



**TECHNISCHE  
UNIVERSITÄT  
DRESDEN**



**GRADUATE  
ACADEMY**

**Newsletter 02 | 2014**

*Dear readers and members!*

## **HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!**

*Sometimes time really does just fly by: One minute you're putting your first ideas down on paper and before you know it, you're in the middle of a new "project." That's how I feel at the moment with the Graduate Academy.*

*A year ago, the idea of providing support for junior researchers across all Faculties became a reality. We were very much aware of the challenges that setting up such a service involves. But thanks to the wonderful support that we were given by the University, and thanks to all the positive feedback on the GA's services, this busy time has really flown by. You can now join us in looking forward to the next year.*

*Yours,*

**It is just over a year ago now since the GA opened its doors for the first time. We were eager to see how many doctoral candidates, postdocs and supervisors we would be able to attract as members, and what the response would be to the wide variety of services offered by the GA. It's now time for a first evaluation and to consider future prospects.**

Since August 2013, it has been possible to become a member of the GA. So far, 710 doctoral candidates and 157 postdocs have taken up this opportunity, together with 7 associated members and 227 supervisors. This makes a total of 1,101 members within a year, a number which is highly motivating and which we are delighted with. It also shows how great the need is among junior researchers at TUD for support, qualification and advice.

The more than 50 seminars and workshops of our qualification program, held in English and German, have regularly been fully booked, with long waiting lists. In

order to provide access to an even larger number of our members, and also to make registration for the events more binding, in future every GA member may register for a maximum of three courses per semester.

With the help of our funding programs, we have been able to provide financial support to 162 GA members since October 2013. Here, too, some changes will be introduced from the next round of applications onward (deadline: 31<sup>st</sup> October). You can read more about this on page 5. The current edition of our newsletter is devoted to the topic of "PhD supervision." The feedback received from many PhD candidates and also from the members of the provisional convention of doctoral candidates has shown this subject to be somewhat contentious. Read more about it in the articles on the next two pages.

On page 6, you will find the report of a PhD candidate who, by taking part in the DAAD RISE funding program, already assumed the role of supervisor while still working on his doctorate. With the positive experience from the first year of the GA behind us, we are now enthusiastically entering our second year and looking forward to even more members, funded projects, well-attended qualification courses and numerous advisory sessions.

*KU*

**Meet Anne-Kathrin Gädecke, the 1,000<sup>th</sup> member of the GA** (Photo: R. Lohse)

## Are you always getting good advice?

**Sound supervision is considered to be a key criterion for successfully completing a doctorate. Traditionally, the relationship between supervisor and doctoral candidate at a German university has been regarded as an exclusive arrangement. Nowadays, however, demands for more commitment and transparency in the supervisory relationship are increasing. How, though, can this be implemented in the everyday life of PhD student and supervisor?**

Germany takes a top position worldwide when it comes to the quantity of completed doctorates. For years, the number has remained at a high level, about 25,000 per year.<sup>1</sup>

However, more and more often, doubts are being expressed concerning the scientific quality of the German doctoral degree – not least on account of the recent high-profile cases of plagiarism. Critics claim that the traditional supervisory relationship is partly to blame for the development. This now raises the questions of how to conduct quality assurance and how to introduce reliable standards without restricting the diversity of doctoral education in Germany.

The structured doctoral program in a research training group or graduate school represents one path towards these goals. At TUD, there are currently 24 such doctoral programs. They differ from the traditional individual doctorate in that they not only include an often obligatory subject-specific or interdisciplinary

training, but also new forms of supervision.

Unlike classic one-on-one supervision, these involve a whole team. For instance, regular meetings of the Thesis Advisory Committees (TACs) provide PhD candidates with a framework of orientation, support and monitoring during the doctoral degree process, in addition to subject-related supervision in a specific work context. Initially introduced as an innovative supervision format at the Dresden International Graduate School for Biomedicine and Bioengineering (DIGS-BB), TACs have since become standard in many areas at TUD.

The introduction of supervision agreements also contributes to assuring quality of supervision. As a GA member, you will already have signed such a document together with your supervisor, at the latest as part of your application for membership. Meanwhile, the recommendation that a supervision agreement be signed at the beginning of the

doctoral degree project has been included in the new TUD *Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Scientific Practice*, thus making it to all intents and purposes binding throughout the University.

