

OPINION PAPER



KARLSTAD STUDENTKÅR
Doktorandsektionen

*The Graduate Students' Association
of the Karlstad University Student Union, 2015*

PREFACE

Doctoral studies are strategically important in knowledge-based economies, and involve large investments of time and money, both for the individuals concerned and for society as a whole. It is therefore important that high standards are maintained as far as the provisions and content of doctoral study programmes are concerned. The quality of doctoral study programmes, along with their terms and content, adds to the ability of an educational institution to attract potential doctoral candidates, and also affects how an institution's doctoral programmes are regarded both nationally and internationally.

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1.1 The purpose of this Opinion Paper

The purpose of this Opinion Paper is to serve as working basis for those doctoral candidates who act as representatives on committees, boards and other bodies, as well to increase the visibility of the opinions of the Graduate Students' Association (GSA) of the Karlstad Student Union. This Opinion Paper, which has been written from the perspective of doctoral students, acts as a tool for promoting the quality of doctoral studies at Karlstad University. It also aims to provide guidance and support for the university's PhD students in their studies.

1.2 The Opinion Paper: a working document

This paper is a revised version of the Opinion Paper entitled *Quality in Doctoral Studies*, which the GSA formulated in the 2011/12 academic year. Members of the GSA are constantly confronted with new questions and areas on which they have to assume positions, making the Opinion Paper a work-in-progress. As a result of the involvement and work of the members of the GSA, further additions and clarifications have been deemed necessary. The responsibility for the final draft, including revisions, therefore remains with the 2014/15 board of the GSA.

1.3 The basis of this Opinion Paper

This paper is based on the Higher Education Ordinance (SFS 1993:100, rev. until SFS 2010:1096); *Doktorandspegeln 2008*; the Discrimination Act (2008:567); The Equality and Diversity Project at Karlstad University (C 2010/75); *Svart på vitt – om jämställdhet i akademien* (SOU 2011:1); the GSA's report of 2012; the GSA's report on discontinuation of doctoral studies (2014); GSA policies; and the accumulated experience of doctoral students at Karlstad University.

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2. INTRODUCTION TO DOCTORAL STUDIES

Newly admitted doctoral students stand to benefit greatly from a well-planned introduction period. Settling in quickly both socially and professionally can be decisive for achieving results, as well as for the doctoral student's well-being and ability to perform. The introduction period is also vital if external PhD students are to feel welcome and become part of the community of doctoral students at Karlstad University. Therefore doctoral students should receive information about Karlstad University, their departments and their workplace, as well as the terms and duties of their employment.

2.1 Admission to the doctoral programme

New doctoral candidates can be admitted to doctoral programmes in different ways. As a matter of principle the GSA believes that public recruitment should continue to be the normal practice at Karlstad University. A doctoral representative from the same or a related discipline should be present during the admission and interview process. This is important in ensuring the equal treatment of applicants, as well as due process, and also because applicants often have questions best answered by another doctoral student.

Settling in quickly both socially and professionally can be decisive for achieving results, as well as for the doctoral student's well-being and performance.

2.2 Information about the workplace

The first month or two of employment ought to be treated as an introductory period, during which new employees should be informed about the rules and guidelines of their workplace and be given help to quickly establish good relations with their colleagues. A newly admitted doctoral student should also attend the university's general introduction for new employees as soon as possible after admission.

We recommend that a new PhD student is given a tour of the campus which includes the central administration buildings, the library, the reception desk and cafeterias. Key people to be met during the introductory phase should include the head of department, supervisors, coordinators of study programmes and research groups, those responsible for planning and

allocating work duties, colleagues and administrators, as well as subject librarians. An introduction to the university should also include a tour of the PhD student's own department, and the doctoral student ought to be introduced to departmental colleagues. The head of department is responsible for providing the doctoral student with a workspace and the necessary office equipment, such as a computer, telephone, IT support, etc. Doctoral students who primarily work elsewhere should also be given a workspace during their stays at Karlstad University.

During the introductory phase, doctoral students should be informed about matters concerning their employment, such as departmental duties; administrative systems (for example systems for self-reporting and Ladok); departmental meetings and events; terms of employment; one's rights and duties as an employee; the delegation and decision making process; employees' unions; the Graduate Students' Association; as well as the university's organizational structure.

