Your next step: a PhD?

LNOC program >

- Dr. Emily Rose Ciscato @UZH Research & Grants Office
- Dr. Nora Gilgen @UZH Graduate School Arts and Social Sciences
- Dr. Roger Gfrörer @UZH Career Services

LNOC 2026

#uzhcareerservices

Program

Making your PhD a success

Dr. Nora Gilgen, Graduate School Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

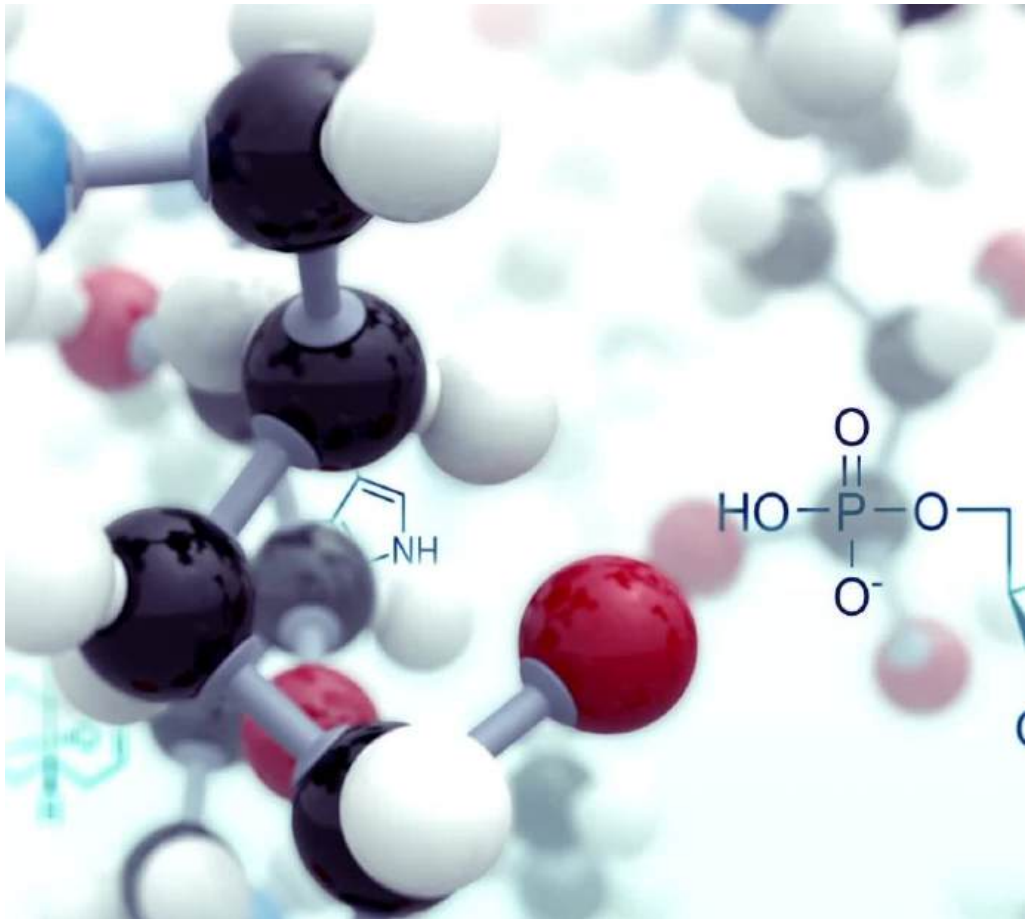
How to fund a PhD?

