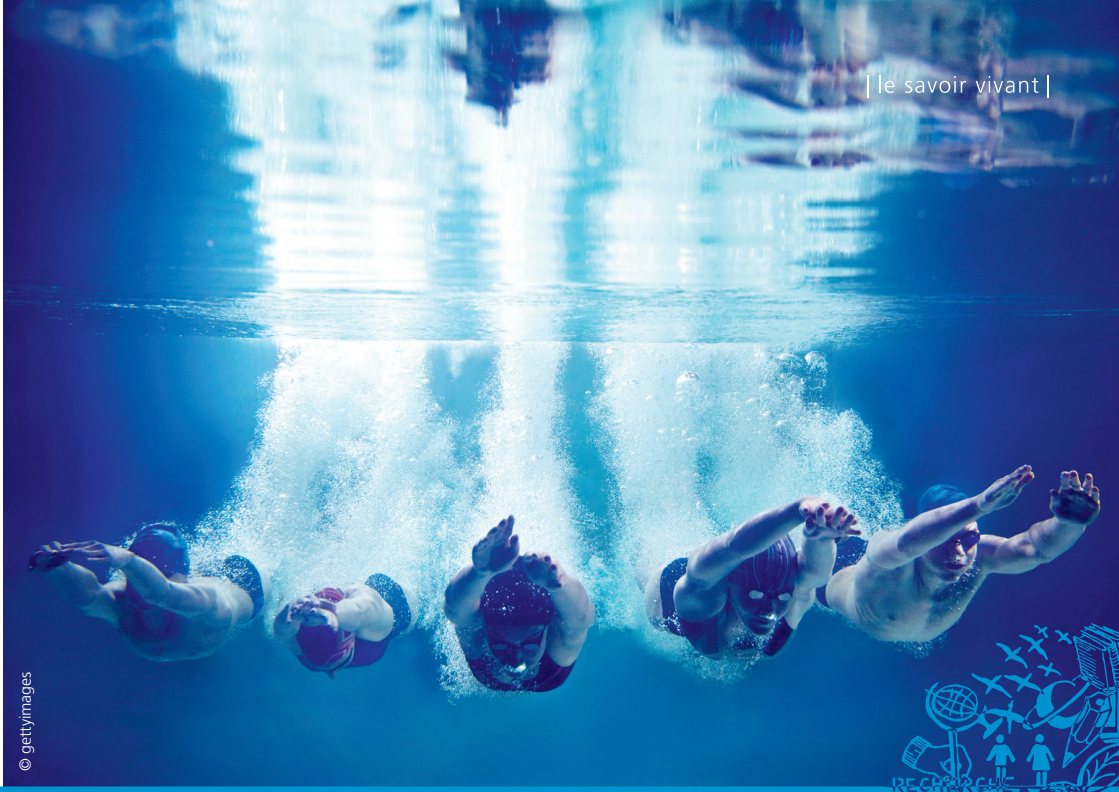


# GETTING YOUR THESIS OFF TO A GOOD START

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# GETTING YOUR THESIS OFF TO A GOOD START

**Guide for doctoral researchers**

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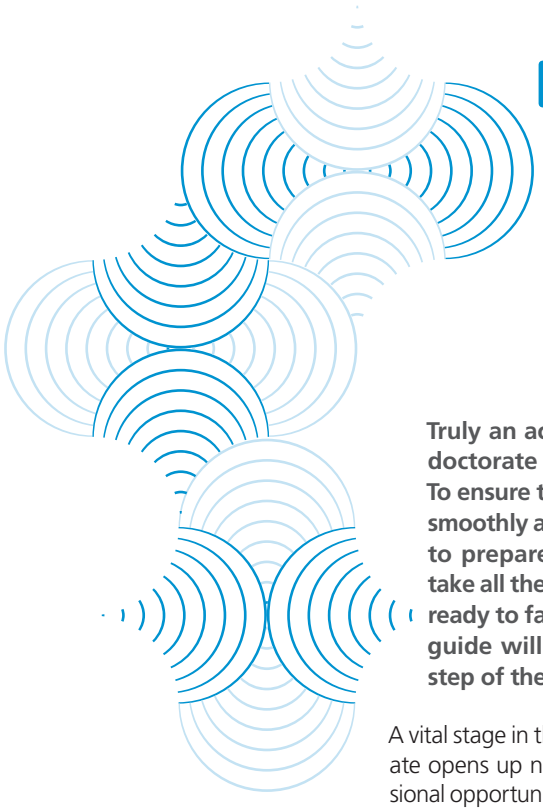
# DESTINATION: DOCTORATE!



**Truly an academic adventure, the doctorate is a unique experience. To ensure that the journey goes as smoothly as possible, it is advisable to prepare carefully, ensure you take all the necessary steps and are ready to face the unexpected. This guide will accompany you every step of the way.**

A vital stage in the academic career, the doctorate opens up numerous personal and professional opportunities. A doctorate is an essential condition for carrying out research activities and pursuing a university career. Outside the university, it can prove to be a deciding factor in obtaining an executive-level position. From a personal point of view, doing a doctorate is a unique experience that enables you to delve deeper into your particular field of research in a motivating environment. The doctoral period is also an opportunity to develop your professional network in Switzerland and abroad. Despite all these advantages however, a thesis is a long-term and often quite solitary adventure, involving challenges of not only an intellectual nature.

In the academic world, the doctoral phase is regarded as a period of transition between study and independent research. Doctoral researchers are no longer considered solely as students, but are expected to expand their knowledge of the subject and develop their independence before gaining recognition as senior researchers. They must also learn the customs and practices of the academic world. Doctoral researchers are expected in particular to participate in the life of the institution and that of their research group, publish their work in journals and become integrated in scientific networks.

The purpose of this guide is to advise doctoral researchers at the University of Lausanne on how to successfully negotiate the different stages of the doctorate. It is also intended for those who are still unsure about whether they should do a doctorate. The information presented here will help them make their decision.

The mission of the Graduate Campus is to inform and support every doctoral and post-doctoral researcher, to help them achieve their personal goals at UNIL and in their career. This guide provides answers to the recurrent questions that doctoral researchers ask during individual consultations and workshops organised by the Graduate Campus.

# WHY DO A THESIS?

**The doctorate is a professional and *professionalizing* experience. It is the first step in the academic career in research and/or teaching, and equally the launchpad for a broad array of careers beyond academia. Doing a doctorate is not just about becoming expert in a particular scientific domain: it also develops a range of skills essential for any professional path. It is this breadth of talent and competence that leads doctorate holders towards careers in the public and private sectors, in research and development as well as in management, policy, consultancy, communications and training… among many others.**

Every thesis – and every doctoral experience – is unique. Through the research project and the various activities engaged in during the doctorate, each person develops the knowledge, skills and network of people that will play a key role in what comes after completion of the thesis.

Consequently, it's never too early to start thinking about what comes next and to develop the skills of career development: to reflect on and review your interests and motivations, to actively engage in strengthening your professional profile through training and experience, and to learn more about the different career opportunities after the doctorate.

## SEIZING UNIQUE OPPORTUNITIES

From a personal point of view, the doctorate offers an experience rarely seen in other professional careers. Firstly, it offers a unique chance to delve deeper into a subject that you yourself have chosen. The doctorate also enables you to work in an intellectually stimulating environment and to be part of a community of researchers. It offers many possibilities to gain experience abroad thanks to mobility grants, attendance at scientific meetings, etc. It also allows great flexibility in both time and geographic location.

## AN ENDURANCE ADVENTURE

However, writing a thesis means committing yourself to a long-term experience that requires great self-discipline, the ability to work alone for long periods and to bounce back if you hit a rough patch. Patience is essential, as the results are only visible in the medium- to long-term. As with any endurance adventure, you will need to prepare yourself: having financial support assured before you begin, and developing good habits to ensure your mental and physical health as you go.

It's time to be honest with yourself. Which subjects would you like to know more about? Are you ready to work on the same topic for several years? How will your doctorate be funded?

**The Thesis Whisperer provides advice and resources for doctoral researchers, as well as links to similar sites: https://thesiswhisperer.com/**

# BEFORE YOU START

Even if you are sure of your reasons, you are strongly advised to take the time to talk with current doctoral researchers and others at UNIL to learn about:

* working on a doctorate and its specific characteristics;
* conditions of acceptance for the doctorate and requirements for obtaining the title of PhD
* establishing a budget and options to fund the doctorate;
* average time taken to complete a thesis in your field;
* the style of supervision and scientific interests of your potential thesis supervisor;
* working conditions in the unit to which you will be attached;
* training programmes available in your field.