2.3 Introduction to employment as a doctoral candidate

The introduction also entails information which more specifically applies to the doctoral position. This includes, among other things, the individual study plan, the rights and duties of a doctoral student, the syllabus and course requirements of the discipline, local policy documents, and current legislation. The doctoral student needs to be informed about available official channels for support, such as the doctoral ombudsperson. Information about other matters related to the doctoral candidate's work and employment, such as regulations governing the application for and financing of literature, participation in conferences, and travelling to attend courses, etc., should also be provided. The doctoral candidate ought to be informed about how salaries are determined and how the doctoral pay scale works. Introduction days for doctoral students who do not speak Swedish need to be adapted so that they receive an introduction comparable to that given to Swedish-speaking candidates.

2.4 Doctoral mentors

A mentor should be appointed during the introduction period. Ideally mentors would be doctoral students with some years' experience of doctoral studies or recently graduated PhDs. The mentor ought to be someone from the same field as the new doctoral student, or, alternatively, from a similar academic or organizational area. It is the task of the mentor to complement the student's standard introduction with, for example, help in practical matters, and

information about departmental routines, and seminar and network activities (see GSA Recommendation 2010:1). At the time of the revision of this Opinion Paper certain disciplines only provide informally for introductions and mentoring activities. The GSA recommends that mentoring activities and introductions be formalized and offered to all doctoral candidates at the university.

2.5 Remuneration of doctoral students

We refer to the university's current pay policy for information on the remuneration of doctoral students. At the time of the writing of this Opinion Paper doctoral candidates are paid differently, depending on the type of position they have been appointed to. The salaries of doctoral students employed as doctoral candidates (as a "doktorand") are not set individually, but are regulated according to a local agreement called the doctoral pay scale ("doktorandstegen"). The four salary levels are determined annually through negotiations between the employer and the employees' union. Remuneration depends on the type of position a doctoral candidate holds at the university, but the GSA is of the opinion that doctoral students should as far as possible receive equal pay, irrespective of their positions. The GSA further encourages all doctoral students to be aware of the type of positions they have been appointed to and to familiarize themselves with the details of the pay scale or relevant pay policy.

Particularly doctoral candidates paid in accordance with the doctoral pay scale should ensure that their salaries have been increased as stipulated by the agreement. A doctoral student has met the requirements for receiving a salary increase when the appropriate percentage of completed study time has been reported in the annually updated individual study plan (ISP), unless the main supervisor provides information to the contrary based on his/her assessment of the ISP. After completing the course "Teaching at University Level I," or an equivalent course of at least five weeks' duration, the doctoral student's monthly salary is increased with SEK 300 at full-time employment. This increase takes effect after the salary administrator has received a certificate of course completion.

3. SUPERVISION

Proper supervision forms the basis for successful doctoral studies. A survey conducted by the board of the Graduate Students' Association in the spring of 2009 showed that doctoral students considered supervision to be significant

and, in many cases, decisive for the quality of doctoral studies. A survey of doctoral candidates who discontinued their studies (conducted in 2014), showed that deficient supervision played an important role in certain cases. We are therefore of the opinion that it is vital to encourage properly functioning supervision.

3.1 The content of supervision

The need for supervision varies during the course of doctoral studies. Certain periods may require more intense supervision than others. The GSA emphasizes that supervision should not be neglected during the first years of study, so that the doctoral student can start working on his/her thesis. It is also important that supervision should be a continuous process and be well planned by all involved. The ongoing feedback from the supervisors should be relevant and clear, and ought to be given within a reasonable time limit. Thesis work should be read thoroughly and commented upon on a regular basis. It is also vital that time be set aside for discussion of methodological and theoretical questions. Optimal supervision requires that reasonable time frames be agreed on. The doctoral student and the supervisor should also agree on the form supervision takes. The GSA would like to see disciplines having common guidelines to this end. In addition, the GSA would like to stress that the different areas of responsibility, demands and expectations in supervisory situations should be communicated and clarified to all concerned parties.

The GSA stresses the importance of supervision during the first year, so that the doctoral student gets underway with work on his or her thesis.

