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Chair of Electrochemistry

# Between euphoria and self-doubt— Stages of a doctoral thesis

Tag der Promotion

Graduiertenakademie, TU Dresden, 13.05.2026



Currently 6 doctoral researchers

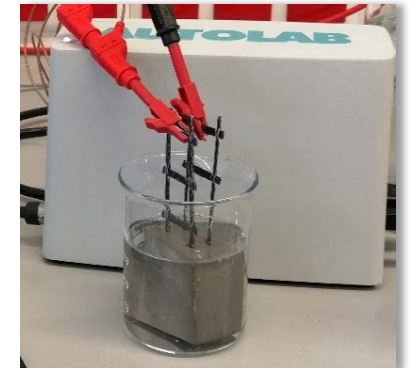
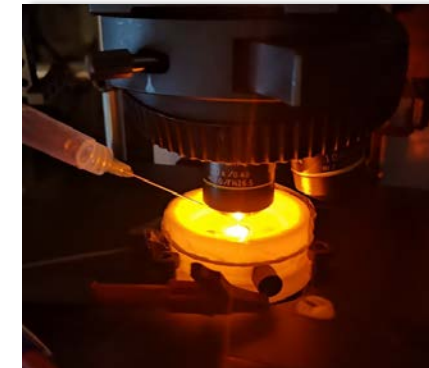
## Stage 1- Onboarding

Mood:

**Good**

### Define Topic and Methods

|          | Topic 1 | Topic 2 | Topic 3 | Topic 4 |
|----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Method 1 |         |         |         |         |
| Method 2 |         |         |         |         |
| Method 3 |         |         |         |         |



### Financing:

- University
- Stipend
- Third Party funding (graduate school, collaborative research center..)

# Stage 1- Onboarding

| Task                       | Year 1 |  |  |  | Year 2 |  |  |  | Year 3 |  |  |  |
|----------------------------|--------|--|--|--|--------|--|--|--|--------|--|--|--|
| WP1                        |        |  |  |  |        |  |  |  |        |  |  |  |
| CNT Pr/Pr hybridisation    |        |  |  |  |        |  |  |  |        |  |  |  |
| EC characterisation        |        |  |  |  |        |  |  |  |        |  |  |  |
| EC-Resonance Raman         |        |  |  |  |        |  |  |  |        |  |  |  |
| Writing publication        |        |  |  |  |        |  |  |  |        |  |  |  |
| WP2                        |        |  |  |  |        |  |  |  |        |  |  |  |
| CNT Pr/Pr hybridisation    |        |  |  |  |        |  |  |  |        |  |  |  |
| EC characterisation        |        |  |  |  |        |  |  |  |        |  |  |  |
| Infrared-Spectroscopy      |        |  |  |  |        |  |  |  |        |  |  |  |
| Writing publication        |        |  |  |  |        |  |  |  |        |  |  |  |
| WP3                        |        |  |  |  |        |  |  |  |        |  |  |  |
| Hybridisation protocols    |        |  |  |  |        |  |  |  |        |  |  |  |
| GC and RR characterisation |        |  |  |  |        |  |  |  |        |  |  |  |
| Writing publication        |        |  |  |  |        |  |  |  |        |  |  |  |
| Writing thesis             |        |  |  |  |        |  |  |  |        |  |  |  |

