

# **HZB guidelines for doctoral researchers and advisors**

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*„A good researcher must strive for the truth and know that they can only ever come near her. They must acknowledge facts. Indifferently whether they comply with their thoughts and wishes or not. That is, they must be selfless. And they must have the ability to wonder at and admire nature.“*

*Lise Meitner (1878 – 1968)*

## Preamble

The HZB guidelines for doctoral researchers and advisors (in short: HZB doctoral guidelines) define uniform standards that shall ensure a successful completion of a doctorate under best possible conditions within a reasonable timeframe at the Helmholtz-Zentrum Berlin (HZB). They contain the general framework of doing a doctorate at the HZB, as well as tasks and duties of doctoral researchers and their advisors.

The guidelines are binding to all HZB doctoral researchers and their advisors. A HZB doctoral researcher is defined as i) a doctoral researcher with an employment contract with HZB\* or ii) a doctoral researcher that performs his/her doctoral work at the HZB\*\*, but does not have an employment contract with the HZB. Guests, who stay at HZB for several days or few weeks to use the large-scale facilities, are not considered HZB doctoral researchers.

Doctoral degrees are conferred by HZB's partner universities according to their specific doctoral regulations. Resultant duties and rights of those regulations possess superordinate validity over the HZB doctoral guidelines. The Doctoral Guidelines of the Helmholtz Association and, if applicable, statutes or guidelines of structured doctoral programs such as the HZB Research Schools, complement the HZB doctoral guidelines.

Scientific achievements as well as the development of excellent career perspectives are at the center of doing a doctorate at HZB.

## 1. Doing a doctorate at HZB

The doctoral training at HZB aims to impart the following skills to doctoral researchers: an ability to perform independent research and to manage and control one's own research activities, as well as the ability to communicate one's own results to a specific target group.

After the completion of a doctorate at HZB, doctoral researchers will have gained competences by attending seminars and lectures, by presenting their research results at conferences and publish those in peer reviewed journals, by following the rules of good scientific practice, and by having gained insight into getting third-party funds and the management of laboratories.

HZB promotes contributions to the scientific community, such as participation in networks, public relations and outreach activities. Various transferable skills courses complete the scientific training.

Furthermore, doctoral researchers are encouraged to take over small additional tasks in teaching or, if reasonable, and not in the sense of compensation for lacking personnel resources, in running scientific facilities at HZB.

## 2. General framework

Recruitment of suitable doctoral candidates is conducted by the advertising organizational unit. The primary selection criteria includes the motivation to work on a specific topic, as well as having expertise and methodological abilities. Sound English language skills are expected (at least B2 of the European Framework of Reference for Languages).

Employment contracts at HZB are usually issued for at least three years. Salary is subjected to the regulations of the funding bodies as well as the German public service pay scale. The department for Personnel and Social Matters is to be contacted for more information.

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\* HZB-employment contract, HZB-contract as scientific staff with the option to do a doctorate, HZB fellowship

\*\* Doctoral researchers that spend at least one year of their doctorate at HZB

HZB doctoral researchers are obliged to enroll as doctoral researcher at a university at the start of their doctorate at the HZB. Admission/acceptance as a doctoral student is sole responsibility of the respective university. HZB doctoral researchers enroll at the university to which their main advisor is affiliated.

Based on suitability of the research topic, HZB doctoral researchers are asked to join one of HZB's Research Schools or equivalent programs.

In case the dissertation is submitted at the respective university within three years, HZB doctoral researchers with an HZB employment contract are eligible for a follow-up six-month full-time contract as a bonus.

If the doctorate cannot be finished within the duration of the initial contract, an HZB employment contract can only be prolonged if the time delay can be justified and if the completion of the doctorate within the intended prolongation seems realistic. In this case, the supervision committee has to evaluate the situation and to state a recommendation. The main advisor then triggers the contract prolongation in communication with the personal and social matters department. All contract prolongations that lead to a total contract duration of more than four years must be approved by the board of directors.

After starting their doctorate, all HZB doctoral researchers receive access to the HZB Doctoral Researchers Portal (DR Portal). All relevant administrative information of a HZB doctoral researcher is stored there, as well as the documentation of the progress of the doctorate and the qualification achievements. All HZB doctoral researchers must update their information in the portal on an ongoing basis.

### 3. Supervision committee

Each HZB doctoral researcher is guided by a supervision committee. The supervision committee meets regularly (see appendix B) to monitor and evaluate the progress of the doctorate. Primary task of the supervision committee is to ensure best possible conditions for a successful completion of the doctorate according to the HZB guidelines.

The supervision committee consists of:

<b>Doctoral researcher</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must be HZB doctoral researcher</li> </ul>
<b>Main advisor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must be HZB employee</li> <li>• Must have the right to confer a PhD degree</li> </ul>
<b>Daily advisor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must hold a doctoral degree</li> </ul>
<b>Second daily advisor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obligatory if main advisor is at the same time daily advisor or if doctoral researcher wants to have a further daily advisor</li> <li>• Must hold a doctorate and is close to the subject of the doctoral thesis</li> </ul>
<b>Backup main advisor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Backup for main advisor (replaces main advisor if required)</li> <li>• Must have the right to confer a PhD degree</li> <li>• May take part in the regular meetings of the supervision committee</li> </ul>

**Further members**

- According to the doctorate regulations of the respective university, further members can be part of the supervision committee

The members of the supervision committee are listed in the HZB supervision agreement (see appendix A). For job advertisements within HZB, the main advisor, backup main advisor, daily advisor, the topic and a short proposal including aims and tasks of the planned doctorate must be stated and confirmed by all involved parties (in written form).