Independently of existing contracts for employment or grants, the supervision agreement is intended to help shape the relationship with your supervisor in a transparent manner in terms of content and time. The goal is to create conditions that enable you to complete a high-quality doctorate within a reasonable period of time. The supervision agreement specifies mutual rights and obligations. While such an agreement is not legally binding in the way that, for example, an employment contract is, putting down in writing the important standards of the supervisory relationship does help to create transparency and commitment for all concerned and to minimize the risk of conflicts. KU

<sup>1</sup> Source: Bundesbericht Wissenschaftlicher Nachwuchs 2013 (Federal Report on Junior Researchers, 2013)





## And what can you do if problems should arise?



Prof. Dr. Achim Mehlhorn

(Photo: Ulrich van Stipriaan / TU Dresden)

### *Three questions to:*

**Prof. Dr. rer. nat. habil. Dr. h.c.  
Achim Mehlhorn**

Professor of Special Organic Chemistry, Rector of TU Dresden from 1994 to 2003, President of Dresden International University (DIU) from 2006 to 2010 and, since May 2011, ombudsman for dealing with scientific misconduct at our University.

#### **What are your main duties as ombudsman and what role do junior researchers play in these?**

Every year, I receive about ten notifications alleging scientific misconduct. This involves accusations of plagiarism in academic theses or presumption of authors' rights without taking into account important contributions of others. These are accusations that can definitely relate to junior researchers, along with falsifications or the invention and manipulation of measurement results. More than half the notifications are linked to "human misconduct in science", that is to say conflicts between superiors and members of staff, which can be smoothed out with arbitration.

#### **As TUD ombudsman, during your time as rector and of course as a professor and supervisor of PhD candidates yourself, you have certainly been able to gather a lot of experience on the subject of "supervision". In your opinion, what are the most common obstacles in the supervisory relationship?**

Obstacles in supervision stem from a lack of trust. The quality of a supervisory relationship is de-

termined by the balance between demands arising from specific assignments (problem solving) and the creative broadening of the assignment by the supervisee. Because, naturally, the goal is not merely to produce new scientific results but to train scientists who will themselves later go on to educate junior researchers. Trying to create this balance can lead to obstacles with the potential for conflict. If only measurement results are demanded, it is easy to feel misused as a "measuring slave". If the university lecturer relies solely on the creative energy of the doctoral candidate, accusations of bad supervision are quick to follow.

It is also important for the junior researcher to realize that we mature not only through success but even more through failure. Both supervisor and supervisee are operating at the frontiers of scientific knowledge, which excludes infallibility in predicting outcomes. It would constitute an obstacle to interpret this as a lack of competence on the part of the supervisor. After all, failure can have objective causes or result from the subjective awkwardness of the supervisee. The distinction between

the two cases can be viewed very differently by the two sides and in this way become an obstacle.

#### **What, in your experience, can doctoral candidates do to make the supervisory relationship a constructive one?**

Today, in almost all supervisory relationships, authoritarian leadership by a supervisor has been replaced with a partnership. So, junior researchers need to prove themselves as partners. On the one hand, this means willingness to perform and focusing on self-organization, creativity and passion without putting a time limit on these qualities. On the other hand, respect is also needed, coupled with the understanding that the scientific assignment which, as it were, means the world to the supervisee, can only be one facet in a larger concept for the supervisor. Modesty, tolerance and openness are qualities that I find all great scientists have. During the qualification phase, these attitudes are practiced and form the basis of a constructive relationship between supervisor and supervisee, as well as among the supervisees.



Photo © Nelos - Fotolia.com

**So, the situation of PhD students ought to be improved? Get involved in the GA's representation of doctoral candidates. It's the only way to make your opinion as a PhD student known and to communicate it to others.**

Dear PhD students at the Graduate Academy, the convention of doctoral candidates laid down in the GA regulations is about to become a reality: Between 3 and 14 November 2014, you will have the chance to officially elect the GA's representation of doctoral candidates for the first time. This is also the first time that such an election will be carried out online at TU Dresden.

