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Leibniz-Institut  
für Sozialwissenschaften

**Promotion at GESIS**  
**GESIS Doctoral Program**

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## 1 Introduction

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Those who support young scientists invest in the future. Therefore, GESIS attaches great importance to the promotion of its doctoral students. The close integration of research and infrastructural tasks, which is typical for GESIS, offers optimal conditions for doctoral students. At the same time, GESIS benefits from the active involvement of PhD students in the provision and development of infrastructure services for the social sciences, as their research contributes significantly to the continuous improvement of our research-based services.

The aim of this document is to present the general conditions for PhD students at GESIS. To this end, Chapter 1 first explains the regulations that apply equally to all doctoral students. Subsequently, chapter 2 describes the GESIS Doctoral Program and the funding structures for doctoral scholars.

With regard to their respective employment and supervision status, we at GESIS distinguish between two categories of doctoral researchers:

1. Doctoral Scholars, who are employed by GESIS as doctoral students<sup>1</sup>, are financed from budget funds (for details see chapter 0) and are supervised during their doctorate by a GESIS scientist. Doctoral Scholars do their doctoral work at GESIS within the framework of the GESIS Doctoral Program.
2. All other doctoral students who, for example, have been hired on the basis of externally funded positions at GESIS or who are supervised externally, i.e. not by GESIS employees, as part of their doctoral studies.

Doctoral degrees at GESIS are awarded in cooperation with universities, since these universities, unlike GESIS, have the right to award doctorates. Therefore, the applicable doctoral regulations of the university (or the faculty or department of the university) at which

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<sup>1</sup> At GESIS, we use the term "doctoralstudent" as an internal personnel category for institute-funded doctoral positions. This is not the same as doctoral\*student status at a university.

the doctoral degree is awarded (usually by the supervisor) are decisive for the successful completion of a doctorate and the award of the associated academic degree.

The legal framework for the employment of PhD students at GESIS is set in particular by the "Wissenschaftszeitvertragsgesetz" (WissZeitVG). According to this law, a doctorate is a temporary activity with the goal of further qualification. The requirement of a time limit means that the employment contracts of doctoral candidates at GESIS are generally not being released from a fixed term. The career paths of scientific employees at GESIS as well as their legal basis and further requirements are explained in the document "[Scientific Career Opportunities at GESIS](#)" ("Career Paper").

### **1.1 Employment contracts with a doctoral component**

Job advertisements for budget-funded doctoral positions at GESIS contain the passage "A doctorate is possible and expected". This results in further rights and obligations regarding the doctorate for both the successful applicant and GESIS.

In order to offer appropriate conditions for the success of a doctorate, doctoral candidates are generally employed with an employment contract with a term of four years. The work activities should provide sufficient room for own research and the doctorate should be completed within the four years. Under special circumstances, it is possible to extend a budget-financed doctoral position by up to two additional years.

The appointment is for 75% of the collectively agreed working time, of which one third is to be used for the doctorate. This is formally recorded with a corresponding research share. At the same time, part-time employment allows sufficient time flexibility to advance the doctorate outside of working hours. GESIS expects the doctoral candidates to make use of this option.

Third-party funded positions are usually only advertised with the expectation of a doctorate if a doctorate is also expected by the third-party funder and corresponding framework conditions are given by the position structure. In particular, the duration of the third-party funding and the possibility of research within the framework of the funded project are decisive criteria, which may vary depending on the specific conditions of the third-party funding.

For third-party funded infrastructure projects, GESIS is increasingly applying for scientific positions in awareness of the need for research time. For this reason, GESIS continues to lobby donors to offer project-funded scientific staff the opportunity to conduct their own research in the interest of promoting young scientists.

## **1.2 The role of superiors**

Supervisors are urged to take into account the special situation of the academic qualification phase in which doctoral students find themselves. In particular, supervisors should ensure that the four-year period for completing a doctorate is observed when allocating tasks.