Dr. Emily Rose Ciscato, UZH Research & Grants Office

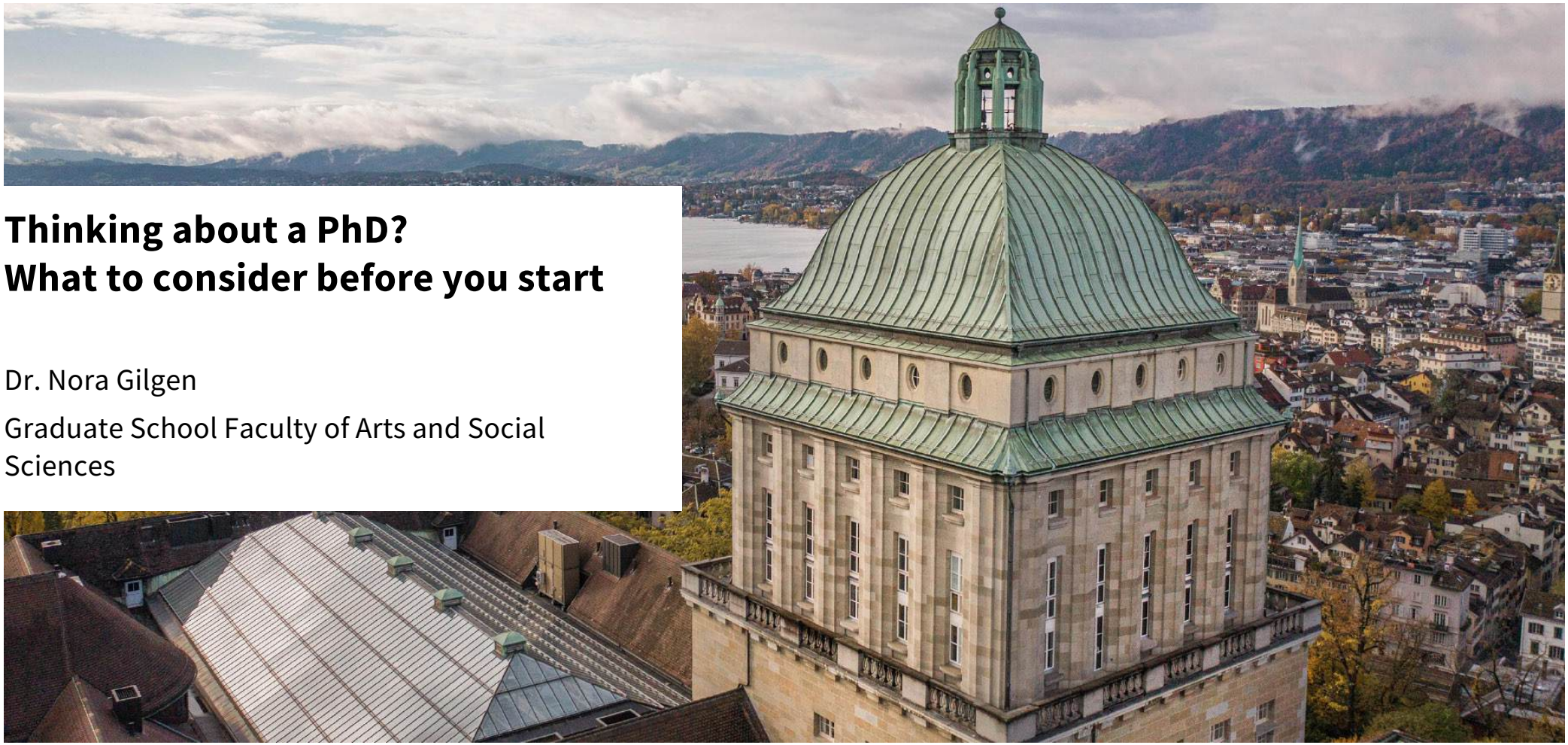
Why do a PhD? Advantages and disadvantages on the labor market

Dr. Roger Gfrörer, UZH Career Services

Questions?



Universität Zürich[UZH]



Thinking about a PhD?
What to consider before you start

Dr. Nora Gilgen

Graduate School Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Why do I want to pursue a PhD?



- **Curiosity:** Am I genuinely interested in exploring a research question?
- **Career:** Does a PhD support my long-term career goals?
- **Growth:** Do I enjoy critical thinking, learning, and long-term challenges?
- **Impact:** Do I want to contribute to knowledge or address relevant problems in my academic field?
- **Expectations:** Am I pursuing a PhD because I genuinely want to – not because others expect it or because I don't know what career path to choose?

Am I ready for a PhD?

- **Motivation:** Am I ready for a multi-year commitment and its challenges?
- **Confidence:** Am I willing to learn, even if I do not feel fully prepared yet?
- **Life situation:** Does a PhD fit my current personal circumstances and priorities?
- **Finances:** Have I considered funding, salary, and financial security?
- **Expectations:** Am I prepared for a PhD journey that may not be linear and require detours along the way?



How can I prepare for this decision?

- **Reflect:** Clarify your goals and expectations.
- **Explore:** Identify potential research topics and consider which academic field your project could fit into.
- **Connect:** Talk to PhD candidates, postdocs, and potential supervisors.
- **Inform yourself:** Explore reliable resources (UZH website) and read relevant guidelines
- **Plan ahead:** Investigate funding options and next steps



How do I find a supervisor?



- **Expertise:** Can the supervisor provide the scientific and practical guidance I need to successfully develop my project
- **Availability:** Can they dedicate enough time to support my PhD over several years?
- **Research environment:** Do they encourage open dialogue and independent thinking?
- **Networking:** Can the supervisor help me access the research community and build my academic network?
- **Personal fit:** Can I imagine working with this supervisor over several years?

What are common pitfalls during a PhD?

