

“The quality of science in Germany completely and utterly depends on the quality of PhDs.” (President of the DFG, M. Kleiner, Die Zeit, 16.08.07)

Conceptual frame

of the Graduate Academy at Friedrich Schiller University Jena

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0 Introductory Remarks

By establishing the Graduate Academy (GA), Friedrich Schiller University Jena (FSU) combines the objective of improving and securing top quality qualification of young researchers as well as the quality of scientific research contributions through dissertation projects. The GA is supporting this objective by strengthening attractive conditions for doctorate degrees and research and by minimising bureaucratic demands on teachers and doctoral students alike, in particular on foreigners.

In doing so, the GA recognises the plurality of forms of both doctorates and faculty traditions. One particular challenge regarding designing conditions for doctorate degrees lies in creating freedom for and excellence in research through restrained structuring and reliable integration into the scientific community.

Doctoral programmes are intended to expand the options for high-quality research activities at the FSU (e.g. through new and more intensive cooperations), while at the same time improving the individual conditions for obtaining doctorates for PhD candidates and supervisors alike (e.g. by taking into account teaching load, comprehensive supervision, improved status of PhD candidates). They thus provide an instrument that will ensure relevance and visibility of research by young researchers at the FSU and that is intended to create freedom for new research ideas and projects.

The following information will detail both the reasons for establishing the GA at the FSU as well as its objectives. Additional information will be provided regarding structure, organisation and contents of conditions for doctorate degrees and their optimisation. The presentation aims at assisting an informed and result-oriented discussion within the University.

1 Starting Position: Science Policy

One of the University's core tasks is the qualification of young researchers. The right to confer doctorate degrees is one of its unique features within the scientific system. In light of technological progress, globalised labour markets, new qualification and requirement profiles for highly qualified graduates and the assertive development of a joint European Research and Higher Education Area, science policy debates on both domestic and European level place greater emphasis on the doctorate stage (European University Association – EUA, 2005).

The Berlin Declaration by the European Ministers of Education (2003) thus placed the focus on doctoral studies as the “third cycle in the degree structure” according to the Bologna Process. The London Communiqué (2007) subsequently opposed the concept of doctoral studies at the level of higher education and demanded that doctorate candidates are recognised as early stage researchers rather than students, while at the same time emphasising the need for a variety of doctoral courses and programmes and warning of overregulation. On this premise, improvements to status, career prospects and funding of doctoral students were demanded. Member States are asked to increase their efforts to embed doctoral programmes into institutional strategies and to develop adequate career perspectives and paths. Greater transparency in access arrangements, selection, supervision and assessment procedures, development of transferable and generic skills as well as ways of enhancing employability of early stage researchers were demanded.

The objective is to essentially strengthen the European Research Area through these measures (Conference of European Ministers of Education, 2003, 2007).

All major German and European science and research organisations are emphatically supporting these demands and are in turn recommending specific arrangements (German Research Foundation (DFG), no date, German Science and Humanities Council (WR), 2002; Association of Universities and other Higher Education Institutions in Germany (HRK) 1996, 2003; EUA, 2005; Coimbra Group Universities CGU, 2007; League of European Research Universities LERU, 2007).

The recommendations are based on situation and deficiency analyses (e.g. DFG, no date; HRK, 2003), which arrive at the same conclusions. One identified central deficiency is the lack of forms of organisation “which could be used in future to attract top early stage researchers for doctoral studies at German universities” (HRK, 2003, p. 3). Criticism focuses on the excessive combination and non-transparent selection, admission, supervision and assessment structures under the traditional German “apprentice model” (ibidem).

In order to remove this structural deficit, recommendations are to introduce “doctoral studies”, which also cover the research-related qualification of PhD candidates based on competitive admission to “doctoral study centres”. This is intended to provide PhD candidates with more intensive interdisciplinary and predictable supervision as well as with research training oriented on top international standards (WR, 2002; HRK, 2003). Die higher

education institutions and their faculties in turn benefit “as highly qualified early stage researchers are attracted by applying transparent procedures, thus allowing for establishing or strengthening internationally competitive, distinguishing focus on research and promoting young talent“(HRK, 2003, p. 4).