The dovetailing of service tasks and own research for the preparation of a dissertation or publications relevant to the doctorate is also discussed with potential candidates during the interview and selection process for doctoral positions. When determining the dissertation topic, the supervisor, manager - if this is not the same person - and doctoral candidate must ensure that service and research tasks are mutually beneficial. This means that doctoral candidates at GESIS should ideally work on research questions that are related to their service tasks. At the same time, service tasks should ideally relate to a single project or proposal. The supervisors, together with the doctoral researchers, ensure that the share of service activities does not exceed the contractually agreed working time for service tasks on average and that the doctoral researchers do not lose sight of their dissertation. This applies in particular to the first year of the doctorate.

If the doctorate is terminated prematurely, work tasks will be renegotiated between the supervisor and the employee until the expiration of the employment contract. In this case, all parties involved strive to find amicable, pragmatic solutions. For example, it may be agreed that research time will no longer be required if it is not needed for the provision of services. An extension of the employment contract for institute-funded positions is then not possible.

During the employee interview, doctoral candidates are specifically advised by their supervisor on further career planning in science and science-related professional fields. In this context, further employment opportunities at GESIS can also be discussed<sup>2</sup>.

Questions regarding further career development can also be discussed in a confidential meeting with the head of department.

### **1.3 Networking**

Every two years, the PhD students at GESIS elect two spokespersons, one for the Mannheim location and one for the Cologne location, who represent the interests of the PhD students vis-à-vis the institute management. The details of the election of the spokespersons and their tasks are regulated in the election regulations for the election of GESIS PhD student spokespersons. The spokespersons consult regularly (usually twice a year) on current issues with the junior staff representative (see 2).

Together with the manager of the GESIS Doctoral Program (see 2), the PhD student spokespersons organize an internal networking day for all PhD students at GESIS at least once a year. It is expected that all doctoral researchers participate in the doctoral networking day. The PhD student spokespersons are also given the opportunity to participate as a member of the Steering Committee of the PhD Network of the Leibniz Association. The prerequisite for this is that they make themselves available for this and are officially elected.

### **1.4 Good scientific practice and dealing with conflicts**

PhD students and their supervisors (as far as they are employed at GESIS) and managers are obliged to comply with the rules of good scientific practice applicable at GESIS. This includes for the doctoral student to consult with the supervisor or other confidants in cases of doubt. For the supervisors and supervisees, this includes the obligation to respect the copyright regulations for texts or research findings of doctoral candidates and to mark them accordingly. In the event of conflicts between the doctoral candidate and one or more supervisors and/or the supervisor, the persons concerned can contact the GESIS

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<sup>2</sup> Further information can be found in the document "[Scientific career opportunities at GESIS](#)".

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[ombudspersons](#). The ombudspersons mediate independently and neutrally between the parties.

## 2 GESIS Doctoral Program

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In 2015, GESIS established the GESIS Doctoral Program to provide optimal support for the qualification phase. This is based on three pillars:

- Optimal working and promotion conditions
- Good support conditions
- Structuring of the qualification process.

The advanced training and continuing education programs of the GESIS Doctoral Program (see chapter 2.2) are open to all doctoral students at GESIS. Thus, the Doctoral Program offers structures that extensively support a successful doctorate within the planned time of four years. By being involved in infrastructure tasks, GESIS Doctoral Scholars are also optimally qualified for the job market.

The heads of the scientific departments, other professors as well as post-doctoral and other employees with the right to award doctorates at GESIS form the GESIS Doctoral Program Board. From this group, one person is appointed to serve for two years as the institute's "Young Investigator for Doctoral Students and Postdocs<sup>3</sup>". The GESIS Doctoral Program is organized by a program manager who performs the tasks in close coordination with the GESIS Doctoral Program staff. In Appendix 1, the roles and tasks within the framework of the doctoral program are explained once again.

Members of the Doctoral Program, whom we refer to as *GESIS Doctoral Scholars*, include:

- Doctoral candidates whose initial supervision is carried out by a GESIS employee and who have been hired as a doctoral candidate as defined in the [GESIS career paper](#). As a rule, they are hired from budget funds at a rate of 75% of the standard working hours for a period of four years. In addition to their research activities,

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<sup>3</sup> See strategy paper "Postdoc phase at GESIS".

GESIS Doctoral Scholars also have infrastructure tasks. In this way, they gain valuable knowledge and professional experience that they can use in the course of their further career.

