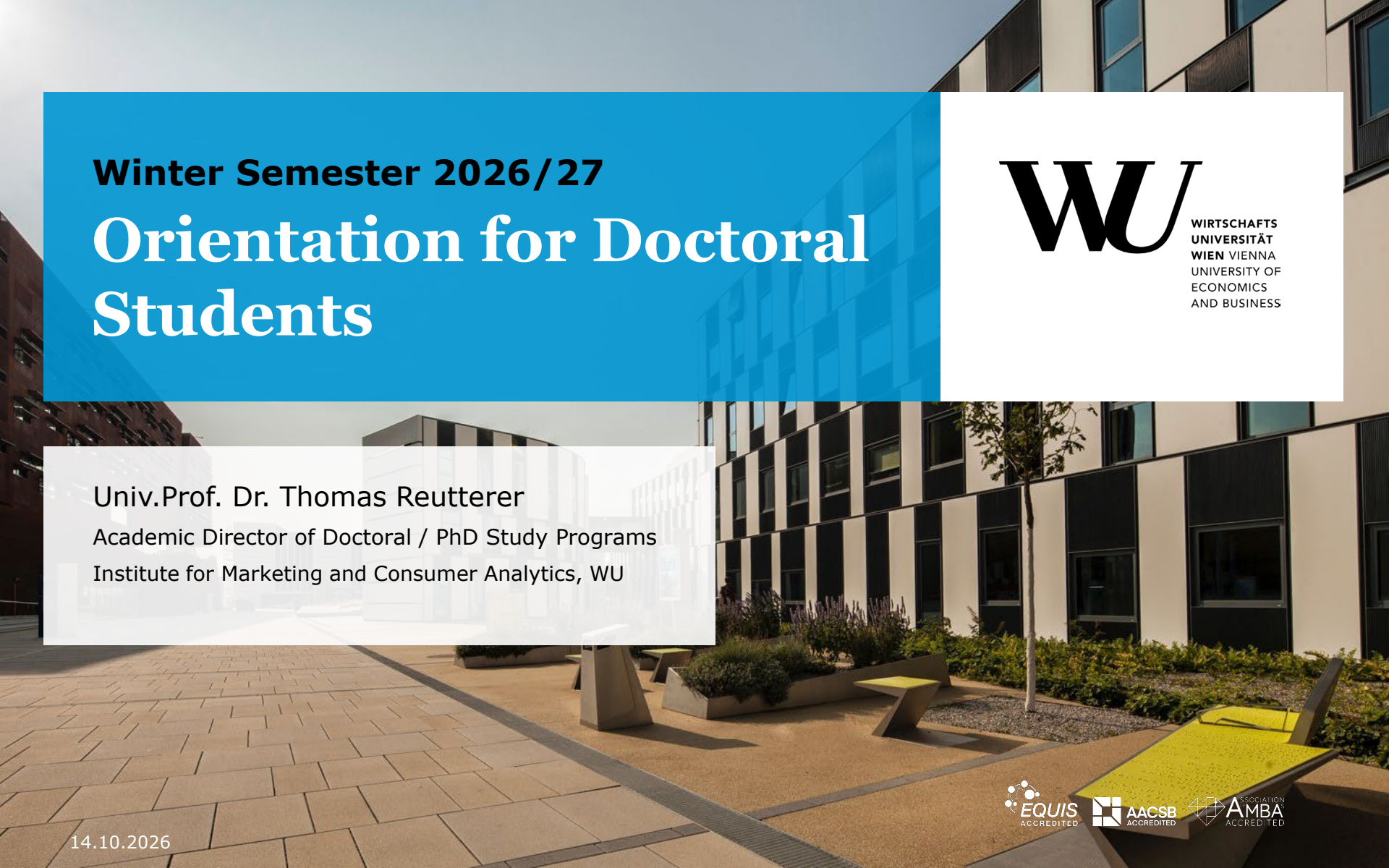


Winter Semester 2026/27

Orientation for Doctoral Students

WU WIRTSCHAFTS UNIVERSITÄT WIEN VIENNA UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