2 Structure and Organisation of Qualification of Doctoral Students

2.1 Objectives and Institutional Implementation

Comments by a wide variety of research organisations agree in their demands for a unified institutionalised strategy for the qualification of doctoral students at the top level of higher education. Plurality in the organisation of the qualification of doctoral students is considered a strength of the European Higher Education Area. However, such plurality should in fact be protected through adequate measures from fragmentation and arbitrariness, which could be prejudicial to a conducive research environment. Research planning on university level rather than on faculty level as well as unreserved publication of all rules and statutes create the necessary transparency and reliability for both doctoral students and supervisors.

The EUA-recommended “good practice” comprises e.g. establishing a central higher education organisation unit responsible for coordination doctoral programmes and preparing standardised rules for the university as a whole (“Code of Practices”) (EUA, 2007, p. 12). This also includes centrally available information about courses available for doctoral students (ibidem, p. 13).

In particular research-intensive universities require such a central control and coordination unit, which should be independent from specialist teaching and research activities and should be installed as closely as possible to or as part of university administration (HRK, 2003, p. 7).

Long-term experiences by structured doctoral training institutions, such as in Finland also show that such new institution will generate major benefits once it has been equipped with sufficient authority, formal responsibility and the necessary legal and organisational instruments (Dill et al., 2006).

Friedrich Schiller University Jena (FSU) follows these recommendations by establishing its **Graduate Academy** as a central scientific institution **in accordance with Sec. 37 (1) of**

the Thuringian Higher Education Act (Thüringer Hochschulgesetz, ThürHG) and Sec. 27 (1) of the Basic Constitution of FSU. A Vice-Rector has been appointed to establish the GA.

It is the Academy's objective in cooperation with the faculties, graduate schools, research training schools, and similar facilities for the structured promotion of early stage researchers, to enhance the quality of doctorate training and to promote adequate framework conditions for PhDs and to thus strengthen the University's research activities and to improve its position competing for young top researchers. **It considers its tasks in particular** to include setting up binding standards for the scientific and personal supervision of doctoral students, for form, scope and contents of doctoral study programmes, for involving doctoral students in the scientific community and its networks and offers for international networking and thus to establish and secure orientation on the internationally recognised status of research.

Based on long-standing positive experiences with doctoral programmes in research training groups, GA is especially supporting obtaining doctorates in structured programmes and networks. It is furthermore supporting PhD candidates outside structured programmes through special course offers and advisory and other services.

The GA is pursuing its objectives expressly taking into account the plurality and diversity of established faculty traditions. In order to meet these expectations, FSU in April 2007 appointed an Advisory Board, consisting of recognised representatives of the various scientific disciplines, who have already gained experiences in designing and/or implementing structured doctoral programmes within graduate schools or research training groups. The Advisory Board consists of nine professors and the Vice-Rector. After extending the Advisory Board by two professors in early 2008, it now comprises professors from all faculties (cf. www.iga.uni-jena.de).

2.2 Research Environment and Membership

In the context of the Bologna Process, the doctorate stage is defined both as third academic level and also as first stage of professional occupation. In line with LERU demands, the GA at Jena University regards **PhD candidates as early stage researchers**, whose research training must be clearly differentiated from the first two higher education levels (Bachelor and Master) with regard to both form and scope (LERU, 2007, p. 3). It regards the function of research training rather in line with the most recent comments made by the German Physical Society (DPG) as "improving internal qualifications as is the case with any serious

professional activity” (DPG, 2007, p. 6): *The core component of doctoral training is the advancement of knowledge through original research* (EUA, 2007, p. 21). This function is largely supported through the promotion of integration into research-oriented networks within the University and into the international scientific community (LERU, 2007, p. 3).