- **Communication gaps:** Unclear mutual expectations, and insufficient exchange with supervisors or peers.
- **Ignoring feedback:** Difficulty accepting and integrating constructive criticism.
- **Lack of structure:** No clear plan or milestones, getting lost in "side topics", and procrastination.
- **Ignoring rules and problems:** Unawareness of regulations or good scientific practice, and addressing problems too late.



What makes a PhD successful?



- **Planning:** Treat your PhD as a project – plan, track, and adapt.
- **Organisation:** Know the UZH regulations, procedures, and requirements.
- **Communication:** Clarify mutual expectations with your supervisors, seek (critical and constructive) feedback, and discuss progress regularly.
- **Engagement:** Attend conferences, present your work, and connect with your peers.
- **Resilience:** Do not let challenges and setbacks discourage you. Push yourself, but remember to be kind to yourself along the way.

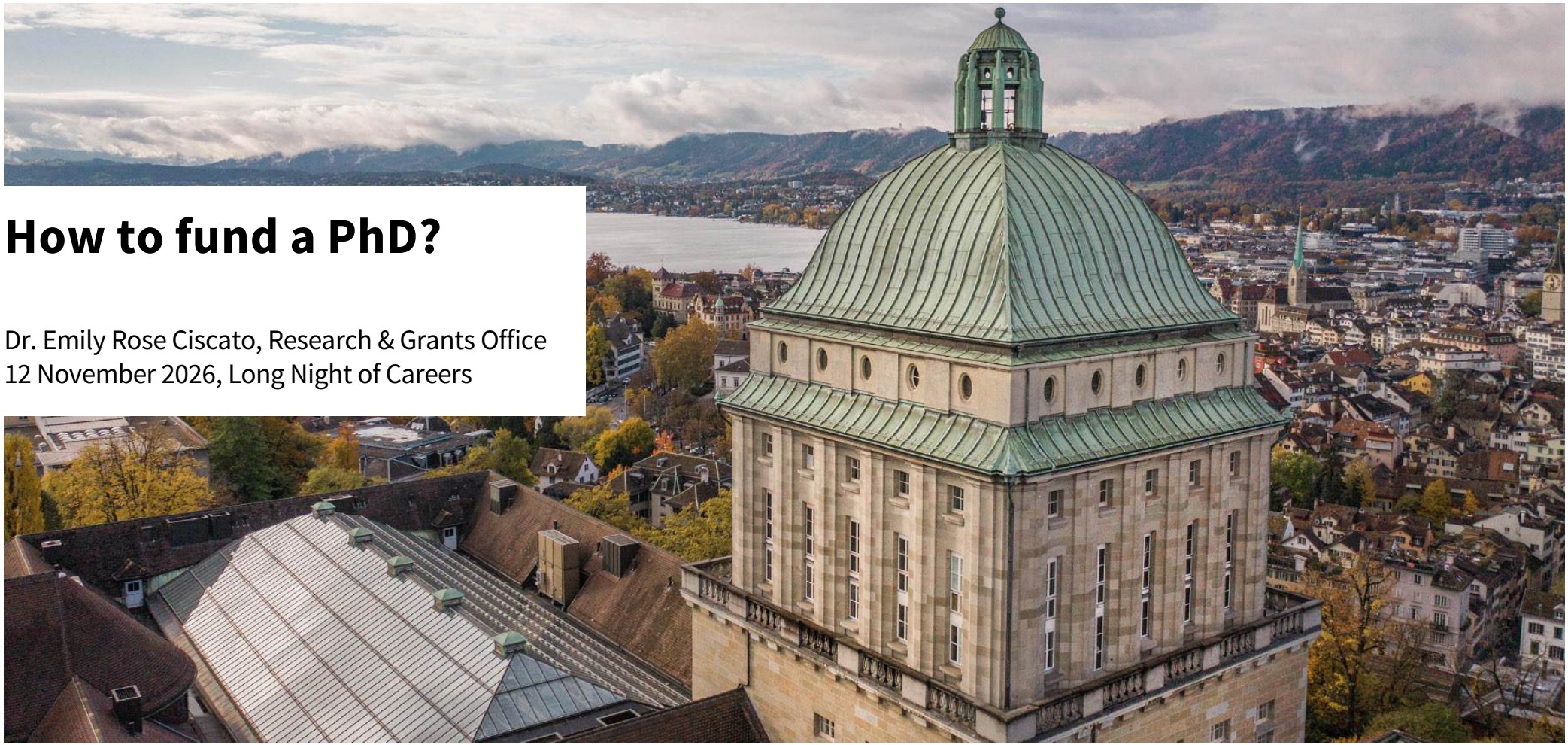
Support and resources at UZH



- **Doctoral Programs / Graduate Schools:** Structure, training, and networking at the *faculty level* (for doctoral researchers)
- **Graduate Campus (GRC):** Support, funding, coaching, courses, information, and networking at the *university level* (mainly for post-docs and advanced doctoral researchers)