Univ.Prof. Dr. Thomas Reutterer

Academic Director of Doctoral / PhD Study Programs

Institute for Marketing and Consumer Analytics, WU

EQUIS ACCREDITED AACSB ACCREDITED ASSOCIATION AMBA ACCREDITED

14.10.2026

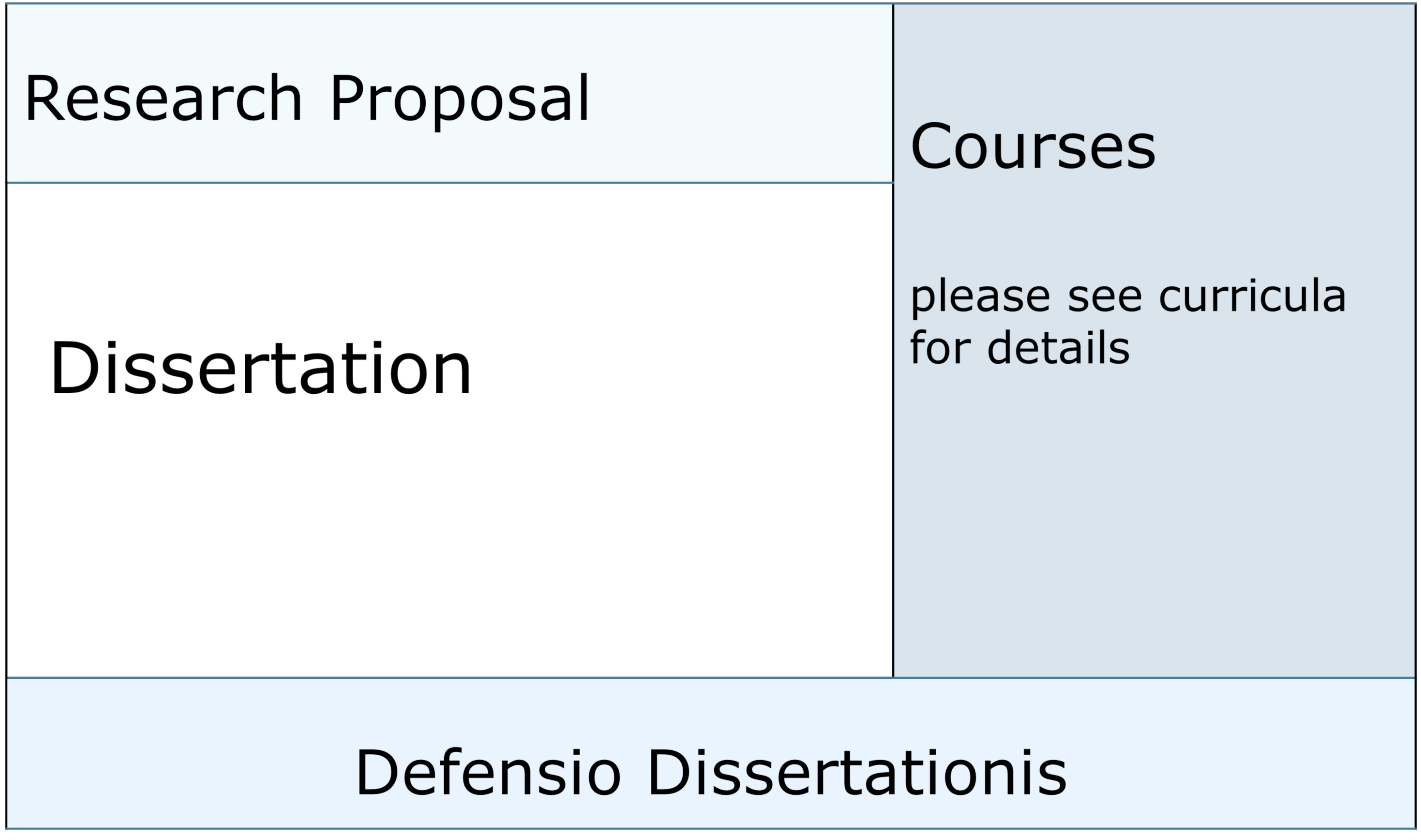
Overview

- Overview and short introduction
- Facts & figures
- Curriculum structure
- What is a dissertation?
- FAQs
- Resources

Facts & Figures

- Five doctoral programs – about 800 people ‚in the system‘
  - Doctorate Social and Economic Sciences / PhD Economic and Social Sciences
  - Doctorate Business Law
  - PhD Finance and PhD International Business Taxation
- During last year, 167 students started their doctoral studies at WU
- Admissions last winter semester (those for this semester are still ongoing)
  - 33 Doctoral program Social and Economic Sciences
  - 26 Doctoral program Business Law
  - 39 PhD Economic and Social Sciences
- PhD WiSo: only for WU‘s academic staff
- About 70 persons successfully complete their studies per year
- Admisson: only with preliminary confirmation of supervision & synopsis

Structure


Research Proposal
Courses
Dissertation
please see curricula for details
Defensio Dissertationis