The qualification of doctoral students on the highest international level requires a **research environment**, which in turn meets highest international standards (CGU, 2007, p.1; EUA, 2005, p. 16; LERU, p. 3). This can be promoted through a critical mass of top-class experienced scientists and promising early stage researchers, by integrating doctoral students in research associations of different sizes and allows them to benefit from the expertise of and cooperation with experienced scientists, early stage researchers and research students.

Two aspects need to be emphasised with regard to supporting the development of an outstanding research environment:

Firstly, a **critical mass** of doctoral students is essentially supported by establishing new institutionalised structures such as doctoral programmes, doctoral research training groups, graduate schools or doctorate centres. Type and organisation of such institutions should take into account specific traditions and requirements of individual subjects. The GA is supporting a wide variety of institutions of structured doctoral studies. Usually, these are graduate schools, research training groups or doctoral programmes.

It should be noted that structured doctoral programmes should be understood “not as ‘schools’ but rather as centres for the improvement of efficiency in attaining the mostly scientific objectives of doctoral studies” (DPG, 2007, p.7).

Secondly and furthermore, any evaluation must take into account the **context of the quality of the supervision** as well as the qualification of supervisors. This applies not only to the ability to supervise as such, but also to the supervisor’s research strength (EUA, 2005, p. 22). Even though scientists with strong research capabilities are not automatically better supervisors of doctoral students, all supervisors of doctoral students should possess strong research capabilities.

The GA at Jena University meets this requirement by providing for transparent and binding procedures for the inclusion of scientists in the GA. Scientists are accepted into the GA either as individual members or by way of cooperating in doctoral training institutions (e.g. graduate

programmes, research training groups, graduate schools) that are recognised by the GA or that are positively assessed or approved by third parties (e.g. DFG). In case of cooperation within a structured programme, the GA accepts the assessment of the involved scientists by the member institutions. **Doctoral training institutions sponsored by non-university research institutions (e.g. Max Planck Society, Leibniz Association or Helmholtz Association) may be granted equivalent status upon request.** However, this requires that the FSU is to a considerable degree involved in the relevant institution. All involved professors hold dual membership both in the respective faculty and in the GA. The Board of the Academy (cf. 2.4) adopts quality criteria for the acceptance of members, which in principle are based on those for DFG research training groups.

The study programme is guaranteed by GA members with the expedient supplementation of appointed visiting scholars. In line with their teaching activities in doctoral programmes their undergraduate teaching load will be reduced and relevant staff will be funded. The commitment to promoting young talent within the GA will be taken into account especially in the performance- and stress-related appropriation of funds (LUBOM) and in awarding scholarships and established positions.

2.3 Research and Qualification Strategy

In addition to inclusion and supervision of already existing research training groups, graduate schools and doctoral programmes, the GA will also support development and implementation of new doctoral programmes. These strategic planning tasks are performed in close coordination in particular with the Vice-Rectorate for Research, thus supporting the cultivation of the FSU's scientific profile and its orientation towards modern doctoral training. One instrument to be made available to this end is that of start-up funding, especially for scholarships. The GA's organisation is in line with this strategic function as central scientific institution with strong connection with both the faculties and the Rectorate.

2.4 Basic Organisation of the GA

The GA's position within the University's structure is reflected in its formal organisation: A **Board of the Academy** is to be established as central body, consisting of both representatives of all status groups of the University's areas involved in doctoral studies and of representatives of all subject groups.

The GA is managed by an **Executive Committee** under a full-time Director, who at the same time is member of the Rectorate. The Director is supported by an office.