## CONDITIONS OF ACCEPTANCE FOR THE DOCTORATE

At UNIL, each faculty has its own regulations regarding doctorates and needs to agree to the admission of any doctoral researcher. To be registered as a doctoral researcher, you will have to complete two essential conditions:

1. Hold a Masters degree issued by a Swiss institution or an equivalent title. While in general this degree should have been acquired within the same scientific field as the doctorate, most faculties are flexible in their requirements.
2. Have the prior agreement of a thesis supervisor.

You are recommended to obtain all necessary information concerning administrative procedures well in advance from the UNIL admissions office *(Service des immatriculations et inscriptions)* and the relevant faculty or doctoral school office (for the FBM and HEC faculties).

## SPECIAL CONDITIONS

**Medicine**
Doctors who have obtained a Master's degree in medicine can go on to do two types of doctoral training:

* **Doctorate in medicine (MD):** the doctorate consists of fundamental or clinical research lasting approximately one year. The thesis can take the form of one or several original publications. The main condition of admission is the degree in medicine.
* **Doctorate in medicine and life sciences (MD-PhD):** the doctorate consists of long-term experimental research (three years). Candidate selection is generally based on examination results, certificates and an interview.

**Registration conditions at UNIL**
**unil.ch/immat**



# FINANCING YOUR DOCTORATE

The smooth progress of a doctorate, and especially its duration, are closely linked to the way in which a doctoral researcher finances their doctorate, how they support themselves and, where applicable, their family.

The doctorate can be financed within the framework of a UNIL assistantship, or by subsidies and/or grants. Some doctoral researchers choose to work outside the academic institution to cover their everyday living expenses.

## A POST AT UNIL

UNIL offers a certain number of assistantships for which a minimum 50% of working time is reserved for the doctorate. Another option is to hold a post funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF).

Assistantship contracts generally run from August to July, and hiring is often already decided at the beginning of the calendar year. The assistantship may be held for a maximum of five years, on the basis of a short-term contract *(contrat à durée déterminée, CDD)*: the first CDD will last one year, and the second and third will be for two years each.

Hiring conditions for assistants (salary, duration, job description, etc.) are provided in the UNIL regulations on assistantships *(Règlement du 13 juin 2007 sur les assistants à l'Université de Lausanne and the Directive 1.34. Procédure d'engagement des assistants diplômés et des premiers assistants).*

These employment opportunities have a number of advantages:

* possibilities of creating synergies with the doctorate and therefore saving time;
* integration in a scientific environment;
* a favourable environment for the completion of the doctorate, particularly by providing optimal infrastructure for doctoral researchers.

## SNSF DOCTORAL RESEARCHERS

Unlike UNIL assistantships, doctoral researchers financed by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) can in principle devote all their working time to their doctorate.

However, the SNSF salary scales are lower than those of assistants funded directly by UNIL. The term of employment is also shorter: a first short-term contract of one-year, to a maximum of four years. At UNIL, compensation is also available for doctoral researchers who wish to undertake supplementary teaching or research activities for the university, to a maximum of 25%.

Hiring conditions are defined by UNIL Directive 1.31 *(Doctorant financé par des fonds externes)*, by the SNSF regulations on the award of subsidies, and by the Swiss Code of Obligations (CO). The CO is less advantageous, particularly in terms of social security and time off (holidays, maternity leave, parental leave, etc.)

than the cantonal and university regulations governing assistantships.

### GRANTS AND SUBSIDIES

Different grants and subsidies are awarded by private foundations and the SNSF. The maximum duration of contracts for doctoral researchers funded by external sources *(fonds externes,* FE) is five years (with a first CDD of one year). These doctoral researchers are covered by UNIL Directive 1.31 *(Doctorant financé par des fonds externes)*.

Beware! Some grants are not paid in the form of a salary and as a consequence, social insurance contributions are not made (unemployment insurance, etc.).

The SNSF awards in particular:

**> Subsidies for projects:**
Projects must be submitted by a senior researcher. The applicant can then take on another employee, often a doctoral researcher, to work on the project.
**snf.ch > Funding > Projects**

**> Subsidies for persons (careers):**

* Doc.CH, grants for two to four years for doctoral researchers in human and social sciences.
* MD-PhD programme, grants awarded to medical doctors (MDs) who wish to undertake a doctoral degree in a Swiss university in the sciences, public health, clinical research or bioethics.
**snf.ch > Funding > Careers**

This diversity of situations can be disconcerting. Indeed, it's not always easy to understand the direct implications on the doctoral research of employment conditions set by the contract.

In addition to the HR service who can provide information on particular aspects of a contract, the association of mid-level staff at UNIL *(Association du corps intermédiaire et des doctorant·e·s de l'Université de Lausanne, ACIDUL)* and mid-level staff associations in each faculty are well aware of the impact these differences can have on doctoral research and you should not hesitate to contact them. They can also provide important information on negotiating terms and conditions.

**FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES**
**unil.ch > Research support > Funding for PhD / Post-doc**

**EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS**
***unil.ch > Human Resources > Administrative info > Laws, regulations & directives**
***snf.ch > Funding > Documents and downloads > Regulations**

**ASSOCIATIONS OF INTERMEDIATE STAFF AND DOCTORAL RESEARCHERS**
**unil.ch > Graduate Campus > Doctorate > During > By Faculty**



# BUDGET

The cost of living in Switzerland is often far greater than the costs linked directly to the doctoral degree. The budget provided below provides a reference point for estimating a single person's financial needs throughout the doctorate (additional costs will be necessary for a family).

| | |
|---|---|
| **NET EXPENDITURE PER MONTH** | **2500** |
| **Fixed costs** | |
| Rent | 800 |
| Income taxes | 170 |
| Basic health insurance *(LAMal)* (before subsidies) | 380 |
| Household and personal liability insurance | 10 |
| Phone, internet, TV, TV licence *(Serafe)* | 120 |
| Electricity | 30 |
| Public transport | 130 |
| | **1640** |
| **Household** | |
| Food and drink (not including alcohol) | 350 |
| Other (household cleaning, laundry, cosmetics, medication) | 50 |
| | **400** |
| **Personal expenses** | |
| Spending money (hobbies, going out, gym, etc.) | **210** |
| **Provisions** | |
| Health insurance deductible (minimum) | 40 |
| Dentist, optician | 30 |
| Gifts | 20 |
| Reserve for unexpected items | 60 |
| | **150** |
| **Other potential expenses** | |
| Travel for work, supplementary health insurance (LCA), off-campus training, savings and investments, pets, car, holidays, etc. | 100 |
| | **2500** |

**Source: Association faîtière Budget-conseil Suisse (2019/20). budgetberatung.ch**

## THE VISIBLE AND HIDDEN COSTS OF A DOCTORATE

A doctorate has a financial cost. While an assistantship (UNIL or SNSF) will cover most of them, it may not be the case for other external funds or grants. Registration fees for conferences and associated travel and travel costs, for example, may depend on the practices and rules in each faculty.

| | Paid by the institution | At your expense | Amount | Total (10 semesters) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Registration for the doctorate | | X | 200 | 200 |
| Semester registration | | X | 80 | 800 |
| Printing costs (PrintUNIL) | X | | 10ct/page | |
| Books, journals, articles | X | | - | - |
| Computer and licences | X | | 2000 | 3000 |
| Conferences (travel, hotel, meals, registration) | X | X | 1000 | 3000 |
| Publications | X | X | 1000 | 3000 |
| Research costs (fieldwork, surveys, analyses, laboratory) | X | X | variable | variable |
| Living costs (see previous table) | | X | 2500/ month | 150'000 |
| Printing and submission of thesis manuscript for the defense | X | X | 10ct/page | 300 |
| Thesis defence | | X | 500 | 500 |

**An interactive budgeting tool is available on the Graduate Campus website:**
**unil.ch > Graduate Campus > Doctorate > Before the PhD > Finance a PhD**



## WHAT YOU PAY, AND WHAT THE INSTITUTION PAYS

The exact costs in the above table, and who pays – you or the institution – depend most of all on your employment situation during the doctorate. Consequently, if you have a paid position, most of the costs linked to research tools (fieldwork, infotech, licences, books, conferences, etc.) will be at least partially paid for by the institution, in addition to the salary you receive each month.

The situation is different if your thesis is self-funded, or if you are employed elsewhere. In this case, you will have to pay most costs, unless your supervisor agrees otherwise, or if, for example, you obtain a research grant from a private foundation.

Either way, you should be sure to put together as possible a budget that includes the entire duration of the doctorate – and regularly review it – in parallel with the time scheduling.