## 4. Progress monitoring

The supervision committee monitors the progress of a doctorate. For that reason, HZB doctoral researchers have to annually write an obligatory progress report, that will be presented in the subsequently conducted obligatory progress meetings (appendix B).

Without all three submitted progress reports, an extension of an HZB employment contract is categorically not possible.

The HZB Graduate Center prepares a yearly overview of the overall situation of doctoral researchers at the HZB.

## 5. Supervision of doctoral researchers

Scientific guidance and supervision are provided by the main advisor, who is usually affiliated with an university and has the right to confer the degree. All HZB employees with the respective qualifications are listed in the HZB database POFSTA (see “Lehrbefugnisse und Promotionsrecht”). In case of questions, the HZB Graduate Center can be consulted.

The daily advisor is responsible for day-to-day supervision. Thus, must be adequately available, ideally during the entire doctorate, and must possess good social competences. The number of doctoral researchers that are guided per advisor must be limited to a reasonable number in order to ensure that HZBs high quality standards on supervision of doctoral researchers are met at any time. Advisors with no or little supervision experience are asked to attend trainings on good supervision of doctoral researchers. The HZB Graduate Center can be consulted on this matter.

Basic tasks and duties of both, doctoral researchers and advisors are listed in the HZB supervision agreement (appendix A).

## 6. Qualification requirements and aims

Each HZB doctoral researcher is responsible to ensure that requirements and duties outlined by the respective doctoral regulations of their respective university are fulfilled.

It is recommended that all tasks and activities, which are not directly related to the doctorate, do not require more than one day per week on average. In the last year of the doctorate, all tasks and activities should be limited to ensure a timely completion of the doctorate.

HZB doctoral researchers are requested to accomplish the following tasks and activities before submitting the dissertation:

- **Obligatory:** three progress reports and progress meetings
- **Obligatory** (ideally during the first year): Attending courses on “Good Scientific Practice”
- At least one peer-reviewed publication as a first author

- Presentation of scientific results at international conferences (at least one oral presentation and one poster presentation)
- Several scientific presentations within HZB
- Subject-specific qualification such as lectures, HZB department and institute seminars, summer/winter schools etc.
- Transferable skills trainings as well as career development and career planning measures (field trips, internships etc.)
- Participation in the DR retreat

The following optional tasks and activities are considered beneficial / are recommended:

- Contributions to HZB campus life (e.g. assistance in the “Schülerlabor”, tours for school classes and guests; public relations activities such as assistance in events for the public like “Lange Nacht der Wissenschaften”, “Girls’ Day” etc.)
- Assistance in maintenance and service of lab equipment and facilities
- Supervision of bachelor or master theses; Being a buddy for new HZB doctoral researchers
- Assistance in teaching, planning of research projects or acquisition of third party funds etc.

A qualification plan that lists all planned tasks and activities to be accomplished during the doctorate is part of the first progress meeting and must be aligned with the main advisor (see appendix B). Alternatively, the qualification plan can also be created and maintained in the DR Portal. This plan is to be updated in each progress report or within the DR Portal and accomplished tasks and activities are to be documented.

The Department of Strategic Personnel Development is offering several inhouse courses for HZB doctoral researchers. Furthermore, the offers (scientific and non-scientific) provided by the universities of Berlin/Brandenburg are available to HZB doctoral researchers. In some cases, admission might be restricted. The HZB Graduate Center can provide assistance.

All HZB doctoral researchers are eligible to receive a „transcript of records“ that lists all tasks and activities that were accomplished during the doctorate, provided that those are documented in the DR Portal and respective documentation of attendance is uploaded.

## 7. Conflict management and special agreements

In case of conflicts or problems that impair the working conditions or the quality of the doctorate, HZB doctoral researchers are requested to proactively look for solutions or support. The HZB Graduate Center is available to all HZB doctoral researchers at any time and assists confidentially in finding suitable contact persons or points out further possibilities for solving conflicts. Furthermore, HZB has ombudspersons on both campuses and from different divisions in Adlershof and Wannsee. They offer consultation and mediation in case of disputes or issues in scientific conduct (e.g. authorship issues, suspicion of scientific misconduct etc.). Works council, gender equality officer, anti-discrimination officer or members of the Department of Personnel and Social Matters are available to HZB doctoral researchers at any time. The next step in conflict and problem resolution is to involve the Scientific Board of the HZB Graduate Center, that can advise and decide on further measures, before in a further and final escalation step the division speakers or the HZB board of managers are involved.

New HZB doctoral researchers have the option of getting an experienced HZB doctoral researcher as a buddy. Buddies provide orientation at the center, share their experience and knowledge regarding HZB-specific processes and facilitate networking at HZB at an early stage. The HZB doctoral researcher representation provides assistance in finding a suitable HZB buddy.

HZB doctoral researchers that require reconciliation arrangements, such as certain means to manage family obligations (e.g. childcare, care of relatives etc.) discuss those with their advisors and contact the HZB Office for Work and Life (OWL). The HZB Graduate Center can advice here as well.

## 8. Appendix

The following appendices are part of the guidelines:

- Appendix A - HZB supervision agreement
- Appendix B - Progress Monitoring