3.2 The role of supervisors

Regulations governing supervision are to be found in paragraphs 28, 29 and 31 of Article 5 of the Higher Education Ordinance. The overarching responsibility for doctoral studies lies with the faculty board, which ought to appoint at least two supervisors to each doctoral student, with one of the two designated main supervisor. Areas of responsibility ought to be divided between the supervisors and it is important that both/all supervisors contribute their time and knowledge actively. According to vice chancellor's decision RB 88/12, it is the policy of the university not to allow family members or otherwise closely related persons to jointly supervise one PhD candidate.

Supervisors are to guide doctoral students in working on their theses and in the learning process that contributes to doctoral students' development during their studies. It is also important that there is an open dialogue and that supervisors encourage initiative as well as constructive, creative thinking. In order to give high-quality supervision, supervisors should be competent researchers who are active in their fields. To provide the best possible supervision, supervisors should be offered suitable training. According to the Swedish Higher Education Ordinance, at least one of the doctoral student's supervisors should have received training in supervision or have equivalent competency. The GSA would like to see basic supervisor training be supplemented with ongoing professional development and training.

The GSA is positively inclined towards the establishment of supervisors' meetings, where supervisors can assist and consult with their colleagues. If supervision should not be functioning properly, it is important that the doctoral student brings this to the attention of his/her supervisors at an early stage. Bringing up the issue during an appraisal interview or contacting the doctoral ombudsperson may also be ways of addressing problems encountered. If necessary, the doctoral student has the right to change supervisors. In the event of changing supervisors, doctoral students should receive support. Faculties should have clear policies detailing this process.

In case problems arise with supervision, the doctoral student can turn to the doctoral ombudsperson. The ombudsperson can assist doctoral students in cases of conflict, withdrawal of financing, problems with work relations, and so on.

3.3 The examiner

The role of the examiner, according to the Higher Education Ordinance, is to set the grade for tests conducted as part of a doctoral programme (SFS 1993:100, revised according to SFS 2010:1064). Karlstad University has no local ordinance specifying the examiner's role further. The Graduate Students' Association is of the opinion that the examiner ought to be someone not involved in the candidate's supervision. The examiner should therefore neither be the main- nor co-supervisor. This is important both for legal reasons, as well as to assure quality.

Should problems arise in supervision, it can complicate matters if the supervisor is also the examiner. The doctoral student is in a position of dependence on his/her supervisors. It is therefore vital that there are

independent parties the doctoral student can turn to for assistance, such as the examiner.

4. STUDY PLANS

The doctoral student is both an employee and a student. Often many tasks and assignments are handled simultaneously. It is nonetheless important to see to it that doctoral students get the most out of their studies, and that their studies are rewarding and manageable. Therefore study plans are the A to Z of doctoral studies.

4.1 The individual study plan (ISP)

The individual study plan is a fundamental tool when it comes to quality assurance in doctoral studies. It also provides a measure of legal security for the doctoral student, supervisors and the head of department. The purpose of the ISP is to reflect the development of the doctoral student's skills at PhD level and to highlight that doctoral study follows a systematically planned course. The ISP is the only legal document drawn up and signed by the doctoral student, supervisor, examiner, and head of department.

The individual study plan forms the basis for doctoral students' rights and duties, as well as their progression up the pay scale. Moreover, it regulates the role of the supervisor and the forms supervision take.

The individual study plan forms the basis for doctoral students' rights and duties as well as their progression up the pay scale. Moreover, it regulates the role of the supervisor and the forms supervision take. Therefore the GSA considers ISPs as fulfilling an important function within doctoral studies and also deems it appropriate that what is written in them is observed.

The content of the ISP is governed by Article 6 of the Higher Education Ordinance and by each university's local regulations. According to the Higher Education Ordinance, the ISP should include a timetable, the organization of supervision, as well as the undertakings of the doctoral student and the faculty board.

The individual study plan should be drawn up within six months from the date a doctoral student begin his/her studies. The faculty board is responsible

for assessing and following up on ISPs. Administration surrounding ISPs is handled by the course and research coordinator of the appropriate faculty. The ISP should be followed up on a yearly basis, or when significant changes have been made to the planned course of study. To guarantee due process, the GSA considers it essential that ISPs are managed uniformly and systematically.

4.2 Course work at doctoral level

A good and creative research environment depends on offering high-quality courses for all doctoral students. It is important that post-graduate courses offered at Karlstad University maintain a high standard, are publicized well before they start, are offered as regularly as required, and that the courses on offer are constantly developed. Courses should also be offered in English, in particular those which are obligatory according to the study plans, so that foreign doctoral students enjoy equal opportunity to complete courses at other institutions in Sweden and abroad.

