

# Data guided improvements of doctoral supervision

**Insights from the collaboration between the Dahlem Research School at Freie Universität Berlin and the Doctoral Candidates Panel Study ProFile**

9<sup>th</sup> EUA-CDE Workshop: Doctoral Supervision – practices and responsibilities,  
Delft, January 20<sup>th</sup>

Dr. Agnieszka Wenninger (Dahlem Research School, Freie Universität Berlin)  
Jakob Tesch (ProFile, German Center for Higher Education and Science Studies,  
DZHW Berlin)

# ProFile – Model of cooperation\*

## Partners

- Cooperation agreement with ProFile
- Contribute contact data of PhD students yearly (since 2009)
- receive annual report and data tables



## ProFile

- Implements monitoring of doctoral candidates (online panel survey)
- Compiles annual report and data tables
- Publishes scholarly publications
- Opens access to the data as a scientific use file

\* ProFile was initiated at iFQ and is now a DZHW budget project

\*\* except Medicine

[www.promovierendenpanel.de](http://www.promovierendenpanel.de)

## ProFile Partners

### Universities



RUPRECHT-KARLS-  
UNIVERSITÄT  
HEIDELBERG



U N I K A S S E L  
V E R S I T Ä T



HEINRICH  
BÖLL  
STIFTUNG

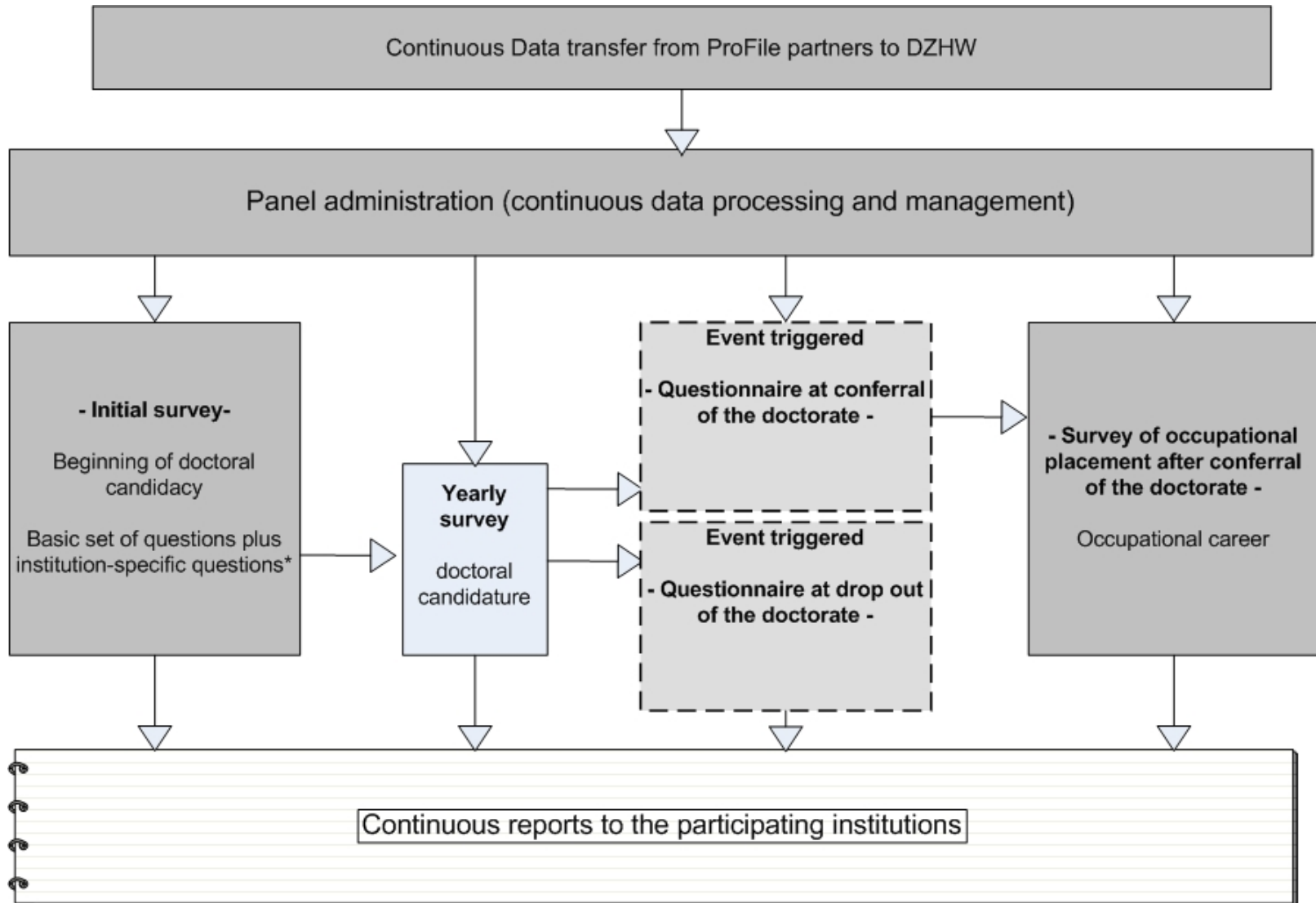


DAAD

Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst  
German Academic Exchange Service