- **Research Development:** Guidance on research funding and grant applications
- **Center for University Teaching and Learning:** Courses to develop teaching skills
- **Language Center:** Language courses and academic writing training
- **Global Affairs:** Support for international mobility and exchanges
- **Gender Equality and Diversity:** Advice on work–life balance and family compatibility
- **Central IT:** Software and digital skills courses
- **Career Services:** Guidance for career planning beyond academia
- **Innovation Hub:** Support for innovation and start-ups
- **Psychological Counseling Center / Ombudspersons:** Confidential support with personal or work-related challenges

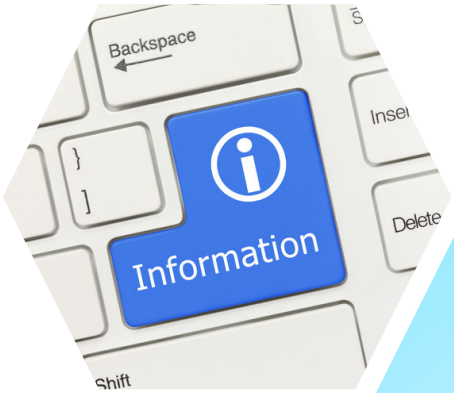
Universität Zürich[UZH]



How to fund a PhD?

Dr. Emily Rose Ciscato, Research & Grants Office
12 November 2026, Long Night of Careers

Research & Grants Office: What we do



We **inform & advise** researchers on **research funding opportunities**

We **support** researchers in submitting **applications** to funding agencies.

We administer the **UZH's internal funding instruments**



We serve as an interface to the **Swiss National Science Foundation** and **Euresearch**