Postgraduate courses are regulated by syllabi, which stipulate content, aims and forms of examination. The Graduate Students' Association considers the syllabi important governing documents for courses given at postgraduate level. The allocated credits should correspond to invested time and effort in a transparent way, and different doctoral candidates ought to receive the same number of credits for comparable activities. Therefore the GSA is of the opinion that course syllabi and reading lists should be drawn up well ahead of each postgraduate course. The GSA strongly recommends that all disciplines, departments, research groups, etc. carefully consider how many credits doctoral students can obtain for activities within each discipline. Course documents should be reviewed following the same routines that apply to first-cycle (undergraduate) and second-cycle (Master's) courses at each faculty.

The GSA also believes that third-cycle (doctoral) courses should be evaluated and that doctoral students be informed of the results of the evaluation along with any measures taken to improve the quality of the courses. Doctoral courses ought to be planned and conducted with careful consideration and high aspirations.

5. DEPARTMENTAL DUTIES

Doctoral students at Karlstad University may spend 20 percent of a full-time position on departmental duties. This can enrich and complement their doctoral studies, and add to the doctoral student's skills and teaching merits.

5.1 Allocation and content

Time may be allocated differently from semester to semester. Departmental duties and participation in doctoral studies may, however, when combined, not exceed 100 percent per the semester. The planning of departmental duties should be regulated in the individual study plan and should be done in consultation with the doctoral student, supervisor and departmental head or appropriate manager. The actual extent of departmental duties is to be documented in Ladok.

Departmental duties are important, and can help to increase the quality of doctoral studies programmes, as well as the doctoral student's own skills and teaching merits

Departmental duties may consist of, for example, teaching and/or representation of employees' unions, student organizations or the university. The GSA considers departmental duties important and is of the opinion that they can play a role in increasing the quality of doctoral studies. It is therefore important that doctoral students have some influence over the allocation of their departmental duties and that these duties are related to the content of their studies and/or career goals.

5.2 Teacher training for higher education

Article 6, paragraph 33 of the Higher Education Ordinance states that doctoral students who are teaching should have completed initial tertiary teacher training or have acquired comparable skills in some other way. As a result of this, and because teaching abilities are a prerequisite for quality teaching, the GSA is of the opinion that doctoral students should be offered a course in tertiary teaching or an equivalent as a part of their departmental duties. Departures from this policy are acceptable if the course can be seen as a relevant part of their thesis work, as it then can be offered as part of their doctoral coursework.

5.3 Acquiring teaching qualifications

Departmental duties in the form of teaching allow doctoral students to acquire teaching merits that may benefit their future careers. The hours allotted for teaching should be in accordance with the actual time spent teaching. Departmental duties should be well defined in advance as regards the number of hours to be taught and the percentage of the doctoral student's workload involved. It is inappropriate to apply the time allotment model used for more experienced teachers to inexperienced doctoral students.

It is important that the doctoral student is qualified in the subject area he/she is to teach. It is therefore positive if the teaching content touches on the doctoral student's thesis topic. This benefits undergraduate students, the quality of undergraduate education, as well as the doctoral student. Furthermore, it is desirable that the doctoral student is

If the content of the doctoral students' teaching hours touches on their thesis topics, there are benefits for undergraduate students as well as for the doctoral students themselves.

given an opportunity to teach the same or similar course module again, and that teaching hours are concentrated in short periods. The GSA is of the opinion that doctoral students should only act as course coordinators if they want to take on this responsibility. Additionally, the GSA recommends that a doctoral student should not have any teaching duties during the final four months before his/her thesis goes to press.

5.4 The teaching mentor

In order to support doctoral students in their teaching duties and to raise the quality of both teaching and doctoral studies, the GSA suggests that each doctoral student be assigned a teaching mentor with whom discussions can be held about teaching and procedures surrounding courses. The teaching mentor ought to be an experienced teacher (a lecturer or senior lecturer) who teaches similar subject areas to those taught by the doctoral student.

6. STUDY ENVIRONMENT

A good study environment, which includes an adequate academic and psycho-social work environment, is a crucial component of high-quality doctoral

studies, and ensures that doctoral students thrive, are challenged, and develop into competent researchers and good ambassadors for Karlstad University.