Scholarship providers for  
outstanding young  
researchers

# ProFile – Research Design



## ProFile Output

Peer reviewed articles, books, proceedings



## Magazines

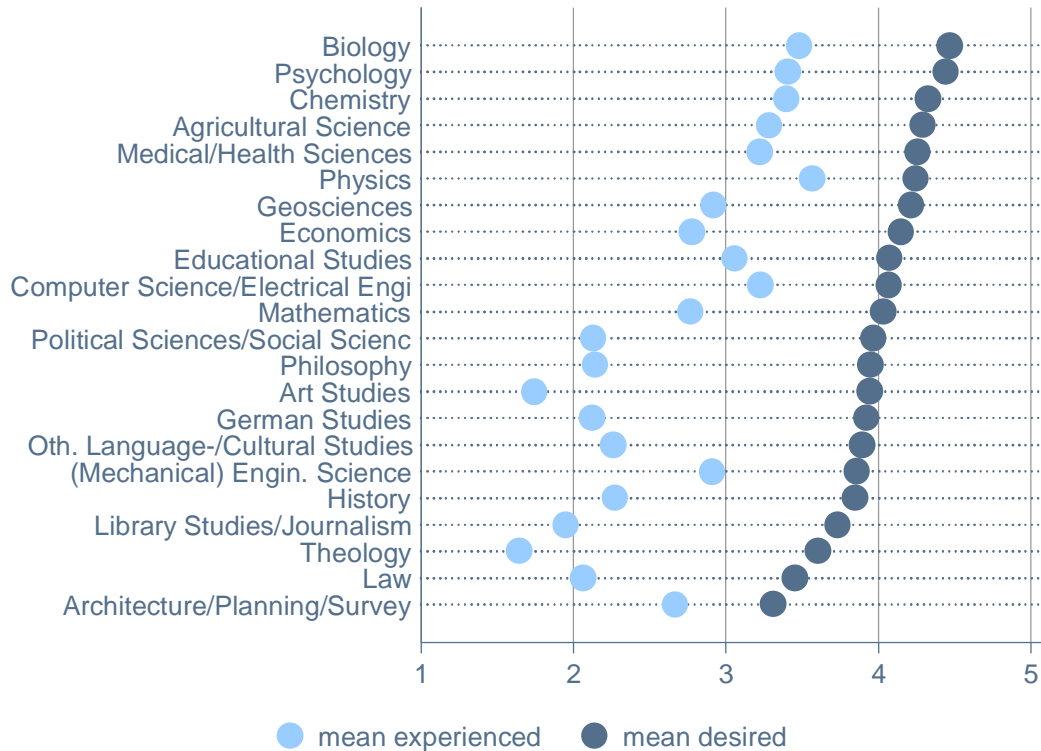


Reports to clients and policy makers



# ProFile Results

Supervision – Experienced and desired and supervision for publishing in journals



- hot topic in the sciences for doctoral students
- Gap between desired and experienced support

# Thank you for your attention!

## Contact:

Jakob Tesch

Deutsches Zentrum für Hochschul- und Wissenschaftsforschung

Schützenstraße 6a

10117 Berlin

Telefon: +49 (0)30 2064 177-49

Fax: +49 (0)30 2064 177-99

E-Mail: [tesch@forschungsinfo.de](mailto:tesch@forschungsinfo.de)

Internet: [www.forschungsinfo.de](http://www.forschungsinfo.de)

# DZHW

Deutsches Zentrum für  
Hochschul- und Wissenschaftsforschung ■

# ifl

Institut für  
Forschungsinformation  
und Qualitätssicherung

# Freie Universität Berlin

- 12 academic departments (including Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin)
- 3 central institutes covering various area studies
- 197 degree programs
- 28 doctoral degree programs
- 29,000 students and ~ **5,800 doctoral candidates**
- Professors: 349, incl. 39 joint appointments with non-university research institutes; 110 fixed-term professorships
- About 4,230 other staff members