- Doctoral students with third-party funding can also be admitted to the GESIS Doctoral Program as doctoral scholars if they are supervised by GESIS staff and their project work makes a doctorate meaningful. The possibility to do a doctorate is either framed by the funding source and the type of funding or coordinated with the respective responsible department head.
- Externally supervised GESIS employees working on their doctorate can be accepted as GESIS Doctoral Scholars if they have a secondary supervision by a GESIS employee. These cases require a case-by-case assessment, which, in addition to the question of the supervisory relationship, also takes into account the relevance of the doctoral topic for GESIS and the cooperation of the primary supervisor with GESIS. In addition, the requirements for the job profile must correspond to those of the regular case. In the case of an institution-funded position, the individual case is reviewed by the responsible department head. In the case of a position financed by third-party funds, the project management decides together with the responsible department management. The decision is then forwarded informally to the manager of the GESIS Doctoral Program.

Doctoral Scholars prepare a synopsis during the first twelve months of their employment contract (cf. 2.2). If the exposé is not submitted after twelve months or if no demonstrable progress towards the doctorate can be shown during this period and if the first supervisor is in favor of terminating the doctoral process, membership in the GESIS Doctoral Program will also end. The same applies if the doctoral candidate decides to discontinue the doctoral program. In the event of leaving the GESIS Doctoral Program or discontinuing the doctorate, the regulations described in chapter 1.2 apply.

## **2.1 Excellent support ratios**

Doctoral Scholars should ideally have a first supervisor at GESIS. Possible supervisors for topics related to the service tasks should be approached by the supervisors even before



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the advertisement. If the GESIS Doctoral Scholar plans to have a second supervisor at GESIS for his/her dissertation, the Doctoral Scholar will make every effort to find a suitable first supervisor for the doctoral procedure in a timely manner with the support of the second supervisor, especially so that the university affiliation and corresponding doctoral regulations can be determined.

All employees at GESIS who are authorized to award doctorates, in particular the department heads, have a special supervisory responsibility. They are regularly available as first supervisors for doctoral studies based on their scientific expertise. The number of doctoral theses to be supervised should not exceed five to seven.<sup>4</sup>

GESIS expects supervisors and GESIS Doctoral Scholars to exchange information about the progress of the dissertation at regular intervals throughout the entire period of the doctorate. This is particularly important during the first twelve months of the doctorate. Questions of career orientation and presentation opportunities at conferences and meetings as well as publication opportunities in preferably peer-reviewed, international journals and in connection with relevant conferences should be regular topics of discussion. The supervisors promote presentation and publication opportunities by using their networks and providing appropriate contacts.

It is also desirable that the doctoral candidates receive guidance with regard to scientific work and procedures and, if necessary, that they are integrated into a joint research process by their supervisors or other experienced colleagues. In all phases of the doctorate, the doctoral candidates should be adequately accompanied by the supervisors and supported in the pursuit of their doctorate.

## **2.2 Structuring of the qualification process**

The doctoral process at GESIS is designed to last four years. In order to offer doctoral scholars the opportunity to complete their doctorate under conditions similar to those at universities, GESIS has established an extensive and high-quality continuing education and

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<sup>4</sup> The GESIS Scientific Advisory Board recommends a supervision ratio of five to seven doctoral students per supervisor\*authorized supervisor (minutes of the Scientific Advisory Board meeting of April 9, 2013).

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training program based on the training offered at the graduate schools of the cooperating universities. Until the completion of the doctorate, doctoral candidates should take advantage of qualification offers at GESIS that correspond to a total of at least 30 ECTS points according to Annex 2. In addition, the respective doctoral regulations must be observed, which may also provide for the acquisition of ECTS points with different requirements.

GESIS has the following requirements for Doctoral Scholars in their first year of doctoral study:

- After six months
  - Completion of the topic identification with the responsible first or second supervisor
- If possible after six months, at the latest after twelve months:
  - Completion of a synopsis outlining the research project in consultation with the GESIS supervisor. The exposé usually contains an explication of the research question, its embedding in current theoretical debates and empirical findings, a detailed description of the research design(s) and publication project, as well as a detailed, preliminary time schedule.
  - In exceptional cases, especially for Doctoral Scholars in Computer and Information Science, the following may apply: Completion of a short report that shows the scientific development process of the candidate during the first twelve months.
- Determine the initial supervision and university assignment. Depending on the doctoral regulations, enrollment at a university for doctoral studies or as a doctoral student should ideally take place by the end of the first year.