6.1 The scholarly environment

An essential component of doctoral studies is the scholarly milieu which forms the basis for good research. Scholarly dialogue in the form of conversation, seminars, etc. presents doctoral students and researchers with the opportunity to broaden their horizons and to receive expert, well-informed feedback on their research. To achieve a scholarly dialogue of high standard, a critical mass of senior researchers and doctoral students is needed.

To maintain a good and creative research environment, all doctoral students should participate in appropriate seminar series. Here they have the opportunity to develop their abilities in critically examining scholarly material. Furthermore, seminars allow doctoral students to present their research (from initial ideas to final products), and to practise scholarly argumentation. Research should be regularly put to the test within the framework of doctoral seminars; ideally with external participation from other disciplines or institutions aimed at ensuring quality thesis work. Research ought to be presented in public regularly, in national as well as international contexts, for example, through participation in conferences. The GSA stresses the importance of conference participation for the future careers of doctoral students. When conference participation is mandatory, the GSA considers that travel and conference expenses should be paid by the faculty.

Research schools can contribute to the creation of stimulating research environments, but participation in research schools ought to be carefully considered and well-justified.

The GSA is of the opinion that research schools comprising a critical mass of doctoral students and senior researchers can contribute to the creation of an innovative and interesting research environment. Participation should, however, be well-justified and carefully considered. It is nevertheless important that doctoral students who do not belong to research schools also have access to an innovative scholarly environment.

6.2 Psychosocial working environment

Doctoral studies can at times mean a heavy workload, which is why doctoral students ought to be offered help with prevention and management of stress when the need arises, both in groups and individually. During appraisal

interviews and in supervisory situations the head of department and the main supervisor ought to ask about the doctoral student's psychological and physical work situation. The doctoral student should be invited – as all other employees – to discussions for the purposes of appraisal as well as for individual professional development meetings with the head of department. (Information on how doctoral students experience their situation at work is to be found in GSA report 2012.) The head of department and the main supervisor also have a duty to see to it that the study and working environments of non-Swedish speaking and external doctoral students' are adequate.

6.3 Doctoral studies and parenthood

It is important that doctoral students have the opportunity to combine their studies with parenthood and home life. Therefore it is essential that attitudes and values support the taking of parental leave by both men and women. At the same time it is important that doctoral

It is important that work is planned and organized so that doctoral studies can be combined with parenthood.

students on parental leave are kept informed of what is going on at work and are invited to individual meetings, etc. The GSA also believes that it is that work should be organized in a way which makes it possible to combine doctoral studies with parenthood. This could mean, for example, that allowance is made for the demands of parenthood when meetings and conferences are scheduled.

6.4 Equality

According to the report, *Svart på vitt – om jämställdhet i akademien* (SOU 2011:1), doctoral students most often discontinue their studies because of social factors. Many studies have also shown that female doctoral students experience shortcomings in their psychosocial environment to a greater extent than male doctoral students. The GSA's survey of doctoral students who discontinued their studies shows that female doctoral students more frequently feel vulnerable and suffer more because of reasons related to their psychosocial working environment. It is crucial that these types of issues are addressed so that all doctoral students have equal opportunity to complete their studies. No doctoral student should have to experience discrimination or harassment on the basis of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or disability.

According to *Doktorandspegeln 2008*, 25 percent of women and 6 percent of men said that they had been discriminated against because of their gender. Discrimination and harassment are not to be tolerated under any circumstances, and clear guidelines and routines should be formulated.

Everyone should have the same opportunity to be admitted to, carry out and complete their doctoral studies, regardless of gender, ethnicity, religious beliefs, age or sexuality.

6.5 Equal opportunities

Karlstad University operates according to the core values of democracy, equality, and diversity. These values are central in ongoing quality assurance. The GSA considers it important that equality between men and women always be observed and promoted, in order to create equal opportunities for everyone as they develop as researchers and colleagues. Everyone should have the same opportunity to be admitted to, carry out and complete their doctoral studies, regardless of gender, ethnicity, religious beliefs, age or sexuality.

Doctoral programmes and academic environments characterized by openness, equality and diversity pave the way for respectful, critical and well-informed discussions, on the basis of which the quality of education and research is improved.

