

INFORMAL GUIDE FOR FRESHERS IN DOCTORAL STUDY PROGRAMMES

1. **Ask the more-experienced, but don't fall for everything** ☺ - it is useful to ask higher-semester students how it works with doctoral studies. However, the information you get may not always be applicable to the current situation. Doctoral studies at the faculty undergo a lot of changes and many things that had been in use for years are different now. Check the information on the web, in the Doctoral study Office or with your supervisor. Be ready to do things in a new way!
2. **Work on your dissertation thesis continually** – frequently seen mismanagement in doctoral studies is starting working on dissertation thesis at the very end of studies. Large number of students then don't finish their studies in time and prolong them in various ways. It is good to know that this practice will no longer be supported. Exceptions will not be granted and ungrounded prolongation of studies will not be allowed. Do not leave work on your dissertation for later. Choose a topic that you are interested in and start straight away!
3. **Concentrate on your dissertation, do not waste your energy elsewhere** – it happens that many active students who invest a lot of energy into their studies do not concentrate on their research topic when picking publication topics, conference presentations, projects and other activities. They do a lot of things, apart from working on their dissertation. Such strategy turned out to be fruitless. It surely is great to fully use the opportunities the faculty offers – specific research projects, scholarship programmes, funds for books, study trips, internships. But don't forget the point to which it is all supposed to aim. If you do something, connect it to your dissertation topic.
4. **Clarify your topic as soon as possible** – the sooner you explicitly clarify the topic and the goal of your dissertation thesis (“about what” and “what for” is the dissertation supposed to be), the better. You should put together a list of questions which are going to be answered in the dissertation thesis by the end of the first year of your studies. Try to aim at the following as soon as possible: be able to explain in one sentence, what your dissertation will be about.
5. **It will take a lot of time** – doctoral studies require lots of reading and lots of thinking. It takes time and you must count with it. It is necessary to summon number of sources, organize them and gradually work through them. In comparison with diploma thesis, the number of sources is often much larger. The sooner you start, the better!
6. **You will not do without foreign sources** – use the plentiful opportunities offered by the library and electronic databases available at the faculty. Don't be afraid to check sources in foreign languages that you can't speak well, too – current translators translate into/from foreign languages surprisingly well. They are perfectly usable for a basic literature search. If you speak English well and can use google translator as well, the number of sources is larger than you would expect.
7. **Don't get overwhelmed** – the danger of getting overwhelmed with information grows hand in hand with the number of sources. Make structured notes. Write down notes on important as well as little progress (you might have a kind of “research diary” where you will make notes on your decisions which way to go or which way you didn't go and why). Learn to appreciate even little failures, as well as mistakes you make – it is a step forward. It is also important to be able to say enough and stop reading other sources in the final stage, otherwise you will never finish your work. It's not possible to read everything. Make notes, try to source as much as possible, but don't get mad!
8. **Contacts are important** – use opportunities to make useful contacts both inland and abroad. The more people who you can talk to about your dissertation work you meet, the better. At the faculty, at conferences, at study stays and internships, at specialist events. Try to gain feedback not only from you supervisor, discuss your dissertation with the others too. Specialist discussions are as important as reading. Moreover, there is a chance of future cooperation in other projects than the dissertation work. Don't make your life difficult by being on your own for it.
9. **Set the bar higher than to the ground level** – try to reach true excellence in your research topic field. As you can carry out research in the given field for four whole years, you have a chance to become a specialist in the field. When you attend a conference in four years' time, you should be an expert in the given topic, known by the people. When they see you in the conference programme, they should think: “Oh, this is the person who wrote that brilliant article I read!” You name is shaped by your publications as well as your conference presentations. Make use of it. Don't write articles the quality of which you cannot be proud of. Don't attend conferences that will not contribute to your knowledge, but will leave you with a headache in the morning. Try to fully use your potential. Aim at quality, not quantity.
10. **Try to be broadminded** – surely not everything will be perfect in the doctoral studies. From the content point of view as well as administrative one. Some things change slowly. We will always welcome your feedback, don't hesitate to provide it at every opportunity. It is really important for us. In this way you will help to move things forward. Don't lose your humility please. Even though you may feel to be the best expert all over the world, don't forget that you are on the start line. The world is usually larger then it seems to be at the first sight.