## You start with the plan



***„You do not choose your  
PhD topic, the PhD topic  
chooses you“***

## Stage 3- Something Unexpected happens

Mood: **Excellent**

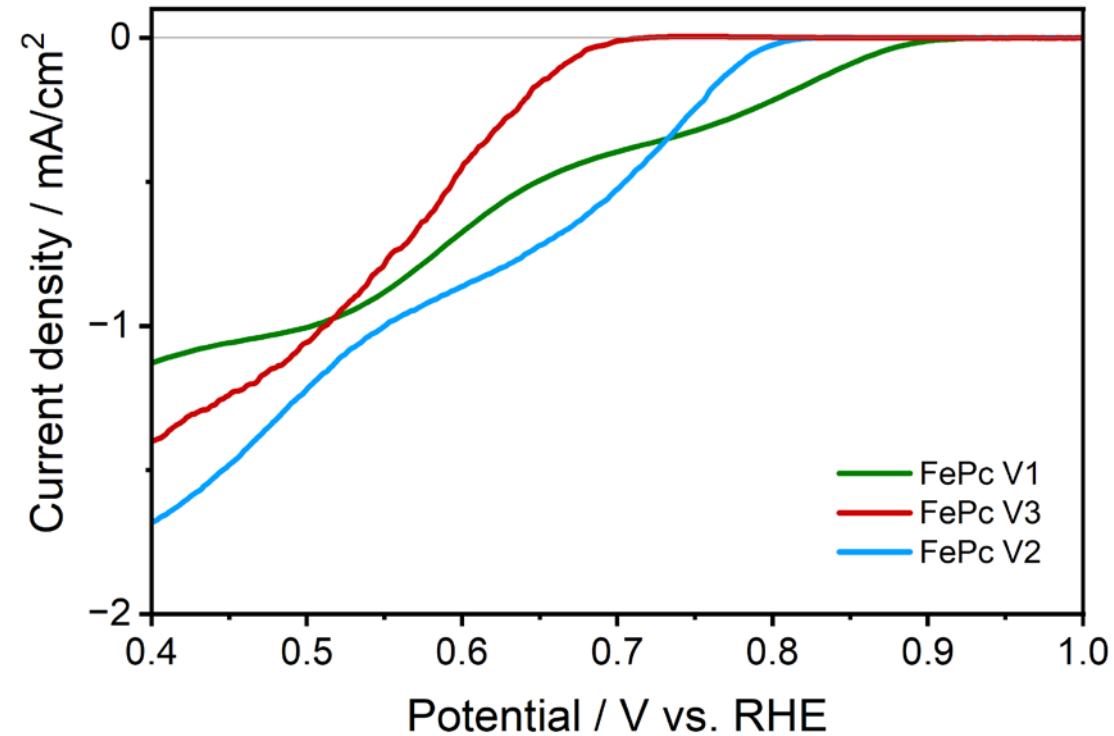


**Great new effect**



Other tasks occur: Teaching, supervising, attending classes „*I do not have time, I have to work on my great results*“