6.6 Language policy

Karlstad University has an over-arching language policy (Dnr. C2012/479), which says the following concerning doctoral programmes:

Guidelines for doctoral programmes:

- Doctoral and licentiate theses may be written in English, Swedish or other Nordic language, or some other language within the research tradition of the subject.
- Doctoral and licentiate theses should have a title, an abstract, and a summary in Swedish as well as in some other language.
- The programme should include training in communicating research problems and results to the public and the research community, nationally and internationally.
- University-wide courses should be held primarily in English

As a public administrative authority, the university has Swedish as its primary language, according to Swedish law (SFS 2009:600 §§1-13). However, the language policy makes it clear that important information, strategic documents, steering documents, and other information that may be important to all employees should be made available both in Swedish and in English, to the extent possible. The GSA supports the university's language policy and considers that all doctoral programmes at the university should adhere to it as far as possible, as a natural part of administering programmes of an international character.

7. CAREER PLANNING

It is not a given that everyone should pursue a doctoral programme with career in mind, but for many doctoral students career planning is an important part of accomplishing their academic aims. Doctoral programmes are the highest level of study in the Swedish educational system and are intended to provide the doctoral student with good career prospects. The Graduate Students' Association is of the opinion that career planning for doctoral students at Karlstad University should start with the planning of the very first individual study plan – doctoral students should plan strategically ahead of their future careers.

Career planning is a matter of keeping an eye on future goals and thinking strategically about one's future employment.

7.1 Think strategically: make optimal use of your time

It is important that doctoral students start considering their future careers as early as possible during their doctoral studies, since they have the opportunity to plan their time strategically in this regard. Doctoral students might, for example, want to relate their thesis work to, or conduct their empirical research in, the field that they later intend to work in, or build up a network within their current field. Departmental duties can also be useful strategically. The importance of career planning at an early stage is something which is highlighted in the alumni study of PhD graduates from Karlstad University. Throughout their studies doctoral students ought to be thinking about developing skills and choosing specializations with a view to increasing their employability after they have graduated with a PhD or licentiate degree.

7.2 The supervisor's role in career planning

The GSA believes that every doctoral student should have access to individual career planning during his/her studies. With the aim of building up their credentials ahead of a future career, doctoral students should be given support and guidance in putting together a portfolio of their qualifications – for teaching as well as other assignments. Discussions between the main supervisor and the doctoral student about the doctoral student's future career should be indicated in the ISP.

Supervisors should be involved in the doctoral student's career planning. It is, however, the responsibility of individual doctoral students to actively plan ahead of their careers throughout their studies, but especially during the final years. At the request of doctoral students, their supervisors should ideally be able to assist in finding mentors in the sectors in which they can expect to work after defending their theses. Supervisors should also support the doctoral students' building of networks. Networks can be decisive if doctoral students are to find meaningful employment after their studies, therefore supervisors should encourage doctoral students to participate in conferences and to publish articles and other texts.

It is important that supervisors or other senior researchers involve doctoral students in the process of putting together applications for research funds. By taking part in this process, doctoral students are given the chance to gain knowledge about the application process – a skill they will need to obtain future research funding.

8. MONITORING AND ASSURING QUALITY

Together with doctoral students, the university and faculties can ensure that doctoral studies programmes at Karlstad University maintain a high and consistent quality; that they are based on equality, regardless of gender, ethnicity, religious belief, age or sexuality; that they offer good psychosocial work environments; that they provide good career prospects; and that they enjoy a good reputation, both nationally and internationally. An important component of this endeavour includes monitoring the university's doctoral study programmes.

8.1 Evaluation of doctoral studies – the details and the big picture

The GSA regards systematic monitoring and evaluations both during and after doctoral studies as important instruments for continuous quality assurance. Questionnaires and interviews with all doctoral students, and in some cases with specific groups of doctoral students such as female or foreign candidates, ought to be carried out regularly so that an overview of the current situations of different PhD students at Karlstad University is available. Review sessions with recently graduated PhD students – concerning all parts of their doctoral programmes – should likewise take place regularly and in a systematic fashion. In the same way, surveys of alumni focussing on how the content of their doctoral studies programmes impacted upon their employability ought to be carried out regularly. Successful quality assurance demands that the results of monitoring processes and evaluations are used to adapt the doctoral education system. This is the responsibility of the university management centrally and of the respective faculty boards, but the GSA also recommends that disciplines and research schools also conduct regular, systematic evaluations of doctoral programmes.