

To be or not to be a doctoral researcher Self-assessment

1. Why do I want to do a doctorate?

- I am fascinated by science.
- I want to learn more about my field of research.
- I find it exciting to delve deeper into scientific issues.
- Scientific research is fun.
- I intend to pursue a career in academia or research & development (outside of academia).
- A doctorate is common in my discipline (e.g. chemistry, biology).
- I hope to find a better job with a higher income.
- My family and friends expect me to do a doctorate.
- I would like to enjoy university life a bit longer.
- I have no other idea or no other job choice to making a living at the moment.

⇒⇒⇒⇒ If you agree mostly with the second half of the questions, you should seriously review your motivation for pursuing a doctorate!

2. Requirements for a doctorate

Formal

- I have the grades and language skills as required by the respective FU departmental doctoral regulations.
- I already have been offered a place for a doctorate.
- I have already looked into funding options for a doctorate, have secured funding, or plan to apply for funding.

Personal

- I am persistent even when faced with setbacks.
- I can handle criticism and failures while still being able to motivate myself.
- I assign myself work tasks and work on them in a disciplined manner.
- I am familiar with the basics of scientific writing and with the publication culture in my research field.
- I am willing to work on the same topic for three years or longer.

Private

- I receive support from family and friends in overcoming challenges. I am aware of the fact that pursuing a doctorate may restrict my family and leisure time activities.
- I feel that I am in good health and confident that I can bear potential stress elements (mental and physical) related to pursuing a doctorate.

⇒⇒⇒⇒ For a doctorate, you should agree with most of these statements.

**To be or not to be a doctoral researcher
Self-assessment**

3. What is my path to a doctoral degree? Structured vs. individual doctorate

Structured doctorate in a program	'Traditional' individual doctorate
Application to a structured doctoral/graduate program, supervisors are either specified by the program or candidates need do search for an appropriate supervisor	Search for an appropriate supervisor
Generally, topic of dissertation project within the specific research field of the doctoral program	Greater freedom as far as the choice of dissertation topic is concerned
Course program designed in accordance with the research objectives of the program to strengthen and deepen disciplinary knowledge as well as professional and transferable skills (curriculum of approx. 30 CP); beyond that individual participation in qualification offers of FU Berlin and Berlin University Alliance partners	Individual participation in qualification offers of FU Berlin and Berlin University Alliance partners to strengthen and deepen disciplinary knowledge as well as professional and transferable skills; beyond that individual participation in offers of working groups, departments and institutes.
Supervision by a supervisory team	Generally one supervisor; team supervision is still an exception
Working environment: interdisciplinary	Working environment: generally disciplinary
Formalized supervisory agreement that defines the rights and duties of doctoral researcher and members of the supervisory team	Letter of acceptance and supervisory agreement from the supervising professor [Betreuungs-zusage] for application to be admitted to the doctorate at the doctoral degree office [Promotionsbüro] of the respective department
Standard time to degree for doctoral studies [Regelstudienzeit] corresponds to the rules and regulations of the program [Promotionsstudienordnung] and generally amounts to three years (+ prolongation options in case of family responsibilities); rules and regulations for the doctorate [Promotionsordnung] at the department apply	Standard time to degree [Regelbearbeitungszeit] as defined in the doctoral rules and regulations of the department [Promotionsordnung], generally four years; with consent of supervisor(s) and doctoral committee [Promotionsausschuss] application for prolongation is possible (repeatedly if applicable).
Systematic program-specific qualification offers in science communication skills, e.g. poster presentation and conference participation (mandatory transferable skills elements of the program curriculum)	Talks and presentations at (inter-)national and national conferences chosen on individual basis in agreement with the supervisor
Doctoral program organizes scientific exchange among doctoral researchers as well as with external partners via guest invitations, research stays abroad and extensive networking and workshop opportunities.	Integration into the scientific community and relevant networks mainly via supervisor, working group, project team; exchange with other doctoral researchers usually on the basis of own initiative

**To be or not to be a doctoral researcher
Self-assessment**

Structured doctorate in a program	'Traditional' individual doctorate
Doctoral degree at FU: discipline specific German degree (e.g. Dr. rer. nat., Dr. phil. etc.) <u>or</u> PhD if applicable	Doctoral degree at FU: discipline specific German degree (e.g. Dr. rer. nat., Dr. phil. etc.)

4. Did you know? - On perseverance and career prospects after the doctorate

- Two out of three doctoral researchers think about quitting at least once. Having doubts during your doctorate is normal! Do not be discouraged. Information and counselling services can be found on the website of the Dahlem Research School.
- Unemployment among doctoral graduates is a marginal problem in the long run. However, it is important to keep in mind that changing your field of activity after your doctorate can mean a new start in your career. You should therefore always keep your subject-related and interdisciplinary competencies up-to-date in order to optimize your employment opportunities after the doctorate.
- Many people who start a doctorate aim for an academic career. However, there is a strong mismatch between the number of early career researchers and the number of vacant professorships in the German system. High expectations of mobility and the regulations of the Act on Fixed-Term Employment Contracts in Academia (Wissenschaftszeitvertragsgesetz – WissZeitVG) make career development complicated. The goal of becoming a professor is accompanied by uncertainty, a low degree of career predictability, and a high level of personal risk. It is not impossible to achieve a professorship, but you should be aware of the difficult circumstances.
- The chances for achieving a professorship vary according to subject groups. However, a doctorate opens many other doors.
- With research management, science communication and science transfer, there are other fields of activity in the research and higher education system that are currently experiencing a boom.
- In the area of research and development (R&D), there are numerous for research positions outside academia.
- In addition, there are a variety of opportunities in arts and culture, the non-profit sector and administration.

⇒⇒⇒⇒ Please find further information, offers and advice on the website of Dahlem Research School: www.fu-berlin.de/drs