2.5 Right to Confer PhDs

In principle, the faculties' right to confer doctorate degrees should not be touched. However, the FSU's existing regulations for the conferment of doctorate degrees should be reviewed and modified for a number of reasons, including:

- the increasing variety of degrees as a result of the introduction of Master's courses, which are not clearly identifiable with any single discipline and which therefore are difficult or impossible to allocate to a discipline;
- the increasing relevance of interdisciplinary research, which makes "cross-border" doctoral students both desirable and necessary;
- increasing internationalisation and the resulting greater degree of heterogeneity of degrees;
- the demand for transparent and reliable rules, which should keep exceptions to a minimum.

In the past, the FSU's faculties were in most cases able to find solutions by way of preparing and agreeing on individual special regulations. While that was expedient and adequate, it must be assumed that sooner rather than later, individual special regulations will no longer be sufficient, as the number of "special cases" will rise and gain relevance and hence will become the "rule". Both interdisciplinarity and internationalisation of post-graduate research are welcomed developments. However, to allow them to take effect and to strengthen the FSU's research activities as a whole, clear and reliable formal regulations are necessary.

It is therefore proposed that the FSU's General Regulation of Doctoral Studies and the Regulations of Doctoral Studies of the Faculties will be amended to provide that instead of individual detailed specifications regarding the subsequent completion of credits or equivalent requirements, credits earned as part of a doctoral programme during the doctoral stage may be considered, e.g. completion of a study programme recognised by the GA as part of the doctoral programme. Successful participation in a study programme may then replace other requirements of the admission as doctoral student. This variant has already been successfully implemented in the DFG research training group "The economy of

innovative change” (*Die Ökonomik des innovativen Wandels*)“and also in interdisciplinary and international collaborations (e.g. LMU Munich, cited in EUA, 2005, p. 29).

If this is found to be unrealisable, completing “interface PhDs” at the GA should be considered. The GA would need to be bestowed a separate right to confer PhDs, to be exercised together with the involved faculties. In Germany, this approach is e.g. practiced by the universities of Würzburg, Bochum and Ulm, while others, such as Bielefeld and Hannover are planning to adopt it.

3 PhD

3.1 *Doctoral Student Status*

The GA aims at establishing a standardised doctoral student status in line with the demands of the German Science and Humanities Council (2002, p. 73).

Introducing a standardised doctoral student status is necessary in order to allow for the involvement of doctoral students in internal University processes in line with their contribution to the University’s research and teaching as well as for reliable monitoring and optimisation of the progress of PhD studies (in detail cf. Sec. 8) and for organising the involvement of PhD candidates in the GA’s services.

To date it is not known how many people are studying for doctorate degrees at the FSU and who they are. PhD candidates are either enrolled scholarship recipients, research associates or staff in budgeted or externally funded positions or are studying towards doctorate degrees without any formal connection with the FSU (e.g. on the basis of a professor’s oral promise of supervision). Accordingly, the latter are either not registered at all or at different sites of the University, in many cases across disciplines.

- (a) Doctoral students holding scholarship are PhD candidates allocated to department 1 and are formally allocated to the group of students, even though due to their qualification they are graduates and usually also assume tasks of research associates (e.g. teaching courses).
- (b) As research associates in budgeted or externally funded positions they are University

employees and as such are registered in department 5. To this extent, acceptance and progress of PhD studies is of only secondary relevance. These PhD candidates are free to also enrol as doctoral students in department 1.

- (c) “Free” PhD candidates may be registered in the faculties if they have applied for admission as doctoral students. Since the majority of faculties requires registration only upon commencement of the PhD procedure, many “free” PhD candidates are known only to their supervisors and hence are not registered.

Due to this established structure, a very large number of PhD candidates are not at all or only insufficiently involved in internal University matters, even though they contribute significantly to the University’s research activities. However, they should be given this opportunity. Relief is possible by way of creating a standardised status of PhD candidates, integrating all PhD candidates regardless of the type of funding and official position into one separate status group defined under the law on corporate bodies. Establishing the GA will provide a relevant organisational frame for this.