For the following years of the doctorate, GESIS offers a framework program and expects that this will be perceived and shaped by the Doctoral Scholars. This includes:

- Regular participation in appropriate GESIS colloquia and presentation of own research topic as well as on the progress of the PhD;
- Participate in the doctoral networking day and doctoral coaching;
- Enhance scientific skills through participation in seminars, workshops, conferences, etc. as described in the Appendix.

The selection of the further education and training events to be attended (Annex 2) and conferences related to the doctorate will be made in consultation with the GESIS supervisor or the supervisor's supervisor and depending on the interests, needs and tasks of the

GESIS Doctoral Scholars. In addition, GESIS Doctoral Scholars have access to all further training opportunities for external users within the scope of their capacities, which they can take advantage of depending on their personal career goals. A curriculum for structuring the four-year doctoral process at GESIS can be found in Appendix 2.

In case of doubt, the German wording is authoritative.

### Attachment 1: Overview of roles and their tasks

Roll	Tasks
Junior Staff Representative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Contact person for issues concerning doctoral candidates</li> <li>▪ Ensuring organizational and financial framework conditions</li> </ul>
Manager of the GESIS Doctoral Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Content design and operational implementation of the GESIS Doctoral Program curriculum (including planning of the networking days as well as the coaching and training program)</li> <li>▪ Coordination and monitoring of the GESIS Doctoral Program</li> <li>▪ Maintenance of the list of doctoral candidates</li> </ul>
Supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If possible, contact potential supervisors before advertising the position.</li> <li>▪ Monitoring of compliance with the contractual framework (working hours, ratio of service and research tasks)</li> <li>▪ Career counseling and promotion progress in the context of employee reviews</li> </ul>
PhD student spokespersons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Representation of the interests of doctoral candidates vis-à-vis the institute management</li> <li>▪ Representation of GESIS doctoral students in Leibniz committees</li> <li>▪ Regular exchange with the junior researcher representative and the manager of the GESIS Doctoral Program</li> <li>▪ Participation in the organization of networking events (for example, the networking day for doctoral students)</li> </ul>

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## **Annex 2 : Curriculum proposal for the design of the four-year doctoral program at GESIS**

The proposed curriculum is based on the [doctoral regulations of the University of Mannheim](#), which require the acquisition of 30 ECTS points<sup>5</sup> either through attendance at its graduate school or through the provision of *comparable services in order* to obtain the doctoral degree. The GESIS curriculum is designed in such a way that it corresponds to the acquisition of 30 ECTS points through the provision of comparable services.<sup>6</sup> The curriculum is structured as follows:

### **Year 1**

obligatory:

- After six months at the latest: Completion of topic identification with the responsible supervisor, taking into account the applicable university doctoral regulations.
- If possible after six months, at the latest after twelve months:
  - Submission of a synopsis outlining the research project, which has been agreed upon with the GESIS supervisor. The exposé usually contains an explication of the research question, its embedding in current theoretical debates and empirical findings, a detailed description of the research design(s) and publication plans, as well as a detailed, necessarily preliminary timetable.
  - In exceptional cases, especially for Doctoral Scholars in Computer and Information Science, the following may apply: Submission of a short report that shows the scientific development process of the candidate during the first 12 months. This is supplemented by a short statement of the responsible GESIS supervisor indicating whether the doctorate will most likely be completed successfully.
- Depending on the doctoral regulations, enrollment at a university for doctoral studies or as a doctoral student should also take place in the first year.

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<sup>5</sup> Similar regulations can also be found in other doctoral regulations, such as the [doctoral regulations of the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences at the University of Cologne dated February 17, 2015](#).

<sup>6</sup> The exact structure of the doctoral process must be coordinated with the external supervisor, especially in the case of initial supervision outside GESIS. Since GESIS cannot award ECTS points, this must be done via the university of the first supervisor. Therefore, the ECTS given are only a guide; they are based on the guidelines for the recognition of equivalent achievements published by the University of Mannheim.