You can stand for election if you are doing a doctorate and are a member of the Graduate Academy. We are still looking for candidates from all Faculties and Departments who would like to be elected to the GA's convention of doctoral candidates. As an elected doctoral representative, you can be actively involved in furthering the links among the individual disciplines and Faculties, raise the concerns of PhD candidates in the Board of the GA and other University committees, and network with doctoral representatives at other universities in Germany.

Would you like to take an active part in helping to improve the position of PhD candidates at TU Dresden? Then why not stand for election? Candidates can be nomi-



**Members of the GA's provisional convention of doctoral candidates** (Photo: R. Lohse)

nated until 17 October. Contact us at: [phd-konventdresden@mail.de](mailto:phd-konventdresden@mail.de) or come along to our meetings every third Tuesday of the month at 8.30 a.m. at the Zebradie (Alte Mensa). You can see all the candidates on our homepage: [www.tu-dresden.de/die\\_tu\\_dresden/zentrale\\_einrichtungen/graduiertenakademie/doktorandenvertretung](http://www.tu-dresden.de/die_tu_dresden/zentrale_einrichtungen/graduiertenakademie/doktorandenvertretung).

Currently, the provisional convention of doctoral candidates is made up of five active members. We would like to offer a warm welcome to Frank Steckel and Andreas Krause, our two new active fellow campaigners. For both of them, the motivation for getting involved in

representing PhD candidates is very similar. As Frank says: "PhD students need a voice to communicate their interests. The GA has paved the way for this notion and now it's up to us to breathe life into the convention of doctoral candidates in order to achieve the goal of a representation for PhD students." Andreas also stresses: "Representation for the second largest group at TUD – the PhD students – is necessary and long overdue."

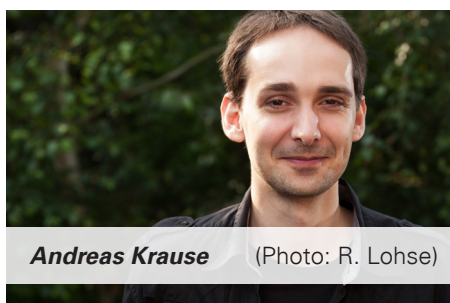
At the moment, we are working at full stretch to prepare and conduct the election. Also, a first networking meeting with the representation of doctoral candidates at the University of Jena and the HU Berlin has taken place, and we are preparing proposals for the future orientation of the convention of doctoral candidates. Your active support is required for all these projects. We need YOU for the convention of doctoral candidates at TU Dresden!

Katrin, Moritz, Frank, Andreas und Kristina



**Frank Steckel**

(Photo: R. Lohse)



**Andreas Krause**

(Photo: R. Lohse)



# CHANGES – PLEASE NOTE!

The funding programs of the Graduate Academy are continuing to enjoy great popularity. Since October 2013, the GA has received 260 applications, a number that is set to increase. There will be a few changes to the funding programs for the next round of invitations to apply (deadline: 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2014), which we will explain here briefly.

## Application deadlines for the GA funding programs

In future, there will be two application deadlines per year and all available GA funding programs will be announced at each of these. They are **31<sup>st</sup> October (funding to begin on 1<sup>st</sup> February)** and **30<sup>th</sup> April (funding to begin on 1<sup>st</sup> August)**.

## Travel Awards

In order to bridge the temporal funding gaps that sometimes occur in the Travel Awards between the application deadline and beginning of funding, in future these awards can **also be granted retroactively**. This applies to conferences taking place between either of the two deadlines on 31.10. and on 30.04. and the time when funding begins (i.e. May to July and November to January).

## Bridging Grants

In future, these will have their **own call to apply, separate from the completion grants**. The application and funding modalities, however, remain unchanged.

## Completion and Wrap-up Grants

In order to ensure greater flexibility, the previous "Completion Grants" and "Wrap-up Stipends" formats will be combined into a single new scholarship program: **"Funding for Young Scientists during the Completion and Wrap-up Phase of the Dissertation"**.

Scholarships for a duration of up to four months within the period from four months before submitting the dissertation until four months after the defense can now be applied for. The amount of the grants is based on the funds stipulated by the DFG for PhD candidates and postdocs.