3.2 Acceptance and Admission

On the international level, the Master’s degree is the standard degree required for the admission as doctoral students. However, exceptions are demanded for especially gifted students (CGU, 2007). The GA is supporting this so-called “fast track”, i.e. outstandingly qualified Bachelor graduates may be prepared for PhD studies in a one-year individually designed study programme.

Clear and transparent regulations are demanded for application and admission procedures, thus increasing the attractiveness in particular also for interdisciplinary topics and for foreign PhD candidates without compromising on performance standards (EUA, 2005, p. 12).

The GA is supporting this objective by advocating simplification and relevant convergence of the rules for PhD studies at the FSU (cf. Sec. 2.4.).

In the structured programmes, selection committees consisting of several experienced scientists are in charge of acceptance and admission in accordance with subject-specific excellence criteria, which usually are established by way of outstanding degrees, references by recognised experts in the relevant research area and by the quality of the research synopsis, possibly in combination with a presentation. Subject-specific special characteristics need to be taken into account in a meaningful way. Resolutions adopted by member institutions regarding the admission of doctoral students are then recognised by the GA.

All applicable regulations and procedural steps are made permanently available on the websites of the GA and its member institutions.

3.3 Duration of PhD Studies

One of the GA's objectives is to reduce the average period of PhD studies at the FSU. The GA follows the WR's view that PhD studies are a "qualification phase with a clearly defined time frame" (WR, 2002, p. 66). The aim is to limit PhD studies to three years for full-time PhD candidates. This project is in line with the established standards and funding periods of German research funding agencies (DFG) and organisations providing assistance to gifted students (German National Academic Foundation, foundations associated with political parties or unions or denominational foundations).

The GA advocates adjusting scholarships under the Thuringian Regulations regarding Assistance of Graduates (*Thüringer Graduiertenförderungsverordnung*) with regard to amount and funding period to other doctoral scholarships and to grant a maximum normal funding period of three years (also cf. the relevant recommendation issued by the WR, 2002). Upon instigation of the GA, the FSU has already adjusted the amount of scholarships to the usual amount of currently € 1,000. In particular the FSU's doctoral students who are not studying in structured programmes will benefit from this.

A number of European scientific organisations by now are advocating a standard period of four years for PhD studies (CGU, 2007; EUA, 2005, p. 17), with the last 12 to 18 months in particular focusing primarily on publications and career orientation.

In general, for interdisciplinary projects, a fully funded PhD term of four years should thus be granted. In addition, flexible extensions of the period of PhD studies in justified cases are advocated, e.g. if a family is started or in case of projects that are rather complex in terms of topic or methodology (EUA, 2005, p. 17, WR, 2002, p. 69).

The GA complies with the above by setting up a relevant scholarship fund, which may be used to grant completion or transitional scholarships if other means of funding (e.g. extension of the funding period in case of pregnancy by DFG graduate assistance) are not available.

Part-time doctoral studies and doctoral studies parallel to full-time occupation - as are conducted and considered expedient in some disciplines - usually require a longer period of

study.

3.4 Plurality of PhD Studies

Establishment of the GA curtails neither the traditional option of individual PhD studies nor the option of part-time PhD studies or PhD studies parallel to full-time occupation. Even if structured PhD studies are specifically supported by the GA, all of the FSU's PhD candidates should benefit from the range of programmes offered by the GA.

For this purpose the GA is setting up a support system, which provides qualification and advisory offers for doctoral students who are not members of any structured doctoral studies institution.

This also applies to PhD studies parallel to full-time occupation as well as to PhD studies with a specific legal background (e.g. in theology or in medicine).

4 Supervision

PhD studies in a structured programme do not reduce the relevance of supervisors, but supplement it in a meaningful way.