**In case of financial distress, you can contact:**
**unil.ch > ACIDUL**

**Templates to help you establish and control a budget (in German, French and Italian)**
**budgetberatung.ch**

**For financial questions (debts, lawsuits, budgeting, others) (in French only)**
**vd.ch > Soutien social et aides financières > Dettes et surendettement > Dettes et surendettement: Parlons cash!**

# WHAT MAKES A GOOD THESIS SUBJECT?

In principle, there is no good or bad subject for a thesis. However, it is important that the subject fulfils at least two conditions:

* the subject must constitute a feasible project, in other words it must be possible to address it scientifically;
* the thesis contributes to the development of the relevant scientific field.

To know whether the project is worthwhile, you need to have a good understanding of the current needs or limits of the research domain that interests you. Researchers in that domain are the best placed to answer your questions. Preliminary research and dialogue with the thesis supervisor are crucial stages for defining a subject that fulfils these two conditions.

The choice of subject may not always be up to the doctoral researcher, but rather as part of a research team. For example, when the doctorate is part of a research group on specific funds, or where applications are invited for a post where the subject is more or less defined in advance. In this case, the doctoral project must be accompanied by the necessary resources to complete the work.

Choosing a subject that is also of interest to your thesis supervisor offers many advantages where supervision is concerned. The existence of a National Research Programme (NRP) in the subject area can also be a bonus in terms of the possibility of making effective use of the results.

It is above all essential that the thesis subject really interests - even fascinates – you as its author, as you will be identified for years to come as the person who works or has worked on this topic.



# CHOOSING A THESIS SUPERVISOR

As far as thesis supervision in Switzerland is concerned, the traditional model of the thesis supervisor prevails – although other forms of supervision are beginning to be seen. Faculty regulations give priority to full, associate and assistant professors. Senior lecturers *(maîtres d'enseignement et de recherche, MER)* are frequently accepted as thesis supervisors.

Whatever the chosen form of supervision, you should plan to contact in good time anyone likely to play a part in supervising your doctorate. As well as making formal contact, seminars and conferences are good opportunities to approach a professor. One last piece of advice: before deciding on a supervisor, talk to their doctoral researchers (past and present) and attend an oral examination held under their supervision.

**OTHER SUPERVISION ARRANGEMENTS**

**Thesis co-supervision provides for a thesis director and a thesis co-director: the former is attached to UNIL, and the latter may be attached to an UNIL faculty, another higher education institution in Switzerland or abroad. The doctoral researcher is supervised by both these professors (who will be jury members) but only UNIL awards the final diploma.**

**A cotutelle provides for two thesis directors, each from a partner institution. The establishment of a cotutelle arrangement requires the conclusion of an agreement between UNIL and the partner institution. The thesis is only defended once but gives rise to two diplomas: one from UNIL, the other from the partner institution (each making reference to the cotutelle).**

**These solutions provide for more extensive supervision and allow integration in a broader scientific network. In addition, they avoid dependency on a single person in the event of conflict. However, they require that the responsibilities be clearly established for each person involved. It is also advisable to ensure beforehand that there are no major theoretical and methodological disagreements between those involved in supervision of the thesis so that the doctoral researcher is not faced with conflicts of loyalty.**

**INFORMATION ON FACULTY REQUIREMENTS AND THE PROCEDURES TO FOLLOW**

**unil.ch > Graduate Campus > Doctorate > During > By Faculty**

**List of professors by research unit**
**unil.ch > Unisciences > All units**

**Recommendations for co-supervision and cotutelle**
**unil.ch > Programmes > PhD/Continuing Education > Cotutelles**

# THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE THESIS SUPERVISOR

A successful thesis depends above all on the relationship between the doctoral researcher and their supervisor. The quality of that relationship is fundamental for the progress of the work and for the integration of the doctoral researcher in the scientific community. The framework for this relationship is outlined in the *Code of Practice for the Doctorate* (2013).

Before approaching a professor or accepting their proposal, it can be helpful to take a step back in order to clarify your own expectations regarding thesis supervision and ensure that they are compatible with your potential supervisor's personality, supervision style and working methods.

It is also advisable to consider the role played by the thesis supervisor regarding the professional future of doctoral researchers, which generally extends well beyond the thesis defence. The support that the supervisor can actually offer is closely linked to the relevance of the research topic, and to the method and approach adopted in the thesis for the field and scientific networks to which it relates.

Finally it is also a good idea to take into account the time that the thesis supervisor can devote to doctoral researchers as a result of their workload. Indeed, the supervision and support given by a professor starting out on their career and small, dynamic research teams can often prove just as reliable and valuable (if not more so) as that of an internationally renowned professor with an overloaded schedule who is already supervising dozens of doctoral researchers.

As in all learning situations, the relationship between doctoral researcher and thesis supervisor is asymmetrical, even more so when the doctoral researcher is also the supervisor's assistant. The supervisor's position gives them the power to specify amongst other things the type of input expected of doctoral researchers, the help they are prepared to provide, and the form and style of communication established in the relationship.

Despite the power involved in the supervisor's position, doctoral researchers are entitled to expect their supervisors to be effective and offer encouragement and support. Doctoral researchers must be able to approach their supervisor regularly for meetings and advice.

The person who supervises a thesis should provide the tools so that their doctoral researcher becomes increasingly autonomous in their research – it is not their role to give all the orders. Mutual respect and recognition are essential for a healthy working relationship.

To ensure a productive relationship, both supervisor and doctoral researcher should clarify their respective expectations from the start regarding:

* the way of working;
* objectives;
* deadlines;
* publications;
* projects to be developed;
* posts to aim for;
* etc.



If the supervisor does not raise these questions, you as the doctoral researcher are advised to take the initiative to discuss them and negotiate with your supervisor a way of interacting and working that suits you both.

Besides supervision of the thesis in the strict sense, it is also the supervisor's role to encourage doctoral researchers to publish and take part in conferences and seminars. They can also help students to define a career plan, whether university-oriented or beyond academia.

Many professors are prepared to organise or support seminars or one-day workshops relating to the thesis subjects of their doctoral researchers, or to co-publish an article with them. Such opportunities should not be missed: they can be time-consuming, but provided they are linked to the thesis, they set an interim deadline that often allows you to progress with your work. What's more, scientific meetings and publications are opportunities to make yourself known in the scientific community (see also the chapter, Being visible).

A sense of initiative and independence are two essential qualities that thesis supervisors expect from their doctoral researchers. So don't hesitate to make suggestions, for example by inviting a speaker who works on a topic closely related to your own research interests. Suggestions of this nature are generally welcomed and supported by professors.

## A FEW TIPS

Your thesis supervisor may not necessarily remember the questions you looked at together during your last meeting. One thing you can do at the beginning of each meeting is to remind your supervisor of the decisions taken the last time you met.

At the end of an oral negotiation, asking for a confirmation by email or writing up and sharing a record of the discussion makes it easier for you to defend your position if necessary and can help avoid unpleasant surprises.

A 'thesis notebook' is a way to provide more formal support and supervision. The doctoral researcher and thesis supervisor use it to record the dates of meetings, topics discussed, advice, criticisms and decisions made. This thesis notebook also makes each party's commitments more explicit.

### CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE DOCTORATE AND ANNUAL THESIS SURVEY

**The University of Lausanne's PhD Code of Practice sets out the principles underlying the relationship between thesis supervisor and doctoral researcher. The code of practice defines the relationship of each party.**

**According to this charter, the doctoral researcher has the right to:**

* **receive personalised and regular support from their supervisor**
* **receive information on academic career opportunities and be introduced to the research culture**
* **be informed of funding or employment opportunities with the supervisor, in order to ensure that the doctorate is funded, ideally in its entirety**

**In return, the doctoral researcher undertakes to:**

* **show initiative in conducting their research;**
* **inform their supervisor about the progress of their doctoral thesis, the difficulties they encounter, and to ask for clarification if they don't understand their supervisor's feedback;**
* **follow their mutually agreed training plan.**

**For their part, the thesis supervisor undertakes to:**

* **determine and agree training needs with the doctoral researcher, including transferable skills;**
* **regularly monitor the progress of work and discuss the plan without imposing specific choices;**
* **regularly dedicate time to supervising the doctoral researcher;**
* **provide feedback to the doctoral researcher on the quality of the work they do, the positive aspects and the improvements to be made, with the goal of a successful thesis defence.**

**unil.ch > Graduatecampus > Doctorate > Before the PhD > PhD Code of Practice**

**Each year, the Graduate Campus contacts UNIL doctoral researchers as well as their supervisors in order to conduct the Annual Thesis Survey. The survey is an opportunity for you to give your opinion confidentially on the progress of your work and on the supervision you receive – and to see whether the principles laid out in the code of practice are being respected.**

**You can also contact the Graduate Campus at any time to receive individual support on the conditions of your doctoral supervision.**

**unil.ch > Graduatecampus > Doctorate > During > Annual thesis survey**



# TRAINING, SUPERVISION AND INFORMAL EXCHANGES

In Switzerland, the thesis supervisor plays a dominant role in the supervision of doctoral researchers. However, courses are also available, such as with doctoral schools or programmes (compulsory or optional), or through workshops on transversal skills (organised especially by the Graduate Campus and the CUSO transversal programme). Also, in parallel with the thesis supervisor, other scientists often take part officially or informally in the supervision of doctoral researchers, particularly through mentoring programmes.