Swiss National Science Foundation

euresearch
Swiss guide to European research and innovation

support@research.uzh.ch
www.research.uzh.ch

Looking for Funding: Overview

➢**Fellowships and Grants:**

Self-raised third-party funds

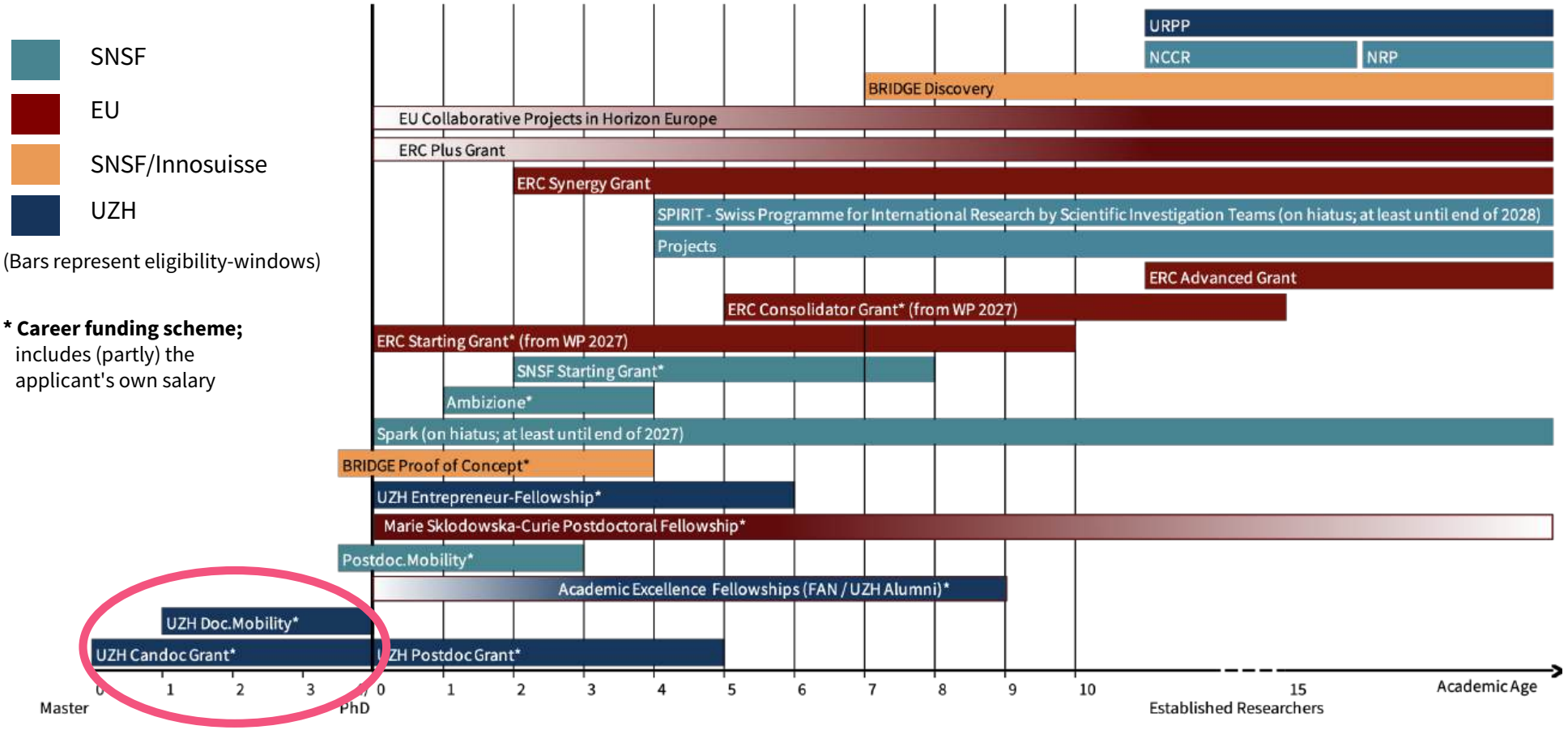
➢**Employment:**

Qualification positions or part-time work



Funding Pathways

Download PDF (with links)
at www.research.uzh.ch
> Research Funding



Financing your doctorate through self-raised third-party funds: Fellowships & Grants

- currently no funding instrument that finances the entire PhD (4 years)

Project funding:

- **UZH Candoc Grant:** 12 months own salary (rsp. 24 for PhDs at the Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences) PhD students of UZH
- **GRC Short Grants:** Project and publications costs up to 5'000 CHF for advanced PhD students & postdocs of UZH
- **GRC Career Grant:** Project and publications costs up to 15'000 CHF for advanced PhD students & postdocs of UZH

Mobility:

- **UZH Doc.Mobility:** 6-12 months research stay for PhD students of UZH
- **GRC Travel grant:** Short research stay (1 - 180 days/6 months) for PhD students & postdocs of UZH
- **SEMP** (Swiss-European Mobility Program): 1-2 semester research stay in CH (PhDs coming from abroad) or EU (CH-based PhDs)

For foreign students

- **Swiss Government Excellence Scholarships:** 12 months full scholarship at a CH-University (monthly payment of 1'920 CHF prolongable up to 36 months)

UZH Candoc Grant



Protected research time for your project

UZH Candoc

PhD at UZH

1 year

Who can apply?

•PhD Students enrolled at UZH / UZH Graduate Schools

What can be applied for?

•Salary contributions, consumables on a very limited scale

•Usually 1 year (2 years at Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences)

When and how to apply?

•Deadline: **1 February 2027** (call opens 1 Dec)

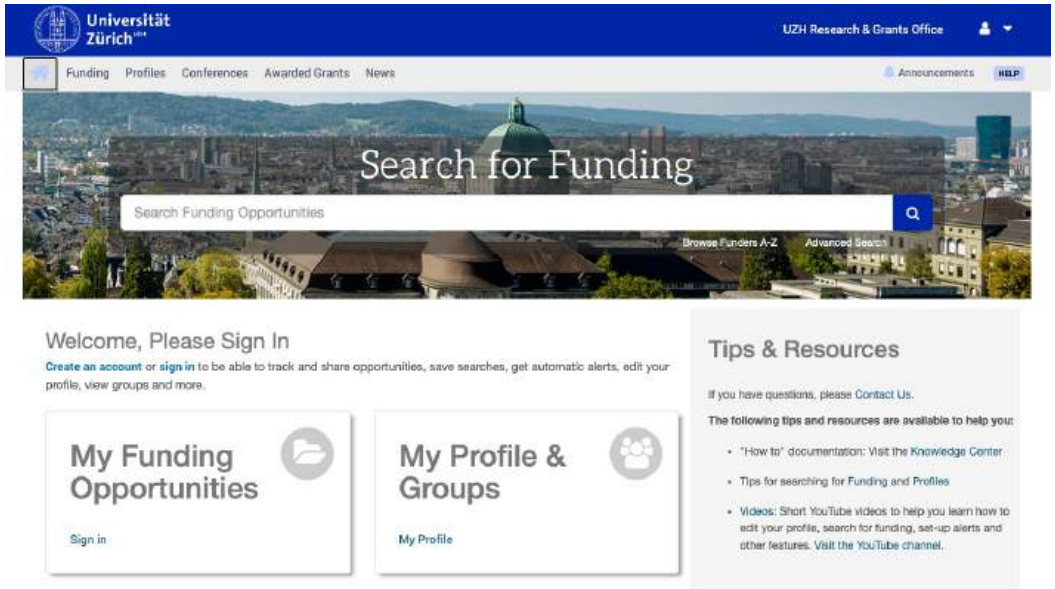
Electronic submission on www.myuzhgrants.uzh.ch

What's the success rate?