Most important is that several supervisors should be available for PhD candidates; in case of interdisciplinary programmes, supervisors could even have different subject backgrounds. A supervisor should be the main contact person equivalent to the traditional PhD supervisor ("*Doktorvater*"). In addition to the above there should be at least one further scientist, who is available as additional advisor and contact person. The GA is supporting the introduction of additional supervisors, as this will reduce the direct dependency of PhD candidates on the willingness and quality of the *Doktorvater's* supervision and any associated risks for the completion of the doctoral dissertation.

Supervision is supplemented by a coach, who will be available as contact person for any non-technical concerns of the PhD candidates. His tasks will include e.g. provide support in structuring workloads, time management issues, study requirement analysis, as the case may be, conflict solutions, future and career planning. The coach is a member of the GA and should normally come from outside the subject area.

5 Study Programme

5.1 *Scope and Work Load*

It is a widespread misunderstanding that involvement in a PhD study programme comes at the expense of research time and therefore rather has the effect of extending the period of PhD studies. If that were the case, the structured doctoral programme would have missed its target. However, experiences made in DFG research training groups show that this is not the case.

Involvement in structured PhD study institutions rather aims at strengthening the focus on research-related activities and on relieving the PhD phase of any other tasks (e.g. excess involvement in undergraduate teaching).

The above may e.g. be achieved through PhD contracts concluded between PhD candidate, supervisor(s) and the GA. Among other things, such contracts could be used to stipulate scope and type of courses to be attended as well as the scope of teaching commitments.

The scope of a study programme for PhD candidates should be equivalent to 20 to 40 credit points throughout the entire period of PhD studies.

Individual institutions may also increase such requirements if this is necessary for the qualification or career objective. Also, study-related differences and the dissimilarity of occupational situations must be taken into account.

When designing new programmes it must be taken into consideration that traditionally, PhD studies have already comprised proportionate elements of structured programmes (e.g. research colloquiums or research seminars), which would become components of the regular programme.

Involvement in the study programme should be limited to the first three to four semesters. The following semesters should be mainly used for the completion of research work, writing the dissertation, and publication and presentation before (inter)national conferences as well as career orientation.

5.2 *Contents*

PhD candidates should be provided with course offerings supporting their research activities, enriching them intellectually and increasing their professional qualifications.

This requires a high-quality programme structure and implementation, which is attained on the one hand by programme structure and implementation being performed exclusively by experts close to the relevant subject or topic, with PhD candidates involved in a meaningful way (e.g. in the selection of topics or instructors). On the other hand, PhD candidates should be able to individually compose their study programme depending on their own requirements and interests and upon consultation with their supervisors.

It is agreed that the core and majority of the study programme is comprised of direct technical and methodological research training, for which the (inter)disciplinary institutions and programmes are responsible.

The qualifications on offer are furthermore to be expanded by adding interdisciplinary general scientific qualifications as well as vocational key competences (transferable skills or generic skills, sometimes misleadingly still called soft skills). Interdisciplinary offers are used for the universal scientific education of doctoral students beyond their specific research topic, whereas key competences are gaining more relevance in an increasingly complex research and work environment and therefore require targeted training (EUA, 2005, p. 15; LERU, 2007, p. 7).

The GA is basing its structure on the basic EUA system, by

1. distinguishing scientific key competences and
2. individual and professional core qualifications as subject matter of the study programme for PhD students (EUA, 2005, p. 15) and
3. by adding the qualification to teach courses or to supervise students.

1. Scientific key competences

Scientific key competences mainly include technical-thematic and subject-specific methodology courses. They form the core of the study programme and are offered both in disciplinary and interdisciplinary PhD training institutions by the institution's university teachers or post-docs or by internationally renowned experts. The GA supports these courses by providing funding for visiting scholarships.

The GA will offer an interdisciplinary scientific programme covering various formats:

Scientific lecture series Internationally renowned scientists from all disciplines will be invited to host inspiring events on current outstanding research topics. However, interdisciplinary subject areas of overriding relevance will also be taken up, aiming at a wider audience with the intention of stimulating scientific discourse. These events may be presentations, seminars, workshops or round-table discussions.