The findings of Swiss Federal Statistics Office (published in *Système d'information universitaire suisse et de l'enquête 2007 auprès des personnes nouvellement diplômées,* OFS, 2010) show that the development of your communication and social skills is enhanced by following one or more training courses. Supervision by several professors, exchanges of information between doctoral researchers and participation in meetings with scientific experts also strengthen your ability to present research findings in public as well as the ability to communicate complex ideas in more than one language.

These are decisive skills in the context of an academic career and significant assets in the wider professional world.

To maximise your chances, it is better therefore not to rely solely on your supervisor's support during your doctorate and instead to take advantage of every opportunity right from the start, whether formal (doctoral programmes, courses, workshops, mentoring) or informal (exchanges between peers and colleagues).

## DOCTORAL PROGRAMMES

Doctoral researchers at UNIL can participate in nearly sixty disciplinary programmes. In some disciplines, such as at the FBM, HEC and IDHEAP, participation in a doctoral programme is compulsory and includes a requirement of credits. In all the other disciplines, participation in a programme is optional.

Some of these programmes are internal to UNIL, but most are organized in common with other universities – especially in the case of programmes organized by the CUSO. These programmes offer a wide range of training and meetings to deepen your theoretical or methodological knowledge.

As well as the methodological training offered by doctoral programmes, attendance gives you an opportunity to meet your peers and report regularly on the progress of your work.

**UNIL > Graduatecampus > Doctorate > During > By Faculty**
**cuso.ch > Programmes doctoraux**

## TRANSVERSAL SKILLS

In addition to its doctoral programmes, the CUSO offers a transversal programme for the development of generic skills designed to help you develop the skills essential for your doctorate as well as to help prepare your professional future.

The CUSO transversal programme organises a wide range of training across several themes: from research and data management to scientific English and verbal and written communication, and for your career development. Courses are free and open to all doctoral researchers registered with a CUSO doctoral programme, and by request for other doctoral researchers.

At UNIL, the Graduate Campus also offers a number of workshops on transversal skills, as does the Equal Opportunities office through the Regard network and PROWD programme (for women doctoral researchers at the end of their thesis).
**competences.cuso.ch/**

## TEACHING SKILLS

The teaching support center (*Centre de soutien à l'enseignement,* CSE) provides numerous training courses to develop your teaching and group leadership skills, and several are designed specifically for doctoral assistants.
**unil.ch/cse**

## LANGUAGE SKILLS

UNIL's language center *(Centre de langues,* CDL) has offers in scientific English specially designed for doctoral researchers, language tandems, and general language courses in German, Italian and others.

To learn or improve your French, the EFLE *(Ecole de français langue étrangère)* provides training courses in French as a foreign language.
**unil.ch/cdl**
**unil.ch/fle**

## EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Specially designed support is available for women researchers at the beginning of their doctorate with the goal of encouraging an academic career.

The REGARD workshops for women researchers in the western Swiss universities cover everything from planning the academic career to managing projects, communication tools, and personal development.

The *Réseau romand de mentorat pour femmes* is an individual mentoring programme for women, backed up by broad-based meetings designed to increase contacts and exchanges. It is targeted more towards women at an advanced stage of their doctorate.

**unil.ch > Equality at the University of Lausanne > Gender Equality > Support for women's careers**



## PEER SUPPORT

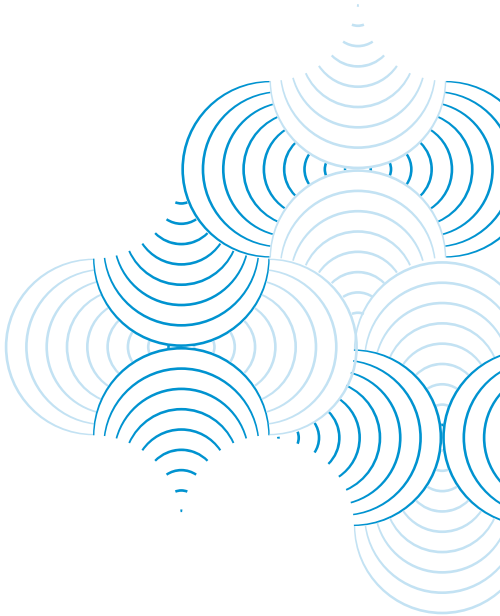
In addition to training courses and workshops proposed by the UNIL and CUSO doctoral programmes, informal contacts with other doctoral researchers are a valuable form of assistance.

The possibilities for discussion and work are many: creating informal seminars on a particular topic, reciprocal rereading of texts before they go to the thesis supervisor or of articles prior to submission to a journal, sharing bibliographical searches between doctoral researchers within the same department, etc.

Experience shows that these informal connections build an essential support network during the doctorate and for a long time afterwards. They can often become the foundations of professional partnerships well after the doctorate!

**UNIL > Graduatecampus > Doctorate > During > Associations and networks**

**UNIL > Graduatecampus > Workshops > Call for projects**



# WHERE TO PUBLISH AND WHICH SCIENTIFIC MEETINGS TO ATTEND?

**The quality of the thesis is not the only criterion taken into account in the academic world when judging the skills of a young researcher. Doctoral researchers also need to be visible.**

**As a consequence, current practice requires that the doctoral period should also be devoted to publishing articles and attending scientific meetings. Knowing where and how to present your research is not always that simple however, particularly as practices vary from one discipline to another and from one journal to another.**

Journals and scientific meetings are not always "rated" in the same way. In all disciplines, journals with a peer-review panel are more highly regarded than others. In some disciplines, despite the criticism it arouses, the impact factor – which measures the importance of a journal according to quantitative criteria – establishes a hierarchy among journals.

Strictly from the point of view of the academic career, you are advised to target the best "rated" journals or scientific meetings in your discipline, bearing in mind that some of these dissemination channels operate on the basis of co-option and that unsolicited contributions are only rarely accepted.

In addition, thesis supervisors often suggest to their doctoral researchers that they co-publish an article. Such opportunities should not be missed, as they are a good way of getting known.

Thesis supervisors and more experienced colleagues are very good sources of information regarding ways of making your work more visible. They also know the weight carried by journals and scientific meetings that are likely to accept contributions from doctoral researchers. However, you shouldn't hesitate to contact other people to obtain information. It's also useful to subscribe to distribution lists that regularly feature calls for contributions in a particular field or discipline.



### SUBMITTING AN ARTICLE TO A PEER-REVIEWED JOURNAL FOR THE FIRST TIME

**Every journal has its particular style, and sometimes a specific field and orientation. If you don't know the journal, read its objectives. You are also advised to check with more experienced colleagues or your thesis supervisor whether the article falls within the field of interest of the journal you are thinking of submitting it to, and whether it's likely to be accepted.**

**Every journal has editorial guidelines that must be adhered to and specific procedures for submitting an article: this information can generally be found on the journal's website. To avoid wasting time, it is best to format the article to comply with these guidelines right from the start.**

**The thesis supervisor is responsible for assisting doctoral researchers with the preparation of their first article(s). Advice from colleagues can also be useful.**

**In the case of peer-reviewed journals, one or more people are asked to evaluate the submitted contribution. There are then three possible outcomes:**

* **the article is accepted;**
* **the article is accepted subject to corrections;**
* **the article is refused.**

**The request for corrections is the most frequent outcome. If the article is refused, it is very useful to analyse the readers' report, with the help of your thesis supervisor or colleagues where possible. It may be that the article was not submitted to the right journal. With the necessary corrections, it could probably be submitted elsewhere.**

# WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF SCIENTIFIC MEETINGS?

Scientific meetings such as conferences, congresses, colloquia and seminars, serve several purposes:

* make your work known;
* discover the work of others;
* advance with your work through formal and informal exchanges;
* build your research dossier;
* gain experience;
* but also (and above all): build and strengthen your network.

In most disciplines, doctoral researchers are encouraged to take part in international meetings before they complete their doctoral studies. Such conferences generally include discussion forums particularly intended for doctoral researchers. It is worth finding out about current practices in your field as soon as you begin your doctorate.

