, some of the activities of the Fachschaft Doktorat, were organised using virtual teleconference software and some activities had to be cancelled.

### 2.1 Counselling (Beratung)

One of the main activities of the Fachschaft Doktorat is counselling of persons who want to enrol on a doctoral programme and doctoral candidates at TU Wien. We offered opening hours, individual counselling and counselling via e-mail.

#### 2.1.1 Opening Hours

The opening hours of the Fachschaft Doktorat were every two weeks on changing weekdays at 5.30 p.m, where study-related counselling was offered. The exact dates and times were announced on our homepage. Additionally, each information e-mail sent to

all doctoral candidates included information on the next upcoming counselling option. Because of Covid-19, starting mid march, we offerend online office hours taking place every two weeks on changing weekdas at 5.30 p.m. Often times two members of Fachschaft Doktorat supported both interested and already enroled students.

Approximately 20 doctoral candidates and 25 persons interested in enrolling on a doctoral programme made use of this offer.

### **2.1.2 Individual Counselling**

Beside the opening hours the Fachschaft Doktorat offered individual counselling of doctoral candidates. Nearly 12 people made use of this offer. Because of Covid-19, starting mid march, we offerend online individual counselling, scheduled individually.

### **2.1.3 E-mail**

Most of the study-related counselling was offered via e-mail. On average there were around four to five e-mails per week sent to the e-mail address fsdr@fsdr.at. The majority of the questions were from people from all over the world who wanted to enrol on a doctoral programme at TU Wien. The members of the Fachschaft Doktorat replied to all of them. Since roughly half of these inquiries can be perfectly answered by referring to our homepage, we have an automatic reply algorithm at work, that identifies and handles these queries. However, all automatic replies are still checked by humans to counter possible false positives. Our current experiences with the algorithm are positive.

## **2.2 Meetings of the Fachschaft Doktorat and Doctoral Candidates**

### **2.2.1 Jour Fixe**

Every four weeks the Fachschaft Doktorat had a Jour Fixe. This is an open meeting where all decisions are made and future actions are coordinated. Every doctoral candidate at TU Wien was invited to join these meetings. The day of the week is evenly distributed between Monday and Wednesday and changes with each meeting. This ensures broad participation and avoid the implicit exclusion of students with personal or professional obligations. The information regarding date, time and location of each upcoming Jour Fixe was published at the website [www.fsdr.at](http://www.fsdr.at). Additionally, some of the Jours Fixes were separately advertised in information e-mails sent to all doctoral candidates. Because of Covid-19, starting mid march, the Jour Fixe was held online and the URL to the meeting was communicated at the website [www.fsdr.at](http://www.fsdr.at).

## **2.3 Activities in Self-Governing Bodies at TU Wien (Arbeit in Kollegialorganen der TU Wien)**

The curricular committee for the doctoral programme had one meeting on 15 June 2019. The most important topic was a discussion about multiple supervisors/mentors. Besides the meeting of the committee there were several meetings between members of the Fachschaf Doktorat and members of the curricular committee.

## 2.4 Providing Infrastructure for Doctoral Candidates

The Fachschaft Doktorat has a small office in Geniegebäude, Getreidemarkt 9 and one small storage room in Freihaus, Wiedner Hauptstraße 8-10. The office and the storage room were used for counselling, meetings, organisation tasks, IT infrastructure and every day representation work. Because of Covid-19, starting mid march, only one person was allowed to use the office at the same time.

## 2.5 Information and Service

One important task of the Fachschaft Doktorat is providing information for doctoral candidates. Thus, our website was maintained, information mails were sent, and our Facebook presence was further improved.

### 2.5.1 Website Maintenance

The Fachschaft Doktorat has a website, [www.fsdr.at](http://www.fsdr.at). Beside the revision of existing content we also have provided new information for all doctoral candidates. For instance, recent changes of the remission of tuition fees (UG § 92 Abs1 Z5, see [UG]) triggered a number of queries regarding the benefits of active enrollment.

### 2.5.2 Information via email

We sent three information e-mails to all enrolled doctoral candidates at TU Wien to inform them about news and upcoming events regarding their doctoral study at TU Wien.

### 2.5.3 Social Media

The Fachschaft Doktorat also commenced activities on the social media platform Facebook. A Facebook page [FPage] was maintained to connect doctoral candidates at TU Wien, and provide them with up-to-date informaton. Originally the Facebook presence gained popularity as a direct communication channel to get in touch with FSDR. While initially intended as a platform to promote our activities, it seems that Facebook is less and less relevant for study-related counselling compared to counselling in office hours or via e-mail. Because the Facebook group [FGroup] attracted little interest from PhD students it was deactivated.