Scientist in Residence "SiR". The 'Scientist in Residence' is a renowned and well-known scientist with considerable intellectual charisma. He or she will be invited to spend six months in Jena to stimulate and structure intellectual discourse in typically interesting and current areas. To this end a wide variety of events will be held, such as lecture cycles, study seminars or round-table discussions.

Meetings with alumni. A particularly popular element of existing doctoral programmes is the "Meeting with alumni" series: Former PhD graduates of Friedrich Schiller University are invited to informally talk about their current work and how they got there and to discuss with the participants. Where have they benefited especially from their PhD in Jena, what was helpful for their career, what provided to be rather an impediment? Which tips and tricks do they have for a career entry after completing a PhD?

2. Key qualifications, language and interdisciplinary courses

"Universities have the potential to play a vital role in attaining the Lisbon objective of equipping Europe with the skills and competences necessary to succeed in a globalised, knowledge-based economy. In order to overcome persistent mismatches between graduate qualifications and labour market needs, university programmes should be **structured to directly enhance the employability of graduates**. At PhD level this means that candidates aiming for a professional research career should acquire skills in research and IPR management, communication, networking, entrepreneurship and team-working in addition to training in research techniques" (EU Commission, 2006, pp. 6-7).

Key qualifications are "obtainable general skills, attitudes and strategies, which are useful for solving problems and for acquiring new competences in the largest possible range of subject matters" (Education Commission NRW, 1995, p. 113). It is possible to obtain **key qualifications** at the GA, which go beyond the skills and competences acquired during the doctorate work. The objective is on the one hand to provide graduates during the doctorate

stage with optimal support for their dissertation. However, on the other hand they will also be prepared for the time after graduation. Additional **career advise** is provided to clarify which career development seems expedient.

With regard to key qualifications, the GA's study programme distinguishes between the areas of (1) EDP and media, (2) management and organisation, (3) communication and presentation, (4) career planning, (5) languages and (6) women in science.

Key qualifications also include **language courses**: "German as a foreign language" aims at facilitating international PhD candidates' ability to manage day-to-day life in Germany. The contents of "academic English" courses have been adapted to the University context and have been allocated to specific areas – they involve e.g. the drafting of academic texts in English or present scientific results at international conferences.

5.3 Teaching and Mentoring

Teaching courses and the supervision of students form part of the qualification profile of academics and should constitute part of any mentoring programme. Doctoral students should be offered competent supervision, developed together with the University's "Developing quality in teaching" project.

At the same time, the GA believes that it has the task to protect PhD candidates from excess stress through teaching courses, by stipulating the scope of courses required to be taught in the PhD contract and by reviewing the above in relevant status reports and/or discussions.

6 Equal Opportunity and Family Orientation

The GA commits to the principle of gender mainstreaming. Equality of opportunities is recognised as a central principle and is supported by specific measures. The primary objective is to increase the proportion of women in academia. Relating to the status group of PhD students this means in particular encouraging women to complete their PhD and - if they have the relevant qualifications - to continue their academic careers and in some natural sciences to aim for a PhD in the first place.

One major instrument for the attainment of this objective is the establishment of a fund for flexible bridging and re-entry scholarships as well as for project and travel scholarships.

Within the study programme events specifically addressing women will be offered. Supervisors should also be sensitised to equal opportunity issues in seminars.

The offer is to be rounded off by a specific female mentor programme.

In general, clear and transparent selection and evaluation criteria will also contribute to increasing equal opportunities for women (HRK, 2006, pp. 2 et seq.; WR, 2007, p. 23).

PhD candidates with children should receive special support from the GA. In cooperation with the Equal Opportunities Office and the Jena-Weimar Student Union, measures aiming at the reconcilability of scientific activities and child care are planned.

