

8 November 2016**Doctoral degrees in medicine: HRK recommends improved quality assurance**

Today, the General Assembly of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) formulated key parameters for doctoral degrees in medicine. These key parameters are intended to ensure compliance with general quality standards for dissertations, while taking into account the special nature of medical subjects. The recommendation is part of intensive efforts by the HRK in recent years to support early career researchers, and follows on from the general recommendations for quality assurance in the doctoral degree process.

For dissertations in medicine, the HRK recommends that they be written after the completion of undergraduate studies, as is a matter of course in other fields. "This is the only way to ensure that the necessary prior knowledge and time are available to author an independent research paper that meets academic standards and makes a significant contribution to knowledge," says HRK Vice-President for Research and Early Career Researchers, Prof Dr Ulrich Rüdiger. "In this way we will also ensure that a doctorate in medicine will once again be given full recognition overseas." "Completion as a postgraduate requires preparation during undergraduate studies, involving an introduction to scientific methods and working techniques," the recommendation says. "This includes an obligatory undergraduate academic thesis, which can also become the basis for a doctoral thesis."

The HRK General Assembly has also pronounced itself in favour of a clearer structure for the doctoral degree phase. "A number of faculties already offer good examples in the form of doctoral programmes or doctoral research programmes," explains HRK Vice-President for Medical Studies in Higher Education and Health Sciences, Prof Dr Johanna Weber. "A further strengthening of supervision and the teaching of interdisciplinary skills and methods are indispensable for quality-controlled, structured doctoral training."

HRK President Prof Dr Horst Hippler added the following: "The HRK is calling for a change of culture. But we are also well aware of the particular factors that affect medical training, with its long standard course duration and the specialist training that follows. We take the concern for fostering more qualified early career researchers especially seriously, and we identify solutions." These include the inclusion of students and doctoral candidates in current research projects and the incorporation of medical doctoral training in cross-disciplinary career and staff development concepts.

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