## 2.6 Training of the Members of the Fachschaft Doktorat

One training seminar for the members of the Fachschaft Doktorat took place from 11 to 13 October 2019 and from 6 to 8 March 2020, respectively. The goals were improving the knowledge of current legal norms, discussing the current situation of doctoral candidates and getting ideas for the further work as representatives of doctoral candidates. In particular it is our objective to transfer formal and informal knowledge from advanced and senior members to newcomers at Fachschaft Doktorat.

The discussed topics included possible improvements on the curriculum and guidelines, current employment situation of the doctoral candidates at TU Wien and further work in the curricular committee etc. Measures to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) were discussed, evaluated and implemented.

As last period, new recruitment options and methods to increase our outreach were discussed. Moreover, some in-depth maintenance work on our homepage was performed and parts of our internal information systems were improved.

## **2.7 Projects**

Besides the above mentioned every day work, the Fachschaft Doktorat organised and participated in projects like one orientation programme and information events.

### **2.7.1 Information Events**

Due to the fact that the Fachschaft Doktorat represents the interests of doctoral candidates all over TU Wien, it is very important to offer possibilities for meeting each other and talking about current problems and ideas to solve them. Two of this possibilities were the Winterfest on 29 November 2019 and the Sommerfestl on -, both organised by Fachschaft Doktorat. These were small parties at the rooftop terrace of Campus Gußhaus (Neues EI, Gußhausstraße 27-29) and the adjacent Kontaktraum. Approximately 300 doctoral candidates and professors attended these parties.

### **2.7.2 Orientation Programme**

Fachschaft Doktorat organised one Orientation Programme for doctoral candidates enrolling in winter term 2019 on 29 November 2018. These information events offers a first introduction to university life for doctoral candidates at TU Wien. Unfortunately, because of Covid-19 we were unable to organise a second Orientation Programme.

### **2.7.3 WinA+ Programme**

The so-called WinA+ Programme is an effort of the university's human resource department to provide additional training to selected PhD candidates that are employed at TU Wien. As part of this programme, we provided basic information on the structure of PhD studies at TU Wien, two times per year.

### **2.7.4 Friends of FSDR**

The network "Friends of FSDR" was founded in order to stay in touch with doctoral candidates that are minded to participate in activities of Fachschaft Doktorat. The network consists mainly of a mailing list, which is used to inform participants on current and upcoming activities of Fachschaft Doktorat. The number of members on this mailing list was extended significantly. For the future, this list might be used not only as pure information channel, but also to solicit volunteers for specific tasks (e.g., support for workshops, contribute to our information events, etc.) or to collect quick feedback on urgent issues.

## **3 Budget**

All students (this includes doctoral candidates) are members of the ÖH (Österreichische Hochschülerinnen- und Hochschülerschaft - the official representation of students at the national level). Every student has to pay the students' union fee (ÖH-Beitrag).

15 % of the fee remain at national level. The rest of the money goes back to the local representations, in our case the HTU Wien (Hochschülerinnen- und Hochschülerschaft an der TU Wien - the official students' representation at university level). The latter distributes the money according to its articles to the students' representations, the departments of the HTU, representations at faculty level, etc. [**HSG**, **HTU**].

The budget of the Programme Representation of Doctoral Candidates at TU Wien (Fachschaft Doktorat) was approximately 14000 EUR of which approx. 21% was spent. Money was used for the following items: providing the food and non-alcoholic drinks served during counselling and at the information events (approx. 300 EUR), to train the members of the Fachschaft Doktorat (approx. 2700 EUR). The rest is going back to the HTU Wien where it is used to set up reserves

## 4 Conclusion and Outlook

At lot of work has been done during the period from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020. Besides the every day work like counselling for doctoral candidates, writing statements, participating in the curricular committee etc., the Fachschaft Doktorat also organised one orientation program to guide new and prospective doctoral candidates. One of our most significant challenges for future terms is to attract new volunteers to retain the quality of our daily operation. To that end, options towards an extended network of "Friends of FSDR" might be a viable option.

For further information about the work in the Fachschaft Doktorat, please contact us via email: [fsdr@fsdr.at](mailto:fsdr@fsdr.at).

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Vorsitzender der Studienvertretung Doktorat

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