Curricula

- Research Proposal:
  - Submission within 1 year after admission
  - Graded by the Supervision Team (Main Supervisor and at least 2 more members)
- Dissertation Agreement
- Dissertation and Defense are graded by a Doctoral Committee consisting of 3 members (all with habilitation or equivalent qualification, at least one not from WU)

Dissertation Agreement
[according to §34 (2) of the WU by-laws]

- Written agreement between student & their main supervisor covering
  - requirements for the dissertation (monography/article-based, paper requirements, etc.)
  - planned next steps & expectations
  - (courses to be completed)
- Submission
  - within the first year of studies, together with the Research Proposal

PhD in Econ. and Social Sciences Curriculum

- For administrative details contact the doctoral office: Barbara Bauer / Antonia Lanner / Daniela Eder: 313 36/4025 or 4696; E-Mail: doctoraloffice@wu.ac.at
- The curriculum is highly flexible and offers many degrees of freedom for customization

Subject / course title	ECTS
Academic Writing (1-3 courses)	6-18
Research Methods (1-3 courses)	6-18
Methodology and Theory (1-3 courses)	6-18
Interdisciplinary Research Seminar (1-2 courses)	6-18
Research Seminar – Participating in Scientific Discourse (2-6 courses)	12-36
Electives (outside WU; 2 courses – presentations at a peer-reviewed academic conference)	6
Research Proposal	-
Defensio Dissertationi	6

PhD/Doc in Econ. and Social Sciences
Suggested Structure

Assumption: No other commitments / full time study

- Dissertation agreement, build supervisory team (main supervisor + co-supervisor(s))
- Agree with supervisory team on course plan for first year
- Work on research proposal (RP) for doctoral project / attend department research seminars
- Course work (36 ECTS)
  - Research Methods I, II, III (see course availability) – 18 ECTS
  - Theory and Methods I & II (Philosophy of Science, theory seminar) – 12 ECTS
  - Academic Writing – 6 ECTS

Admission

(1st Sem.)

Y 1

Submit RP

(end of 2nd Sem.)

- Based on RP feedback: Decision on additional course work, revising research proposal, …
- Continue work on doctoral research project / attend department's research seminars
- Course work (36 ECTS)
  - Research Seminars (incl. discourse with supervising team) I, II, III, IV, V – 30 ECTS
  - Electives (Presenting at academic conferences, specialized course(s)) – 6 ECTS

Y 2

Submit Thesis

(~5/6th Sem.)

- Dissertation: Papers suitable for publication in leading academic journals (see department-specific dissertation guidelines) or monography
- Prepare for (academic) job market (academic job market trainings, presentation coaching, etc.)
- Formally defend dissertation research in front of committee – 6 ECTS

Y 3

What is a dissertation?

- **Original** academic work, supported by Supervision Team
- Participation (at least temporary) in academic discourse in the respective academic unit(s)
- Playing by the rules of…
  - Good scientific practice within the subject / discipline
  - WU as an academic institution
  - the Supervision Team
- More than just an extended diploma/master thesis