There are no alterations to the funding line for travel grants for short-term research stays abroad. Also, for the time being, there are no plans for an additional round of invitations to apply for the Research Assistantship Program; the application deadline for this program ended on 15<sup>th</sup> June, 2014. CB

### Publishing Details| Contact

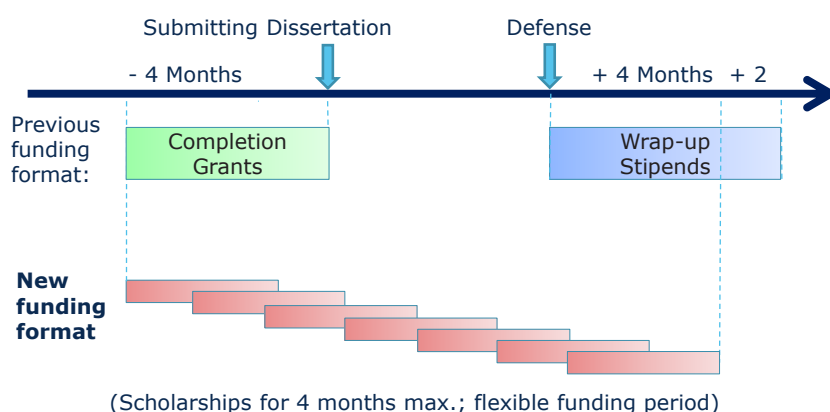
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## *(Almost) last but not least*

- Recommended reading:  
**Recommendations of the Council of Science and Humanities for career paths and goals at universities**  
<http://www.wissenschaftsrat.de/download/archiv/4009-14.pdf>
- New invitation to apply for the **Maria Reiche Support Programme for Female Habilitation Candidates and Post-Doc Researchers**  
(Applications until 30.09.2014, [http://tu-dresden.de/wiss\\_karriere/TUD\\_foerderpr/maria\\_reiche\\_foerderprogramm/maria\\_reiche](http://tu-dresden.de/wiss_karriere/TUD_foerderpr/maria_reiche_foerderprogramm/maria_reiche))
- Guidelines (in English) for the **Art of Writing a Grant Application** are provided in the article "The Art of Grantsmanship" by Jacob Kraicer: [http://tu-dresden.de/forschung/forschungsfoerderung/hinweise\\_zur\\_drittmittelforschung/grantmanship](http://tu-dresden.de/forschung/forschungsfoerderung/hinweise_zur_drittmittelforschung/grantmanship)
- New **GA-Qualification Program**  
For more information, please visit: [https://tu-dresden.de/die\\_tu\\_dresden/zentrale\\_einrichtungen/graduieretenakademie/qualifizierungsprogramm/Wintersemester%202014\\_15](https://tu-dresden.de/die_tu_dresden/zentrale_einrichtungen/graduieretenakademie/qualifizierungsprogramm/Wintersemester%202014_15)

### New Funding Format: Funding for Young Scientists during the Completion and Wrap-up Phase of the Dissertation



## Introducing our Members

**Thanks to the DAAD's RISE program, eleven research assistants from the USA, Canada and Great Britain are currently supporting PhD students from the Departments of Natural Sciences, Life Sciences and Engineering at TUD and at local non-university research institutions in their scientific work. In doing so, they gain valuable insights into research that go far beyond what conventional courses can provide.**

*One of these RISE teams at TUD consists of Ivan Radin, DIGS-BB doctoral candidate in the field of biology and a GA member, and Austin Mottola, a biochemistry student from the University of Rochester, USA. Together, they are researching the physical orientation of membrane proteins within the inner mitochondrial membrane.*

**What was your motivation to take part in the RISE program? Did the RISE experience meet your expectations and what did it teach you so far for your future career?**

*Ivan:* Universities are, above all, places of learning. I believe that research groups at universities cannot forget that they are there not only to do research, but to teach, and ensure the coming generations are fully equipped with the experience they will need. With that in mind, the RISE program was particularly interesting because it allows students from the US, Canada, and the UK to experience things they might not have had the opportunity to otherwise. Especially for students from

North America, it's not so simple to spend a significant amount of time in continental Europe. I have taught other students before – no two students are the same, so each student brings with him a learning experience for me as well. I believe that the experience has met my expectations in terms of education, and was definitely a worthwhile experience for both of us.