•Historically 200-260 applications/year with 30% success rate; in 2026: 329 applications, 22% SR

Further / Other funding opportunities

- https://www.research.uzh.ch/en/funding/phd.html
- **Graduate Campus / Faculties** (e.g. travel grants, workshops)
- Personalised search and email-alerts in **Pivot RP** (access via UZH VPN)
  https://pivot.proquest.com/dashboard
- **Foundations directories** – e.g.
  https://www.research.uzh.ch/static/fnf/stiftungen/
  https://www.fundraiso.ch
  https://stiftungschweiz.ch
- **Funding abroad**



Financing your doctorate through employment

- **Employment (at UZH) in a (academic) qualification position as**
  - ➢ **a doctoral candidate** usually on a research project, e.g. SNSF or Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Doctoral Networks MSCA-DN
    - 80 % as standard employment level,
    - A minimum of 3.5 working days per week (= 70 % full-time equivalent) dedicated to research project
    - A maximum of 20% of the employment time for teaching tasks or other personal further qualification activities
    - Salary in accordance with SNSF rates or MSCA-DN fixed allowances
    - Usually limited to 4 years
  - ➢ **a teaching / research assistant** at a chair / in a lab / research group
    - 50-70 % as standard employment level (EL)
    - Min. 1.5 working days per week of protected research time, i.e. EL ≤ 60 % = 30 % of a full-time equivalent; EL> 60 % protected time requirement of 50 % of the EL applies
    - Max. 50% of the employment time for teaching tasks or other activities in connection with teaching
    - Salary: LK 17
    - Limited to 6 years (3 +3)

❖ The best way to find out about open doctoral positions is to contact your supervisor directly or visit the **UZH job platform**

Department of Geography

PhD position in "Large-Scale In-Situ Experiments on Glacier Ice Rheology and Thermodynamics" (funded for 4 years) 80 %

Within the framework of the project "Large-Scale In-Situ Experiments on Rheology and Thermodynamics" (LISERT) we are pleased to offer a PhD position for 4 years at the University of Zurich (UZH), Switzerland. The project is funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNF) and is a collaborative effort of several research institutions to understand the rheology of temperate glacier ice.
The project employs a combination of in-situ measurements on a glacier, structure-geological analysis, numerical modeling and theoretical developments to investigate how glacier ice deforms under active forcing at the scale of meters. With complementary studies the glacier dynamical and structural context is mapped with multi-spectral and thermal sensors on drones and analyzed with glacier flow models of different complexity. This work is performed in close collaboration with scientists from the University of Oxford and LMU Munich. We are seeking a highly motivated PhD student to join the glaciology group at the University of Zurich.

Your responsibilities

- Active contribution to the design, development and implementation of the field experiments.
- Analysis of datasets from field experiments.
- Application and adaptation of numerical models of ice flow and crystal texture evolution.
- Active participation in the field work on a glacier, including week-long field camps.
- Collaboration with PhDs and Postdocs of related projects.
- Writing of high-quality publications.

Your profile

- Fascinated by large-scale dynamic processes in the mountains.
- MSc in glaciology, structural geology, applied geophysics, (computational) mechanics or (computational) geosciences.
- Background in solid/fluid/continuum mechanics
- Experience with numerical modeling (e.g. finite elements, finite differences, particle models).
- Good programming knowledge with e.g. Python, Matlab, Julia, C++ or similar languages.
- Mountaineering skills such as glacier travel, backcountry skiing and expedition camping.
- Team player with the ability to work independently, and with excellent communication capabilities as she/he will collaborate with PhDs and postdocs of related projects.
- Excellent written and spoken English and strong scientific writing skills.
- Teamwork, scientific communication and organizational skills.

English Department

Two PhD Assistantships in American Literature and Culture 60 %

The English Department of the University of Zurich invites applications for two Research and Teaching Assistantships at the Chair for American Literature and Culture (Prof. Dr. Katharina Gerund) to begin on 1 February 2025. These doctoral positions are open to candidates with a completed Master's degree who plan to pursue a PhD in American Studies. The contracts are initially limited to three years (with the possibility of extension for up to three years).

Your responsibilities
For Research and Teaching Assistants, 50% of the working hours are reserved for research, primarily for work on the PhD project, but also for related activities such as conference papers, publications, organization of academic events, and applications for external funding. The other 50% are devoted to teaching BA courses (two hours per week, (two hours per week, beginning with a course within the “Textual Analysis” module or a BA seminar in literature) as well as some administrative tasks.