Meetings have a scientific dimension and a 'social' dimension that should not be neglected as it is often during scheduled intervals (coffee breaks, aperitifs, meals, entertainment) that initial contact is made with members of a scientific network. For early stage researchers, it is also a good place to introduce yourself to people you would like to work with at a later date or who you would like to be a member of your thesis jury. It is really much easier to approach someone when you can mention where and when you already met.

## SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITIES

The doctorate is the not just the time to get yourself known professionally. Take advantage of this period to travel, meet people and present your work.

**Major international conferences organise pre-events or workshops dedicated to early stage researchers. These are the ideal occasions to build your organisational skills, learn to present your research, and develop your confidence in networking.**

### PREPARING AN ORAL PRESENTATION FOR THE FIRST TIME

**There are three key points to bear in mind when preparing a scientific presentation:**

*** audience;**
*** duration;**
*** language.**

**It is important to identify the audience you will be addressing and to adapt the terminology and degree of methodological precision of your presentation accordingly. Experts do not have the same expectations as the "general public" or an interdisciplinary audience.**

**It is wise to find out from the conference organisers the sequence of events: length of the presentation, any time allocated for a moderator and/or questions or comments from the audience. It is best if you plan to speak for slightly less than the allotted time, particularly when giving a talk in a foreign language.**

**For a first conference, you should allow sufficient time to prepare your presentation and the increasingly essential backup material. It is strongly advisable to carefully check the content and graphic layout of presentation aids, to rehearse, stopwatch in hand, and to make your presentation to other researchers before the big day.**

**Nic Fleming provides a synopsis of expert advice for researchers at nature.com/articles/d41586-018-07780-5**

### PRESENTING A POSTER, A WAY FOR EARLY STAGE RESEARCHERS TO BE KNOWN

**Presenting a poster at a colloquium is a way of making a name for yourself in the scientific community, particularly when your research cannot easily be communicated orally (innovative or highly specialised research or in-depth investigation of well-known issues). Before the conference, a list of posters and their résumés (or even the posters themselves) is published on the website. This allows those attending the conference to pick out in advance the researchers they would like to contact.**

**Sometimes there is an introductory session for posters in which each author can very briefly present their work. Time is sometimes set aside to view the posters displayed, sometimes not.**

**The University of Toronto at Scarborough Library provides advice and resources for researchers on the design and characteristics of great posters at https://guides.library.utoronto.ca/c.php?g=251277&p=1673732**

# ONLINE VISIBILITY AND POPULARISING YOUR SCIENCE

Communicating your research findings to a non-academic audience by publishing in association or scientific popularization journals, building your own website, and taking part in public debates are all ways to improve diverse skills. They can also help to broaden your network outside the walls of academia and open up career opportunities elsewhere.

Each year, UNIL gives its doctoral researchers the opportunity to take part in the international competition, "Ma thèse en 180 sécondes". This is an excellent opportunity to practice your communication and popularisation skills, as well as to let a broader public know about your research. While the MT180 event is held in French, English-speaking equivalents exist (Pint of Science, 3MT, among others) and are advertised locally.

Social media is a practical way for researchers to make and build links, to find out about what's happening in their scientific domain, and to present their contributions (an article or interview in the press, a scientific publication, event, volunteering event, etc.). Some researchers will create their own website or blog, which allows for more content than most social media.

**Research support:**
**Make your research visible and communicate**
**unil.ch > research support > Valorisation**

**unil.ch > MT180**

## OPEN SCIENCE, OPEN ACCESS

Since 2017, the Swiss national strategy on Open Access has aimed to ensure that all scholarly publications funded by public money must be freely accessible on the Internet. You are also strongly advised to place your publications on open access on SERVAL. Your thesis supervisor should help you understand your obligations as a researcher. The Open Science website at UNIL will provide you with more information on copyright management and obligations, and ensuring your research is visible online.
**UNIL > Open Science at UNIL**



# A STAY ABROAD

As well as the personal benefits offered by a stay abroad, it also brings with it great professional advantages. If you're thinking of an academic career, mobility is very favourably looked upon. Furthermore, it is an excellent way to forge contacts internationally and thus extend your scientific network. A stay abroad is also a strong point in a CV when applying for a position on the non-academic job market.

To derive maximum benefit from this stay, you should however choose your destination carefully. It is a good idea to seek information beforehand from your thesis supervisor as well as other professors, senior lecturers and lecturers. They can also act as intermediaries and facilitate your integration into the new team.

To avoid any unpleasant surprises, you should also check your health and accident insurance cover, particularly for stays in the United States or Japan. In addition, some SNSF subsidies and grants involve special stipulations concerning tax and social security. Some are non-taxable subsidies and do not include social security contributions. These special features have important repercussions on your return, particularly regarding taxation and entitlement to unemployment benefit. It is essential therefore to make enquiries before your departure.

# TIMESCALE FOR THE THESIS

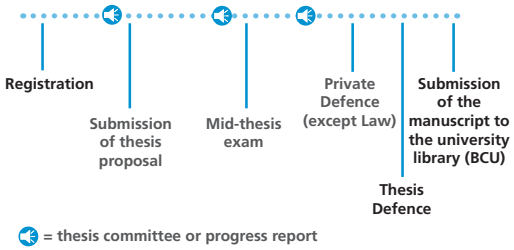
A thesis consists of different phases or stages to be completed prior to submitting the manuscript: formulation of the scientific question involved, reading and compilation of the bibliography, data collection and analysis, writing, proofreading and corrections, formatting and printing of the manuscript.

Generally, these different stages overlap, and the duration and development of each stage varies according to the field, discipline and approach/school in which the thesis is situated, as well as the form of the thesis (monograph or collection of articles).

**You are strongly encouraged to start writing and keep careful notes of your reading, so that you're not faced with a blank page when the time is coming to a close.**

Each faculty has its own regulations concerning stages of the thesis, and they can vary widely. It is thus very important to find out about your faculty's requirements. In SSP, FBM and IDHEAP, the first important stage is the submission of the thesis proposal. In other faculties, an important stage is the mid-thesis exam – known differently from one faculty or institution to another *(mémoire de these in* ESC, *pré-colloque* at IDHEAP, *première étape* at the HEC). Law is the only discipline which does not have any required step before the thesis defence.

## STEPS TO THE DOCTORATE ACCORDING TO FACULTY REGULATIONS




Concerning the final stage of the thesis, each faculty has its own procedures and deadlines for:

* appointment of members of the jury (proposal and approval);
* submission of the different manuscripts (number, where, by which deadline);
* jury examination *(colloque);*
* public defence;
* award of the title of Doctor.

The time lapse between these different stages can be considerable. It is therefore advisable to become acquainted with the regulations well in advance, prepare an end-of-thesis schedule and in particular contact external jury members sufficiently well in advance to establish their availability.

With the exception of Law, the final thesis exam at UNIL includes two steps: the private and the public defence.



The best way to prepare for them is to:

* ask more advanced researchers about their experience regarding the private defence;
* attend the public defence of your peers;
* discuss the process with your thesis supervisor.

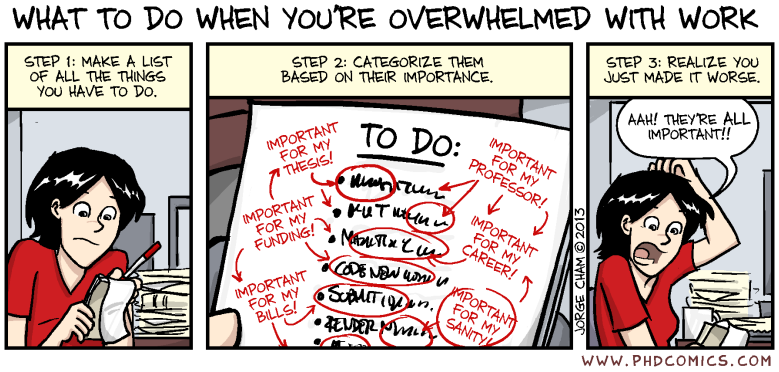
**The Graduate Campus offers a workshop "Préparer sa soutenance de thèse" which will help you prepare your private and public defence. (Currently available in French only.)**

**The private defence is a discussion conducted behind closed doors lasting several hours between the doctoral researcher, members of the jury and thesis supervisors. It allows in-depth discussion of all aspects of the thesis. Generally the candidate is asked to make certain changes at the end of the examination.**

**The public defence is organised some time after the private defence, once the candidate has made the corrections requested. Thus the public defence is unlikely to give rise to major differences between the candidate and the thesis jury. The thesis defence is a public event, intended to allow the candidate to present their work.**

In order to obtain the title of Doctor, a final essential step is to submit the thesis to the UNIL library (BCU).