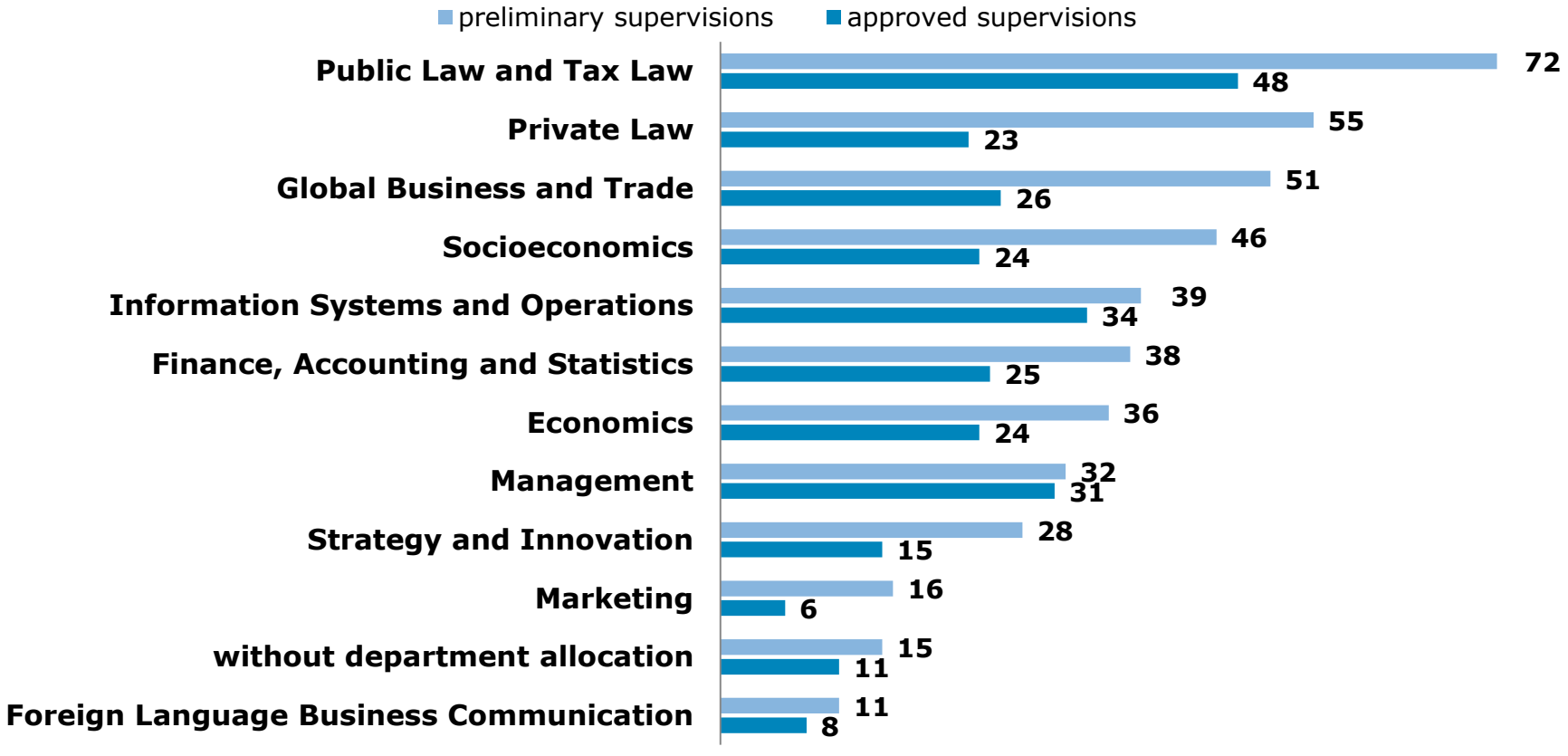
FAQs

- What are the critical points in a doctoral program?
- Can I study the doctoral program beside my job?
- What are the chances for students from abroad/from other universities/from universities of applied science?
- Can I spend a research stay abroad / attend courses somewhere else?
- Do I have to „explain the world“ in my dissertation?
- How do I know if it would be better to abandon the dissertation project?

What are the critical points in a doctoral program?

- Before admission: Finding a supervisor
  - Who is a potential Main Supervisor?
    - Any WU professor with a habilitation degree
    - External supervisors: only as a further member of the Supervision Team or Doctoral Committee
  - How to go about the search?
    - Independently
    - Academic Director does NOT allocate supervisors
  - Job vacancies at WU – job advertisements
- What do I need when looking for a supervisor?
  - good idea & research gap (based on previous studies) / access to specific (company?) data, experiments, field tests, …
  - What is my USP? Why should a supervisor join the project?
  - First draft for a research proposal

Number of supervisions per department



Critical Point: Supervision

- Main Supervisor: required for application
  - Look for WU professors matching your research interests (for information on specializations, check the WU homepage)
  - Contact them (sending along a short concept of the intended topic)
  - Discuss the project with them
  - Get a “confirmation of supervision”-form (available on WU homepage) signed and stamped
  - Send the form to admissions with your application documents

Critical Point: Supervision

- Supervision Team
  - On submission of the Research Proposal (i.e. after about one year of studies)
  - Confirmed by the Academic Director
  - Proposed by the student, usually after consulting the Main Supervisor
  - Usually from WU, external professors possible

Critical Point: Research Proposal

- First phase of dissertation project:
  - What is the project‘s contribution to academic discourse?
  - How will the dissertation answer the research question?
- Three goals
  - Orientation
  - Mutual commitment
  - Initiation
- Accessible to all WU professors via the Intranet
- Comments from the Supervision Team
- Attendance of Academic Writing-course recommended
- Please submit early (within one year)

Can I study the doctoral program beside my job?

- Studying should have priority
- Time requirements
  - 180 ECTS in total = 4500 working hours in the course of 3 years
    - in 3 years: about 30 hours/week
    - in 4 years: about 20 hours/week
    - dissertation itself: about 15 hours/week
  - Continuity is important – interruptions may have negative effects
  - Plunging into another (mental) world
- Checking your resources
  - intellectual, temporal, social
  - financial
- It is possible to work on the side
- Good intentions alone are not enough … ask your employer for support / leave options, etc.

What are the chances for students from other universities?