Your profile
We are looking for two members of staff with outstanding MA theses in the field of American Literature and Culture and promising ideas for research projects that correspond to the Chair's main research areas (Critical Military Studies, Affect and Gender Studies, Critical Race Studies, Cultural Theory and Popular Culture). The successful candidates will be well versed in literary history and critical theory, have didactic skills, and enjoy working in a team environment. They will be proficient in English and have a working knowledge of German (to be acquired within two years).

Financing your doctorate through employment

- **Employment in a part-time work position**

  - **at the University**
    - at Libraries, Research Centers, Institutes, Clinics etc.
    - as scientific proposal writer, fundraising coordinator, course supervisor, scientific (research) assistant, animal caretaker

  - **outside the University**
    - In a position/field close to your research area
    - In a position/field that you would like to continue after your PhD or that gives you early access to a preferred field of work
    - In a position/field that is complementary to your field of research

❖ The best way to find out about jobs and open positions is to browse job platforms like the one from the UZH career services:
https://uzhcareer.ch/de/jobs/

Universität Zürich[UZH] | Career Services



Why do a PhD? Advantages and disadvantages on the labor market

Roger Gfrörer, Dr.oec.publ. | Head UZH Career Services

12. November 2026



In the next 15 minutes I want to tell you about

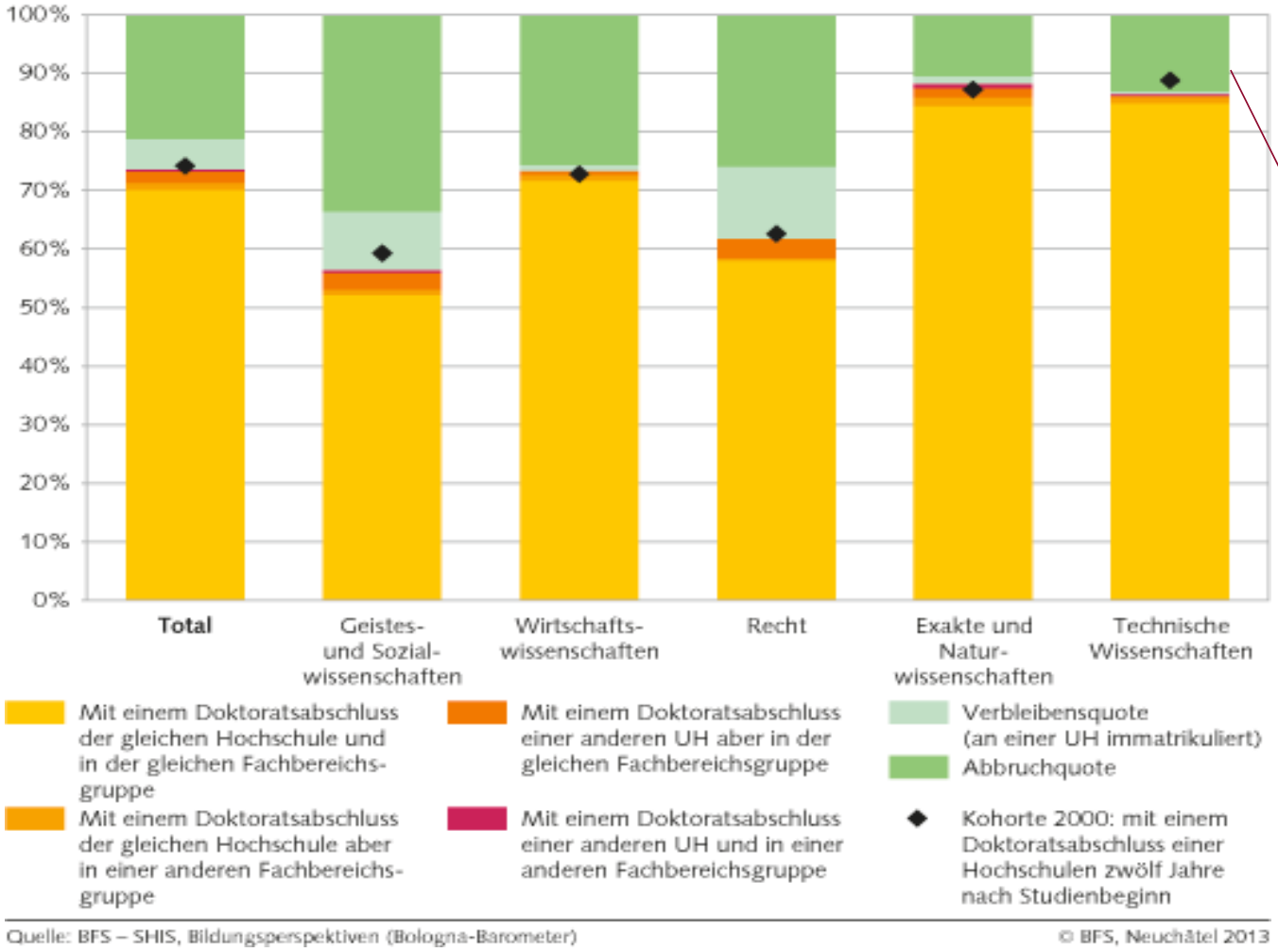
- **Where a PhD can take you**
- **The challenges after the PhD on the way to the job market**
- **The advantages of a PhD for the job market**
- **My concusion for your PhD**