# MANAGING YOUR TIME




The doctorate lasts on average five years and the results of your work will only be visible in the medium- to long-term. This can give the false impression of having lots of time available. In order to stay within the allocated time, you will need to establish a working rhythm that lasts the entire time. This rhythm needs to be organised over the large and small scale: over years, over one year, a month, a week, and a working day.

In the middle of all that, you will need to balance your doctorate with your working activities, your private life, and any family responsibilities.

Regardless of specific aspects related to discipline, every doctoral researcher needs to manage the timescale of the thesis and make progress despite any stumbling blocks or disappointments.

Some advice to help you stay the course:

1. **Know and respect your personal rhythm**
   You have no doubt noticed that you are more effective at certain periods during the day. As far as possible, reserve these times for the doctorate – it demands intense concentration. Keep the easier tasks (such as answering emails) for those times in the day when you are less effective. Some people develop rituals to help structure their day (coffee breaks, lunch, getting some fresh air, answering emails at particular times, etc.).

2. **Define clear and precise objectives**
   Good planning means a clear and precise definition of your objectives. For example, making progress on your thesis is a vague objective. Reading and reviewing an identified article is a clear objective, one which will motivate you to move forward since you can cross it off your list and move on to the next task.



3. **Avoid procrastination**
   There are some tasks it's really hard to complete and we keep leaving for later. This is often because we don't feel competent or because the task has not been well-defined. So, instead of making progress on the thesis, we answer emails, have a chat with colleagues… Once again, it is vital to have clearly defined objectives and priorities, and from time to time allow yourself some small reward for having completed an objective (go out to eat, watch a movie, etc.).

4. **Avoid interruptions**
   Whether at the office or at home, we're often interrupted: a text, an email, a student who comes for advice, a partner who asks a question… It is important to reserve the time and space dedicated entirely to the doctorate: find a space where you won't be disturbed (the library, at home), put your phone on silent and turn off notifications. You can choose for yourself at what time you need to take a break.

5. **Know how to say 'no' and/or delegate**
   It's impossible to say yes to every request – there's only so much time in one day. Instead of responding immediately, take a moment to think about what needs to be done and the time you have available. Negotiate and decide what is priority, and what can be delegated.

6. **Plan realistically**
   In your time plan, don't just schedule the tasks that need to be done: make sure you put time aside for the unexpected and for taking care of yourself (sport, socializing, etc.). Your time planning should include tasks related to your doctorate, but also for all your other obligations – such as work, family, etc. An unrealistic schedule will end up frustrating you, as you will never be able to keep to it. Ideally, you should dedicate at least one to two days per week entirely to your thesis. Discuss your time plan with your supervisor so that they are aware of your working schedule and can advise you.

**The Graduate Campus organises a workshop "Getting your PhD off to a good start" which takes a look at managing your time between the thesis, your job, and your private life.**

**Free time plans you can download: https://www.ithinkwell.com.au/resources/PhDToolkit**

**DARE TO TYPE THAT FINAL FULL STOP**
**The longer a thesis lasts, the greater the risk of not completing it. The doctorate is only the first stage – you're not writing your life's work! A good thesis is a finished thesis.**

# THESIS AND ASSISTANTSHIPS

One of the greatest difficulties encountered by assistants is that of ensuring that student supervision and tasks delegated by their immediate superior do not impinge on the time they are entitled to for thesis work.

There will be times when other tasks take more time than expected in your job description, but overall this should not have a negative impact on your thesis. If you feel you are overwhelmed, discuss it with your thesis supervisor.

**SOME PRACTICAL TIPS FOR SAFEGUARDING TIME DEVOTED TO THE THESIS:**

* **Establish a long-term thesis schedule, in agreement with your thesis supervisor, which takes into account all the time necessary for your additional obligations;**
* **Plan a weekly schedule, in agreement with your supervisor, that includes certain fixed days of the week devoted solely to the thesis;**
* **Establish specific times when students can call on you in your capacity as assistant, and stick to them;**
* **Do not delay in (re)negotiating terms and conditions that are not respected or are unrealistic;**
* **At key points during the doctorate, make sure you remain focused and concentrate your attention on activities (scientific meetings, publications) that are closely linked to the thesis and enable your work to progress;**
* **Try to work on your thesis away from where you work as an assistant to avoid being interrupted by students, professors, colleagues and phone calls.**

## WORKPLACE ORGANISATION

Every unit or department has its own methods of organisation and generally there are tacit rules governing how things work. The circulation of information among newly recruited assistants is often informal and based on the goodwill of established employees. The fact that the members of a unit know these rules and adhere to them greatly affects the working atmosphere. Generally, respect for each individual's rights and obligations is based on trust and if a member of the unit does not fulfil their obligations, this creates additional work for the others.

It is advisable for assistants to:

* tell others which days of the week they are working outside the university;
* clearly indicate office hours and adhere to them;
* adapt their holidays to the academic calendar;
* ask questions and attend the unit's formal and informal meetings.



Units and professors responsible for recruitment can also help to improve the way in which work is organised:

* by ensuring that information circulates as transparently as possible;
* by adopting the fairest possible distribution of tasks between assistants.

## SETTLING INTO YOUR WORKPLACE

Members of the scientific community are expected to play an active part in life at UNIL. When you are an early stage researcher, it is very important not to underestimate the links that can be forged during activities organised by colleagues, meetings of your institute, in more informal settings, or in faculty committees. The people you meet in these different frameworks can often go on to play an important role in your career development.

University policy, research, teaching, and the working conditions of academic staff are defined by different institutional bodies. Joining intermediary staff associations or other organisations such as faculty or UNIL councils or commissions, is a good way to better understand the challenges for the rising academic generation, the different disciplinary perspectives on research and teaching, and to find support.

**FORGING LINKS**

**Associations, doctoral programmes, the Equal Opportunities Office and the Graduate Campus offer activities that encourage contact between doctoral researchers and provide essential support not only during the writing of the thesis, but also afterwards. They often serve to facilitate professional integration at the end of the doctorate.**

# PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY, THESIS AND PRIVATE LIFE

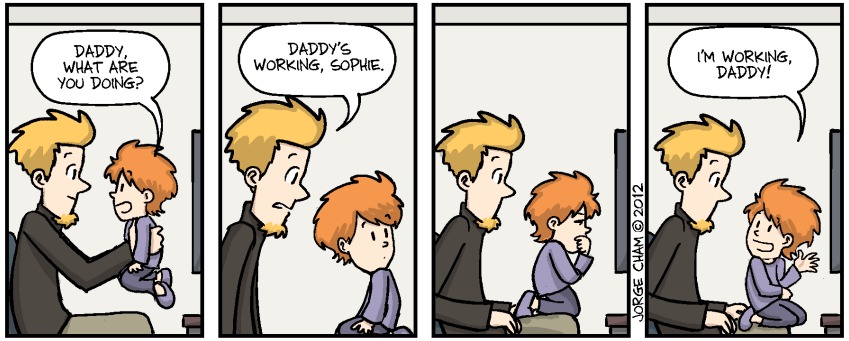
For those who are funding their doctorate with part-time employment outside academia, reconciling their doctorate and professional activity requires a great deal of organisation and tremendous personal discipline.

Wherever possible, you are advised in this case:

* to establish a rigorous schedule and stick to it;
* to plan days devoted solely to thesis work;
* to find ways in which you can stay motivated and keep the rhythm going over the long term;
* to ensure that you maintain as many links as possible with UNIL (such as taking part in your unit's research meetings, occasionally taking part in teaching a course, or similar);
* to negotiate a degree of flexibility with your employer so that you can take part in scientific meetings and attend conferences in your field.



# WRITING YOUR THESIS AT HOME




Whether by choice or necessity, many doctoral researchers end up writing up their thesis at home. Friends and family often find it difficult to imagine the constraints of the doctorate: doctoral researchers must learn to defend the time they set aside for the thesis as a working period that cannot be encroached upon by other activities.