7 Alumni

Contact with GA graduates – even after they have left the FSU – is a major factor towards enhancing the FSU's attractiveness. This also involves – albeit not ostensibly – calls for donations. The life-long identification with one's higher education institution serves as a basis for raising an interest in the FSU among other people, in particular among young people.

8 Quality Management, Monitoring and Evaluation

Active quality management increases competitiveness and secures optimal use of resources (HRK, 2003, p. 7).

The GA's quality management comprises three levels. On the level of PhD candidates, it involves a review of the successful progress of PhD studies, including participation in the study programme and the doctoral student's supervisory situation.

On the level of doctoral programmes, the Board of the Academy establishes binding criteria as quality standards, which programmes need to meet in order to be recognised as GA programmes.

The GA as such, too, needs to be regularly subjected to a process and results monitoring to evidence the effectiveness of the objectives set above and to make adjustments. This also includes the potential partial or complete winding-up of the GA.

8.1 Progress of PhD Studies

Progress and success of PhD studies are monitored based on PhD contracts concluded upon commencement of the PhD phase between PhD candidate, supervisors, and GA (cf. EUA, 2005, p. 22). These contracts set forth the parties' respective performances (e.g. type and scope of the study programme to be attended or to be provided, scope of supervision, services by the GA; teaching requirements, material support, access to research resources). The contract also defines the applicable success criteria.

Performance of the contract and progress of the PhD are regularly monitored in status talks between PhD candidate, supervisor and GA and if required, adjustments are made. Such talks should be held at least annually or preferably every six months (EUA, 2005, p. 24). In addition, it may also be expedient to prepare status reports.

Also, so-called "personal development plans" or other equivalent instruments may be used as long as they support the GA's objective of bringing reliability and transparency into the relationship between PhD candidate and supervisor(s) and of demonstrating both the PhD candidate's progress as well as possible impediments.

8.2 PhD programmes

Even though quality assurance is necessary for PhD programmes and PhD study courses alike, the formal accreditation of programs in the postgraduate area is highly disputed (HRK, 2003, p. 7).

The GA subjects all events within its area of responsibility to constant evaluation, which is carried out in cooperation with the FSU's teaching evaluation project. In addition, in cooperation with the FSU's teaching evaluation project or other internal or external partners, the GA is setting up a panel of doctoral students, which is to provide information of the progress of PhD studies and the situation of PhD candidates at the FSU and which is therefore intended to be the starting point for improvements.

The GA is not aiming for the accreditation of PhD programmes or PhD study courses. The Academy is thus following LERU's recommendations (2007, p. 3) to avoid overregulation. At

the same time, individual institutional members are free to formally accredit their programmes or study courses. To facilitate recognition of participation in events, credit points (CP) are awarded according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). If and how the above are to be applied is subject to the rules of the member institutions

8.3 Graduate Academy

The GA is initially set up as a pilot project for a period of five years. Prior to expiration of the above period, the Senate will appoint an external group of reviewers to review the success of the GA against the stated fixed objectives. The Senate may also instruct one of its committees to carry out such a review. The Rectorate may demand the appointment of external and independent reviewers.

Criteria for the assessment of the Academy's quality and performance shall include in particular

1. the scientific quality of certified degrees;
2. the quality of qualification courses;
3. the relevance of the institutions for cultivating the University's profile;
4. the efficiency of the Academy's structures and organizations.

The Executive Committee will provide the Rectorate with its comments, addressing the report's proposals and results regarding the GA's future development. The Rectorate will decide on the continued existence of the GA and/or of its institutions and if required, will initiate the required Senate resolutions.

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Postscript

On 30 October 2007, the Vice-Rector for the Graduate Academy provided the Rector and the Faculties with the first draft of a concept for the GA. In November and December, this draft was presented by the Vice-Rector to the Faculties' boards and professors and explained in



detail. The subsequently revised version was discussed and approved by the Extended Rectorate on 29 January 2008.