# Why engage in the study?

- Continuous feedback on the supervision situation and satisfaction with supervision of our doctoral candidates and doctoral graduates
- Comparison and benchmarking
  - Program doctoral candidates vs. individual doctorate
  - Time series
  - Other universities and other funding institutions
- Contribution to the Higher Education Research and Science Studies

# What is being asked on supervision?

*How often do you discuss your doctoral thesis with your supervisor?*

*How many supervisors do you have?*

*Altogether, I am ... satisfied with the supervision of my thesis... (totally satisfied, not satisfied at all)*

*Who is your most important contact person in case of organizational or personal conflicts pertaining to your doctorate?*



# What do we get:

- Annual Report
- Topics:
  - Characteristics of Doctoral Candidates
  - Supervision
  - Financing
  - Response Rates

Antonia Domke, Almuth Lietz, Madeleine Siegel

**Promovierendenpanel: Ergebnisse der Befragung von Promovierenden der Freien Universität Berlin**

iFQ-Berichte No. 55 | Oktober 2015

Stichtag der Datenziehung: 28.10.2014



# What do we get:

- Data Tables
  - Motivation for PhD
  - Doctoral Agreements
  - Reasons for choosing the university
  - Evaluation of courses visited
  - Career goals
  - ... and many more

Reasons for choosing Freie Universität as PhD granting university			Total	Does not apply at all	2	3	4	Applies Fully
			n = 100%	%	%	%	%	%
Total	Total	2012						
		2013						
		2014						
		Total						
	Freie Universität	2012						
		2013						
		2014						
		Total						
	Other Universities	2012						
		2013						
		2014						
		Total						
Discipline 1	Total	2012						
		2013						
		2014						
		Total						
	Freie Universität	2012						
		2013						
		2014						
		Total						
	Other Universities	2012						
		2013						
		2014						
		Total						



# How to improve supervision?



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## Guidelines for Good Doctoral Supervision

### Introduction

Freie Universität Berlin recognizes its responsibility to create a nurturing environment for young scholars and scientists.

These guidelines, approved on November 10, 2014 by the executive committee, are an important step in ensuring such an environment and in maintaining the university's already high level of doctoral education.

The guidelines are designed for faculty members in the university's departments granting doctoral degrees. They are the product of exchange of experiences among graduate schools and institutions at various universities gathered over many years. They are also informed by the recommendations of the University of Saarland's Doctoral Studies Quality Circle (Qualitätszirkel Promotion) and by the conclusions of the task force on supervisory models of the German University Association of Advanced Graduate Training (UniWiND).

### 1. Taking on New Doctoral Candidates

Providing good supervision is a challenging endeavor. University faculty have many obligations and are responsible for numerous staff members. In addition, doctoral candidates often face difficult upheavals and financial uncertainties during this period of their lives.

#### Verifying capacity

It is therefore critical that university faculty make sure they have sufficient capacity before agreeing to supervise a new doctoral candidate. They must check whether they have the space, financial resources, and technical equipment for a new doctoral candidate to complete a dissertation in the standard length of time. As a rule, a faculty member should not take on more than twenty doctoral candidates at a time. Requirements will vary depending on the discipline and the objectives, but as a minimum faculty should make certain that they can meet the recommendations contained in these guidelines.

#### Assessing prospective doctoral candidates

Before formally accepting new doctoral candidates, faculty should carefully discuss with them their goals and objectives, the quality and scope of their project, the resources and skills needed to complete the dissertation (methods, language, etc.), and a realistic timetable. These discussions should be based on a candidate's dissertation prospectus and chapter outline. Any stays abroad should be factored into planning also at this time.

#### Funding for doctoral candidates

Secure finances play an important role in how quickly and successfully doctoral candidates complete their dissertations. At the same time information concerning funding is sensitive, therefore supervisors should handle it confidentially, as they would all other personal information. Furthermore, doctoral candidates should be informed that while they are not obliged to disclose their financial situation, doing so is recommended. Before accepting a new doctoral candidate, faculty members should discuss these issues with the candidate and, if necessary, recommend appropriate advice services. Supervisors gauge whether they can support doctoral candidates' scholarship applications through letters of recommendation. Generally, dissertation time and work schedule should take candidate's financial situation into consideration.

Good

# How to improve supervision?

Our measures:

## DRS Supervision Award



# How to improve supervision?

Our measures:

**Workshops supporting doctoral candidates:**

**e.g. “Me and my Supervisor”**

**Workshops supporting supervisors:**

**e.g. “PhD Supervision Process:  
Methods and Tools”**





**Thank you for your attention!**

[www.fu-berlin/drs](http://www.fu-berlin/drs)

**DAHLEM  
RESEARCH  
SCHOOL**

Center  
for Junior  
Researchers