***„Before we discuss too much, please reproduce the result“***

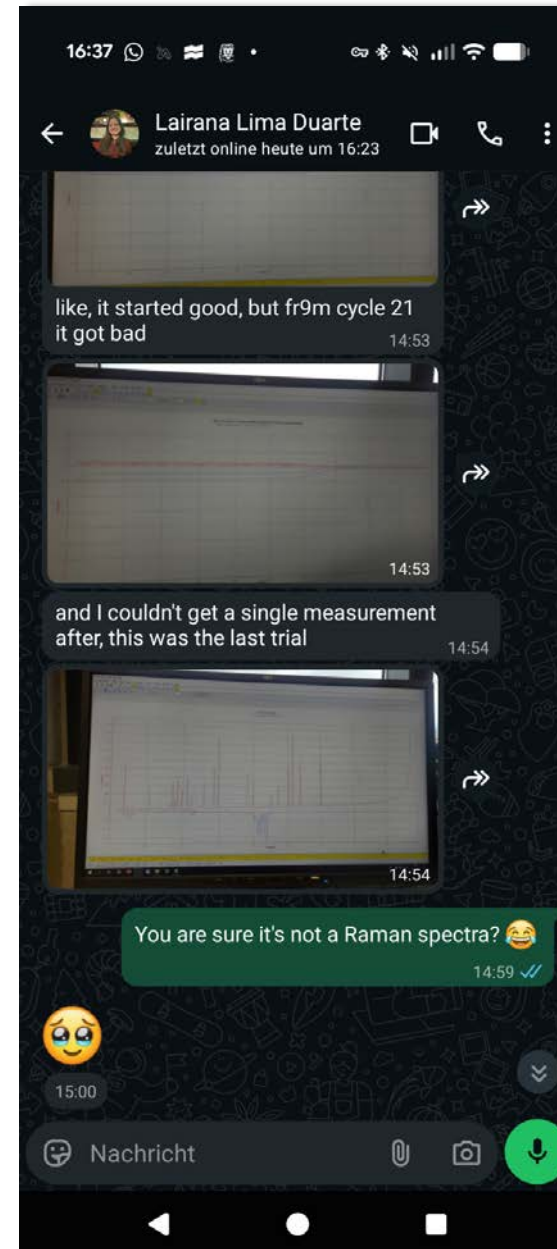


## Stage 5- The device breaks

**Even reference  
measurements do not  
work anymore**

***„Teaching is maybe not so  
bad. At least I feel usefull“***

Mood: **Despair**

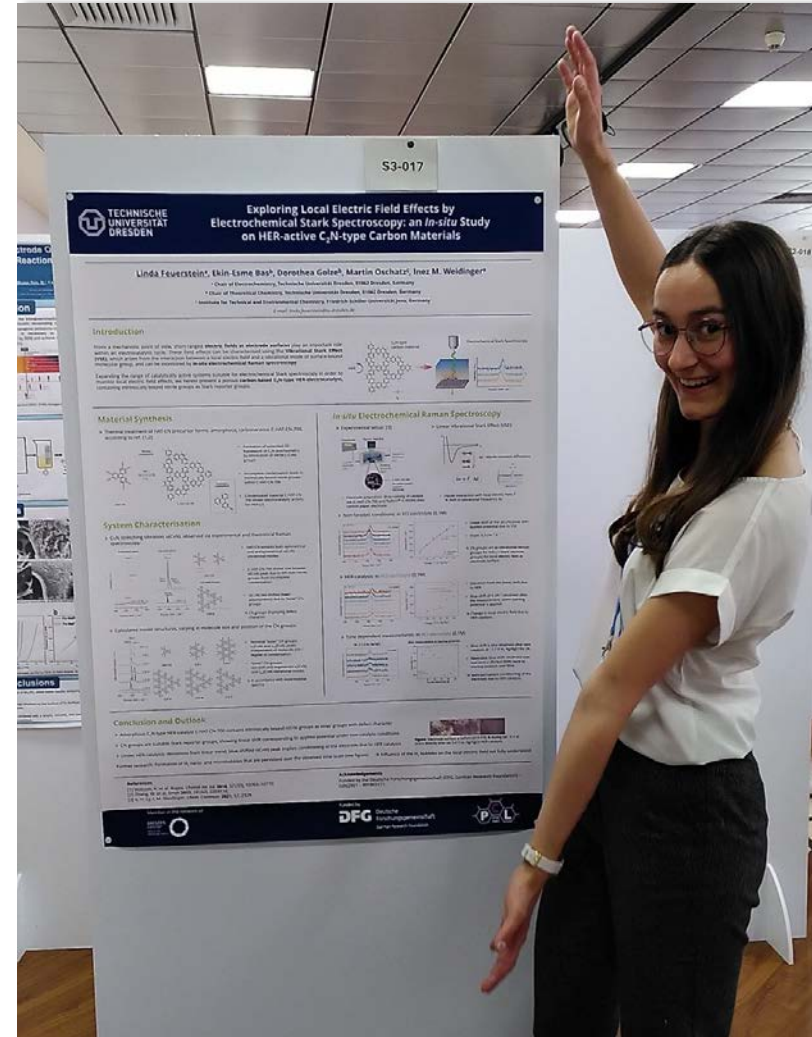


## Stage 6 – Presenting your results

Mood: **Cautious**

First talk, retreats...

Your work is more  
interesting than you thought



### Time management

*„Bist du heute fertig geworden?“*

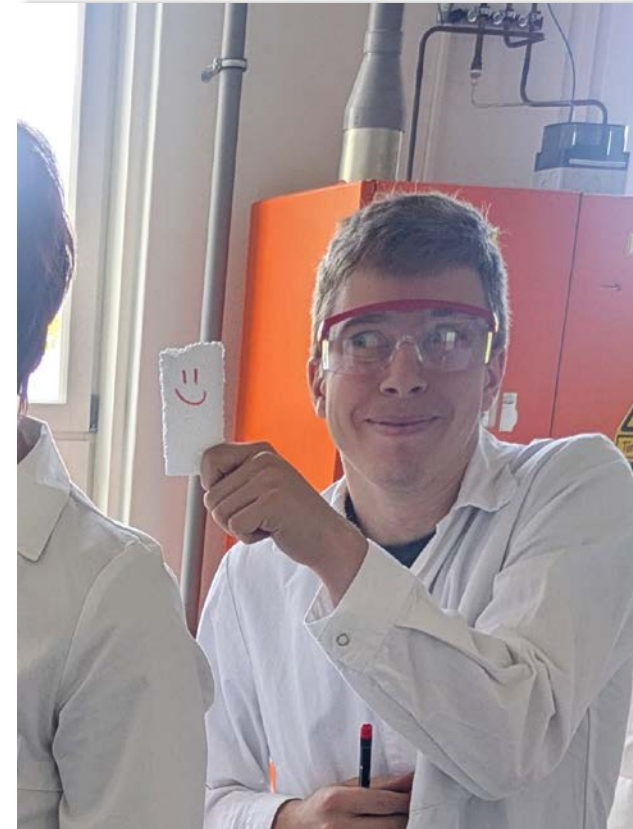
No one tells you when to start your day

Not a deadline for tomorrow but seven deadlines in two weeks

**Tip:** Start the day with something that does not have a deadline (because the one with the deadline you will do anyway)



**Suddenly weird data  
makes sense**



### *„What is new?“*

First time in your academic life it is not enough to describe what you have done, but you have to show the novelty of your work

**Tip:** Start with the results part (4 Figures) and not with the introduction

**Harsh reality:** If you are not good on writing, academia is not for you

### Editor rejects your manuscript immediately

*“After careful assessment, the editorial team has decided not to proceed further with your manuscript. We apologize that we can not give you a better news.”*

### Review Reports

*“It is a long report, but it lacks scientific novelty. Most analytic methods and discussion of data/mechanism in this work are very problematic and misleading. All statements are built on confusing data and explanations. It provides neither interesting discovery nor useful insights into the optimization of new generations of catalysts”*

*“The quality and conclusions that can be drawn from the DFT calculations is not clear. The authors should follow proper protocols for carry out such calculations”*

*“This paper is really written for an expert in Raman spectroscopy. I am not such a person, so I found it difficult to follow.”*

*“The authors have missed a number of important references from ...”*

## Stage 10 – Everything again but better

Mood: **Confident**

**You become a pro**



For some it is easy for some the most difficult part

**Tip:** Don't stop writing for 30 Minutes

**Another tip:** If you are not productive, stop! Do something nice and useless

→ Feel guilty and be productive the next day

Don't trick yourself!!!



## Stage 12 – Defense

Mood:

**Panic**

## Stage 12 – Defense

Mood: **Euphoria!!**



Thank you



Thank you for your attention

Fanny Reichmayr  
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Linda Feuerstein  
Anna-Maria Dominik  
Markus Göbel