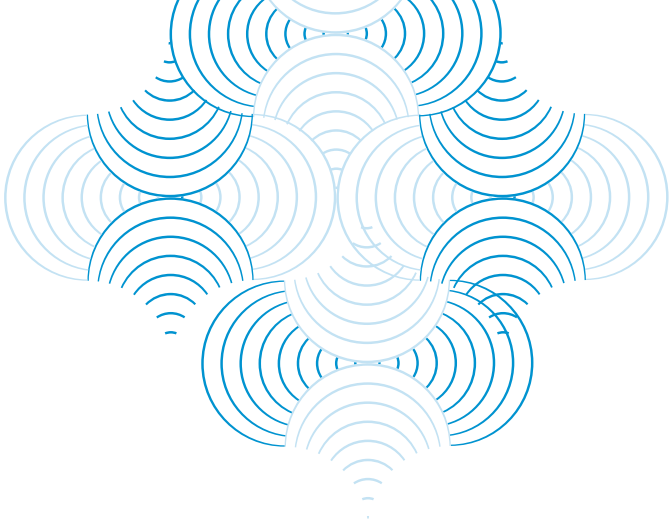
**SOME TIPS FOR FINDING YOUR RHYTHM:**

* **Create a calm space dedicated to working on your thesis;**
* **Tell those close to you when you will be working on your thesis (the hours, the days), so that they can avoid interrupting you;**
* **Organise your day like a day at the office, with clearly scheduled breaks;**
* **Ensure that you are not landed with all the family obligations and/or household chores under the pretext that you "have the time" or are flexible;**
* **Make sure as well not to let the thesis completely take over your life. Giving up certain things (leisure, holidays, going out, reading) is a trap that any doctoral researcher can fall into, particularly during the most stressful phases of the thesis.**

**STRIKING A BALANCE**

**When confronted with requests from your family and friends, it is important to defend the time you devote to your thesis. On the other hand, the thesis should not impinge on leisure time! A good balance will help you to maintain your health all the way to the end of the doctorate.**

# THESIS AND FAMILY



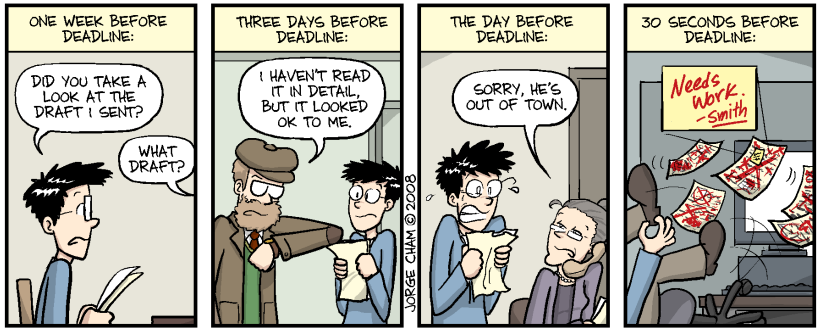
At UNIL, the Equal Opportunities Office and Human Resources Service can provide information on maternity, parental or paternity leave, and on maternity rights. The Equal Opportunities Office can also inform you on the support (financial and other) for families or carers.

**The UNIL and EPFL** jointly operate two day nurseries and a nursery school: the *Croquignole,* the *Croq'cinelle* and the *Polychinelle.* Places are in high demand. Holiday camps are also organised for the children of members of the UNIL community. In emergency situations linked to the professional obligations of an UNIL parent, the Equal Opportunities Office also offers a free emergency childcare service.

**Equal Opportunities office**
**unil.ch > Gender Equality**
**unil.ch > Families at UNIL**

**GUIDE "Being a parent at UNIL"**
**unil.ch > Families at UNIL > Parents and children > Information and advice > Parents' guide + flyer**

# THE SOURCES OF STRESS




**The following situations can lead to stress and have a negative impact on the doctorate. Most doctoral researchers will experience each to different degrees. Each source of stress is a challenge in itself, but once identified it can be addressed and its effects alleviated.**

## THE IMPOSTER SYNDROME

Perhaps the most common challenge, this is a doctoral researcher's feeling that they don't have the knowledge and skills to merit the title of PhD, or even to be able to defend their hypothesis or the work they have done.

## CONFLICTING PRIORITIES

This occurs when someone has multiple activities that seem irreconcilable and they are unable to establish priorities (for example between supervising students and progressing with the doctorate).

## LACK OF A CLEARLY DEFINED ROLE

This occurs when a doctoral researcher feels that they are receiving insufficient supervision and they are unable to understand what is expected of them. Over time, they can lose self-confidence (for example, when the thesis supervisor's expectations are unclear).

## OVERWORK/BURNOUT

This occurs when a person is increasingly in demand and doesn't know how to say no. They eventually collapse under the strain of overwork (for example when there is too much pressure to publish, or too much supervision of students).

## ISOLATION

Depending on the professional and personal situation, especially where the doctorate is being done without a salaried post, the distance between the doctoral researcher and their supervisor, their colleagues, and the academic environment, can lead to social and professional isolation. This isolation can weigh heavily on morale and lead to discouragement.

## CONFLICT

Disagreement with a colleague or with the thesis supervisor can happen at any time and can be resolved as soon as it happens. Sometimes however, if the situation persists the tension can complicate even the smallest daily act and can develop into latent or overt conflict. These situations can intensify the effects of other sources of stress described above, leading to a high degree of psychological and physical suffering.

# MANAGING THE SITUATION

Everyone has different ways of coping with stress. However, there are stress management techniques that anyone can learn. Anyone should be able to do their doctorate in good conditions, without risking their health or their relationships.

To manage a stressful situation, the first thing to do is step back in order to:

* Identify the source of stress or unease;
* Seek information;
* Seek support and advice;
* Identify objectives;
* Establish a plan of action.

### PREPARING FOR THE SITUATION

Doctoral researchers often practise this technique without realising it – for example in the case of the imposter syndrome, by explaining the results of their research to their colleagues, teaching, preparing presentations, etc. In general, stress will diminish with practice and communication, and with the positive feedback of experts and colleagues.

### TAKE A BREAK FROM THE STRESSFUL SITUATION

You need to know when to take a break and maintain your network of relationships with family and friends – people who are often the breath of fresh air you need when in a stressful situation.

Sometimes, the stress persists. Health specialists emphasise that you should not underestimate certain symptoms such as insomnia and anxiety, which can be accompanied by feelings of guilt of having not progressed as quickly as expected. It is better to talk things through frankly with your supervisor and colleagues and take some time out. For a doctoral researcher with an employment contract, this means taking your vacation time, according to legal requirements, by planning holidays at appropriate moments: for example, after a stressful period (such as completing a chapter, submitting an article, etc.). Physical or temporal distance from a stressful situation can help a refreshed and calmer return.

If the situation persists, don't hesitate to consult your doctor or specialised therapist.

### NO STAYING POWER WITHOUT GOOD HEALTH

**It is essential to take of yourself, physically and mentally. If you don't, your risks of burnout or abandoning your doctorate are that much higher. Sport, hobbies, holidays, a healthy diet, regular sleep – they are all factors for success!**



# WHAT TO DO IN THE EVENT OF CONFLICT, MOBBING, PSYCHOLOGICAL OR SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

**The University of Lausanne has established a moral and legal framework for working relationships in the university community and has zero tolerance for violations of personal rights. These principles and the procedures to follow are detailed in UNIL Directive 0.4.**
**unil.ch > Organisation > Documents officiels > Directives internes (legal information available only in French)**
**The principles for all those with a UNIL employment contract are described fully in English on the "UNIL Help" pages**
**https://www.unil.ch/help/en/home/menuinst/personnes-sous-contrat.html**

**Sexual harassment** in the workplace is a form of discrimination based on gender. Sexual harassment is imposed behaviour resulting from a power-based relationship. Tt is therefore not to be confused with relationships based on seduction, which involve reciprocity.

"*Discriminatory behaviour means any importunate behaviour of a sexual character or any other behaviour based on sexual appropriation which undermines personal dignity at the place of work, particularly making threats, promising advantages, imposing constraints or exerting pressure of any kind on a person with a view to obtaining from them favours of a sexual nature.*"
**Federal law on gender equality, article 4.**

The following behaviours are examples of sexual harassment:

* Sexist remarks or jokes about sexual characteristics, sexual behaviour or sexual orientation
* Persistent staring, whistling, or remarks on physique
* Unwelcome attention with a sexual objective
* Unwanted physical contact
* Showing pornographic material

**Psychological harassment** or mobbing is characterised by different forms of hostile behaviour exhibited by one or more individuals seeking to undermine an employee or make them feel inferior consistently or repeatedly over a period of several months.

Even though its manifestations can be different, psychological harassment nearly always has at its root an unresolved conflict. This conflict may stem from a divergence of views, rivalry, an endeavour to influence, power struggles, etc. That is why, in the event of conflict, action must be taken quickly. Indeed, the longer it goes on, the more the working atmosphere deteriorates and the more difficult it is to re-establish a situation of trust.

If you feel you are being psychologically harassed, mobbed, or sexually harassed or are experiencing a conflict situation with no resolution in sight, it is essential to keep a careful record of all incidents of victimisation, noting

the person responsible, date, time, place, facts, what was said, and witnesses if any.