- No formal barriers

- Degree holders of other disciplines (e.g., Psychology): 300 ECTS of previous studies (Master & Bachelor) -> additional courses prescribed (max. 28 ECTS)
- Generally, finding a supervisor it is easier for WU students, as they are known to professors

Can I spend a research stay abroad / attend courses at another institution?

- NEURUS (Network of European and US Regional and Urban Studies)
  - Grant for working at dissertation abroad
  - 1 year program: one semester at WU, one semester at selected US schools (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, University of California at Irvine).
  - managed by International Office

- ENGAGE.EU PhD exchange
  - to attend courses at Engage partner universities

- Mobility grants for doctoral / PhD candidates (short term stay)
  - intended as help to cover travel expenses and encourage mobility
  - amount of up to €2000 per applicant (depending on yearly budget)
  - managed by Doctoral Office

Credit Transfer / Co-registration

Credit Transfer:

- courses attended at another university / summer schools / workshops / conferences (only as elective and if you presented a paper) can be accredited if certain criteria - formal ones (ECTS, doctoral level course) as well as with regard to contents (learning goals fit into curriculum) - are met
- -> application for credit transfer after attending the event to anerkennung@wu.ac.at

Co-registration / Mitbelegung:

- doctoral courses attended at another **Austrian** university as "Mitbeleger" can be transferred to your WU curriculum
- -> please write to doktoratsreferat@wu.ac.at **before** the course starts, as this has to be approved of in advance

Do I have to “explain the world” in my dissertation?

- Scientific progress is a collective effort – we are standing ‚on the shoulders of giants‘
- A dissertation is a (usually small) contribution to academic discourse
  - In Germany alone, there are about 25,000 dissertations per year (all disciplines)
  - WU-Journal ratings (A+, A, B): 521 journals – about 10,000 articles per year
  - Journals not ranked: multiplied by 4
- That‘s a relief…

A dissertation is public!?

- § 86 of the Universities Act governs the **publication** for academic dissertations
  - If the student establishes that his/her legal/business interests would be materially endangered by permitting access, it is possible to withhold the access to the dissertation for a **maximum of 5 years**.
  - „I would not have been granted access to the data if had I not promised to withhold access" or „If access is not withheld, some other party might exploit my data for commercial purposes" are not good reasons…
- **Withholding access is in stark contrast to WU's open access policy!**
- Integral part of academic practice is that research findings are available to the scientific community – no „secret knowledge"
- Should sensitive data be shared with everyone? No – it is reasonable to keep original data private **BUT**
- results of doctoral thesis must become part of public discourse as soon as possible!
- Make sure at an early stage that you have permission to publish data, or that at least the scientific conclusion drawn from data can be made available.
- That articles are still under review is **not** a reason for withholding access!

How do I know if it would be better to abandon the dissertation project?

- Realizing that resources are not sufficient
  - resources = time, money, energy, intellect, …
  - Synopsis as a first test
  - Introductory courses as a second test
- Unsuccessful search for a supervisor
  - ‚make or break'-point
- Framing important: not a dropout (‚failure'), but a decision taken after an exploration phase
- The earlier the better (most of the time…)

Resources

- Website
  - for persons interested in a doctoral/PhD program: https://www.wu.ac.at/studium/doktorat-phd/
  - For doctoral/PhD students: https://www.wu.ac.at/studierende/mein-studium/doktorat-phd/programmuebergreifende-informationen/
- Doctoral Office: Barbara Bauer / Antonia Lanner / Daniela Eder: 313 36/4025 or 4696; E-Mail: doctoraloffice@wu.ac.at
- ÖH-WU (StV Doktorat): stv-doktorat@wu.ac.at; https://www.wu.ac.at/en/stv-doktorat/home
- Our WU Student Counselling Team can help in stressful situations and conflicts
- Consultation hours of the Academic Director
  - By appointment, registration via the Doctoral Office

WU WIRTSCHAFTS UNIVERSITÄT WIEN VIENNA UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

Calendar of Activities

Each semester, we offer **interactive talks, trainings and workshops** on a variety of relevant topics that aim to make your student life easier and more effective.

Peer groups

Peer groups are spaces for exchange & learning from each other in **specific contexts**: studying & **neurodiversity, writing your bachelor theses, finding motivation, studying with children**. Our peer groups are held in German; Enlish speakers welcome.

One-to-one Coaching

Do you have a **personal issue** that **you would like to share in a confidential setting** to figure out your own solution? - Make an appointment for one-on-one coaching.

DIY Toolbox

We've put together a few **tools** for you online that **you can use to work independently at home**.

WU VIENNA STUDENT COUNSELLING

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VIENNA UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

All the best for your intellectual journey!

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