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Also expected to take advantage of the following offerings:

- Doctoral Coaching (1 ECTS credit).
- Participation in and presentation of the doctoral project in a colloquium (1 ECTS point).
- Doctoral Networking Day (1 ECTS credit).

It could also make sense to attend training courses, workshops, seminars or similar (GESIS<sup>7</sup> or external) with a content-related or methodological focus (2 ECTS per week of active participation, 2 extra points for final exam or assignment).

### **Year 2:**

Recommended to take advantage of the following offers:

- Regular participation and presentation in a colloquium (1 ECTS points).
- Participation in the PhD networking day (1 ECTS point).
- Attendance of two training courses, workshops, seminars or similar (GESIS or external) with content, methodological or soft skill orientation (2 ECTS per week of active participation, 2 extra points for final exam or assignment).

It could also make sense to:

- Attendance of a relevant conference with own contribution (presentation 4 ECTS credits, poster 3 ECTS credits).
- Research stay (1/2 ECTS point per week of stay, maximum 2 ECTS points).
- Submission of a manuscript for publication in a professional journal. (4 ECTS credits).

### **Year 3 and 4<sup>8</sup> :**

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<sup>7</sup> The GESIS Training courses offer capacities for 10% internal participants\* (i.e. 1 to 3 places per course). In addition, participants can freely choose from the courses offered by the GESIS Qualification Center.

<sup>8</sup> The listed services and their evaluation are not to be understood as conclusive. Additional options and possible crediting must be discussed with the supervisor and the respective university.

Recommended to take advantage of the following offers:

- Regular participation and presentation in a colloquium (1 ECTS points).
- Participation in the PhD networking day (1 ECTS point).

It could also make sense to:

- Attendance of a relevant conference with own contribution (presentation 4 ECTS credits, poster 2 ECTS credits).
- Submission of a manuscript for publication in a professional journal (4 ECTS credits).
- Research stay (1/2 ECTS point per week of stay, maximum 2 ECTS points).
- Attendance of a training course, workshop, seminar or similar (GESIS or external) with content or methodological orientation (2 ECTS per week of active participation, 2 extra points for final exam or assignment).
- Attendance of courses offered by the university didactics (1 ECTS point per semester course).
- Organization, teaching assistance and/or, in exceptional cases, leading a course, for example a workshop or a course of the Summer School or the Methods Seminar (triple ECTS credit value of the attendance hours in the course).
- If applicable, application for a third-party funded project (4 ECTS credits).

Graduation:

- Submission of the dissertation thesis and disputation at the respective participating university, publication and receipt of the doctoral certificate.





**Table 1: Overview of the recommended and mandatory curriculum elements of the GESIS Doctoral Program**

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3 and 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Recommended:</b> After six months at the latest: Completion of topic identification</li> <li>▪ <b>Mandatory:</b> If possible after six months, at the latest after twelve months: Submission of an exposé agreed upon with the GESIS supervisor.</li> <li>▪ <b>Recommended:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regular participation and presentation in a colloquium</li> <li>- Participation in promotion coaching</li> <li>- Participation in the doctoral networking day</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Recommended:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regular participation and presentation in a colloquium</li> <li>- Participation in promotion coaching</li> <li>- Participation in the doctoral networking day</li> <li>- Attendance of two training courses, workshops, seminars or similar (GESIS or external) with content-related, methodological or soft skill orientation</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Recommended:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regular participation and presentation in a colloquium</li> <li>- Participation in promotion coaching</li> <li>- Participation in the doctoral networking day</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ <b>Meaningful:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attendance of a relevant conference with own contribution</li> <li>- Submission of a manuscript for publication in a professional journal</li> <li>- Research stay</li> <li>- Attendance of a training course, workshop, seminar or similar (GESIS or external) with content or methodological orientation</li> <li>- Attendance of courses within the scope of the university didactics offer</li> <li>- Organization, teaching assistance and/or, in exceptional cases, leading a course, for example a workshop or a course of the Summer School or the Methods Seminar.</li> <li>- If applicable, application for a third-party funded project</li> </ul> </li> </ul>