It is advisable to try and explain your feelings clearly, without being aggressive, to the person whose actions you perceive as hostile or deprecating. However, it is not always possible to do this, and it may be that the person does not listen or want to listen. In this case, try to speak to the person when there are witnesses around.

Doctoral researchers, and especially foreign doctoral researchers, are particularly vulnerable to this type of situation. On their own, in a cultural context that can be very different to what they are used to, they often don't realise that what they are experiencing is problematic or aren't sure if they are misinterpreting it. This ambiguity is best resolved by speaking with a neutral third person.

Contact the people or the services with whom you feel most at ease – for example:

* the director of your doctoral school or programme;
* the vice-dean in charge of equality and early stage researchers ("relève académique");
* the Human Resources office;
* the Mediation Office;
* the Personnel Committee (CoPers);
* the Equal Opportunities Office;
* the Graduate Campus.

This is a non-exhaustive list and can extend to other services or groups relative to your personal preferences and your current contacts. Unions and mid-level researcher associations can also provide information and support.



**TALK ABOUT IT**

**Talking about your situation enables you to obtain advice, support or even concrete opportunities. Likewise, by listening to your peers, you will be better equipped to deal with any future difficulties.**

**SUPPORT SERVICES AT UNIL**

**unil.ch/help**

**Graduate Campus**
**Individual and confidential advice**
**List of Associations of mid-level staff and doctoral researchers**

**Social Affairs and Student Mobility Office**
**Psychotherapeutic consultations**

**Equal Opportunities**
**Advice on sexual harassment, racism, homophobia and transphobia**

**Mediation office**
**Counselling and mediation in relational, operational and collaborative conflicts.**

**Chaplaincy**
**A place for discussion, listening, and support during difficult times.**

**Human Resources**
**Questions connected to contracts and working conditions, by faculty or service.**

**Federal government information on sexual harassment in the workplace**
**harcelementsexuel.ch**

The range of potential careers after a PhD is wide. Doctoral graduates of UNIL have gone on to do many different things: from high school teaching to advisory roles in federal government, from think-tanks and museums, to management consultancies and multinational companies. And, of course, they go on to academic careers in research and teaching in universities and colleges in Switzerland and around the world.

From your position at the beginning of the doctorate, the next chapter can look very far away. Some doctoral researchers start their thesis absolutely certain of what they want to do afterwards, others only have a very vague idea. What is very likely is that your professional plans will change – which means that it's never too early to start thinking about and preparing for what comes next. As the defence draws near and the pressure mounts, it can be hard to focus beyond the immediate future: taking small but regular steps beforehand can reap huge benefits afterwards!

* Build your knowledge of potential roles and employment sectors. Seek out informal conversations with people who work in different environments; attend career events and talk with employers; engage in activities outside the university and pursue side projects. Find out for yourself what it would be to work as a management consultant, a medical liaison officer or a university lecturer? What would the actual role look like? What knowledge and skills would it demand? Which employers are active, beyond the obvious ones?

* Depending on your individual doctoral experience, you'll have the opportunity to build skills such as teamwork and adaptability, oral and written communication, information management, and more. These skills, developed as you do your research, assist in teaching and supervision, present and publish, will be further strengthened by training courses, on- and off-campus and online. You could also consider developing side-projects – whether as part of your doctorate or completely separate – to extend your experience as well as your network.

* Integrate the time in your calendar – just two or three hours every month – to take the time for yourself and reflect on how things are going, what you've seen and the direction you're taking. What roles and environments would you like to know more about? How are your interests, motivations and competencies evolving? By asking these questions regularly, you can begin to identify your individual goals and prepare to make vital decisions for after the completion of your thesis.



Knowing your strengths, your interests and your motivations will help you make the best decisions for yourself – and will also be key to convincing potential employers, whether they're in the university or elsewhere. Each type of employer will have their own priorities and interests and will want to know not just *how* you can contribute but also that you *will* contribute.

You can also receive your free copy of the UNIL PhD's skills framework as part of the Graduate Campus' career support service.

The Graduate Campus provides counselling and support for doctoral researchers as well as for postdoctoral researchers at UNIL. We can assist you in completing your research project and to develop the right professional career for you. Our services include:

* monthly meetings – Career Café and PhD Chat;
* a "meet and greet" each semester;
* workshops on the thesis from A to Z, spicing up your research, and developing your career;
* individual advice and counselling;
* coaching.

In addition to this direct support, the Graduate Campus is a hub for all the questions that come from doctoral and postdoctoral researchers, in conjunction and regular contact with the relevant central services and associations (the green bubbles on the following figure). We can inform and guide you to the right people and services relative to the question you have. These services also offer workshops and training which the Graduate Campus advertises on its platform.

**unil.ch/graduatecampus**

**You can count on us!**

**UNIL Services and Associations**

**BEC = Equal Opportunities Office**
**Grant Office = Network of research support (SNFS funding and applications)**
**SOC = Careers Service**
**SASME = Social Affairs and Student Mobility Office**
**Welcome Centre = Welcome service for international researchers**
**UNIRIS = Information and data resources and archives service**
**ACIDUL = Association of mid-level and doctoral researchers at UNIL**
**SRH = Human Resources Office**
**CSE = Centre for Teaching Support**
**EFLE = School of French as a foreign language**
**CDL = Language Centre**
**CI = Centre for information technology**

**CUSO = Conference of Western Swiss Universities**

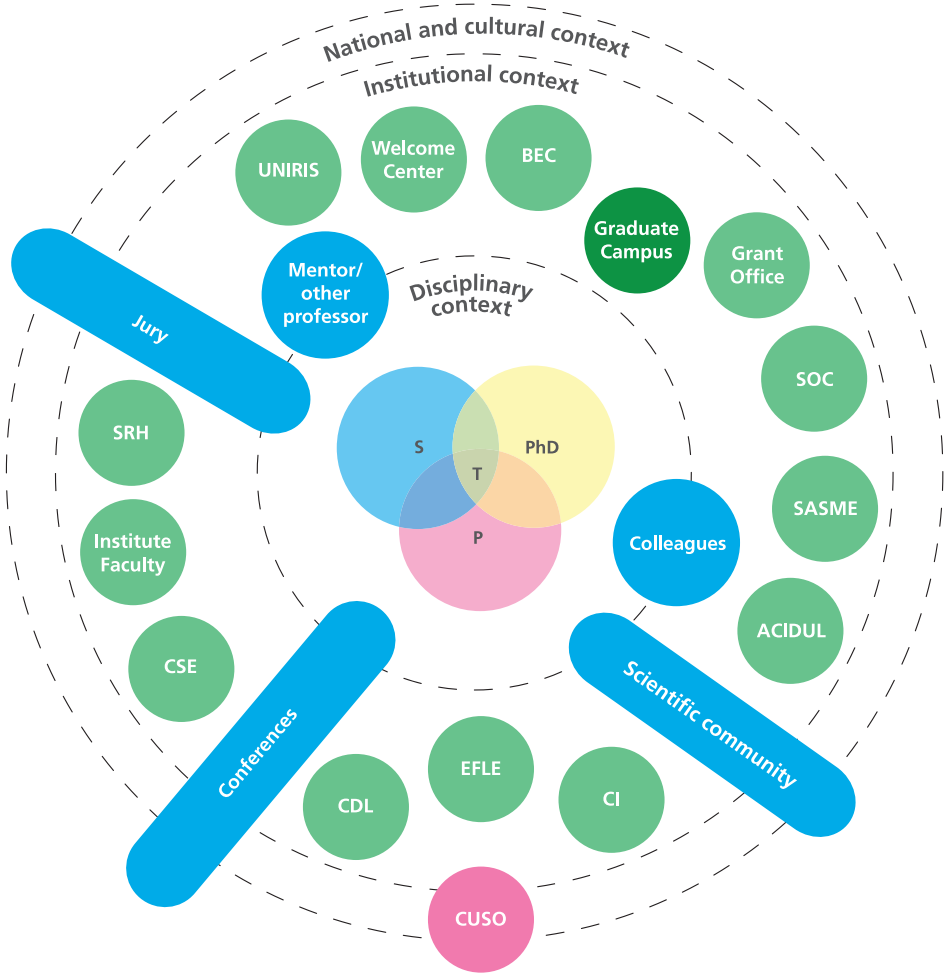
**S = Supervisor**

**P = Doctoral programmes**

**T = Thesis**



# OVERVIEW OF SUPPORT RESOURCES




This figure highlights how a doctorate is never completed in isolation but is situated within a larger context. A doctoral researcher can benefit from help and advice within their research community (in blue), from UNIL services and associations (in green), or from doctoral schools and programmes (in pink).

**Source: Graduate Campus, diagram modified after Berthiaume (2009).**

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