*Austin:* The most obvious motivation for me to apply for the RISE program was, of course, the prospect of spending three months in Europe. I'd never left the US before, and had wanted to visit Germany for years. The fact that I would be paid to learn and do something I enjoy has made this the perfect opportunity. I would say that the program has not only lived up to my expectations, but exceeded them.

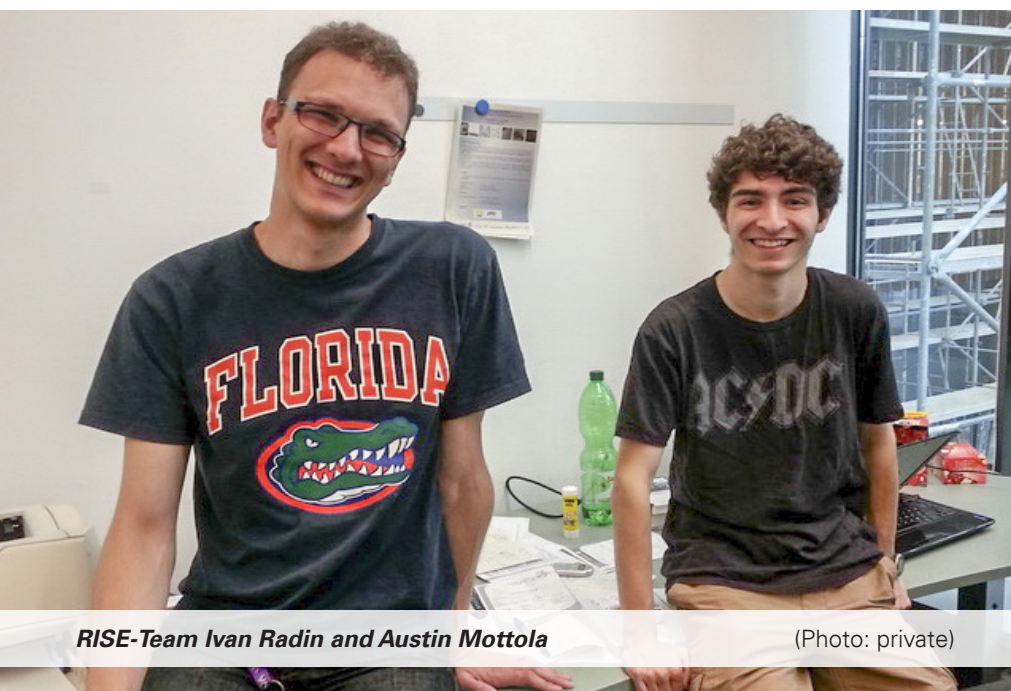
Branching out to experience lab work in a subject somewhat separate to what I normally study (molecular biology, as opposed to biochemistry) and working in a different lab in a different country has broadened the scope of my career interests both

intellectually and geographically. Before I began my internship, I had been certain that I would continue on to an American PhD program, but I've enjoyed my time here enough that I am now strongly considering applying to international Master's programs in Germany.

**Austin, what has been your best experience in Germany so far? What did surprise you the most?**

*Austin:* It's impossible to choose a single experience as the 'best.' As a whole, this has been, without a doubt, the highlight of my life so far. As a generality, the traveling I've done has probably been the best part – it's amazing how much one can see on weekend trips here. The US is so large that a 'weekend trip' there usually means going camping – rarely is anything other than nature within reach. Here, on the other hand, I can pass through three countries just travelling to my destination – there's so much more that I would like to see and do here than I would ever have time for. Alternatively, I could say that the best experience has been interacting with so many different interesting people – co-workers, flat mates, other RISE interns, and the huge variety of people one meets while travelling – who come from cultures and lifestyles of all sorts.

Interestingly, however, I think the most surprising thing about this experience has been the lack of surprises. Of course I could list a number of cultural differences that I may not have known about or expected, but ultimately these were just small obstacles. Granted, the various cultures of America and Europe are not so distantly related, and it sounds cliché, but people are people wherever they are, and it shows. Within my first week here, I already felt more or less at home.



**RISE-Team Ivan Radin and Austin Mottola**

(Photo: private)