Where a PhD can take you

1

A PhD not always leads to a graduation

Universitäre Hochschulen: Studienerfolg neun Jahre nach Beginn des Doktoratstudiums, Studienabbruch und Verbleibensquote im Jahr 2012 für die Eintritte 2003 mit einem Abschluss einer Schweizer UH
nach Fachbereichsgruppe zu Beginn des Doktoratstudiums

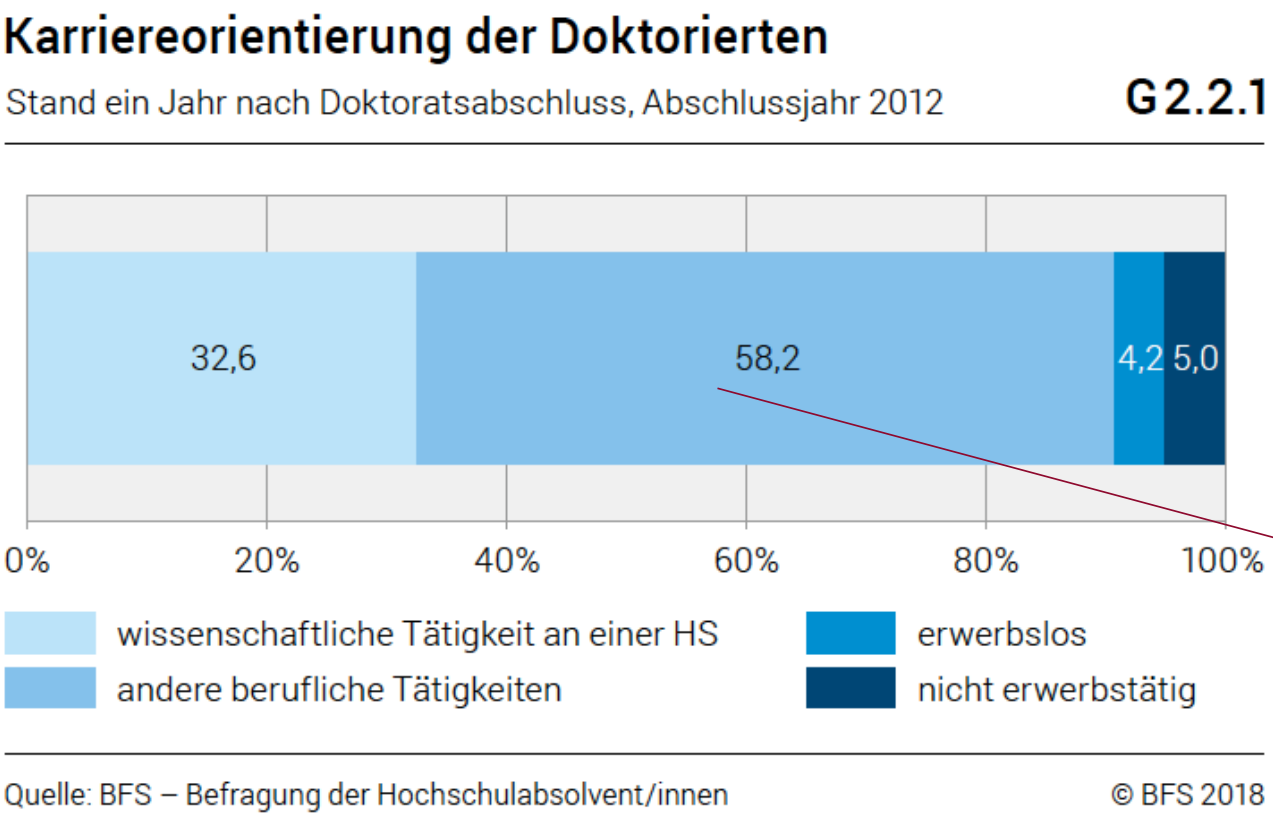


Quelle: BFS – SHIS, Bildungsperspektiven (Bologna-Barometer)

© BFS, Neuchâtel 2013

No graduation

A PhD does not always lead to employment in science



Other professional activities

2

Advantages of a PhD

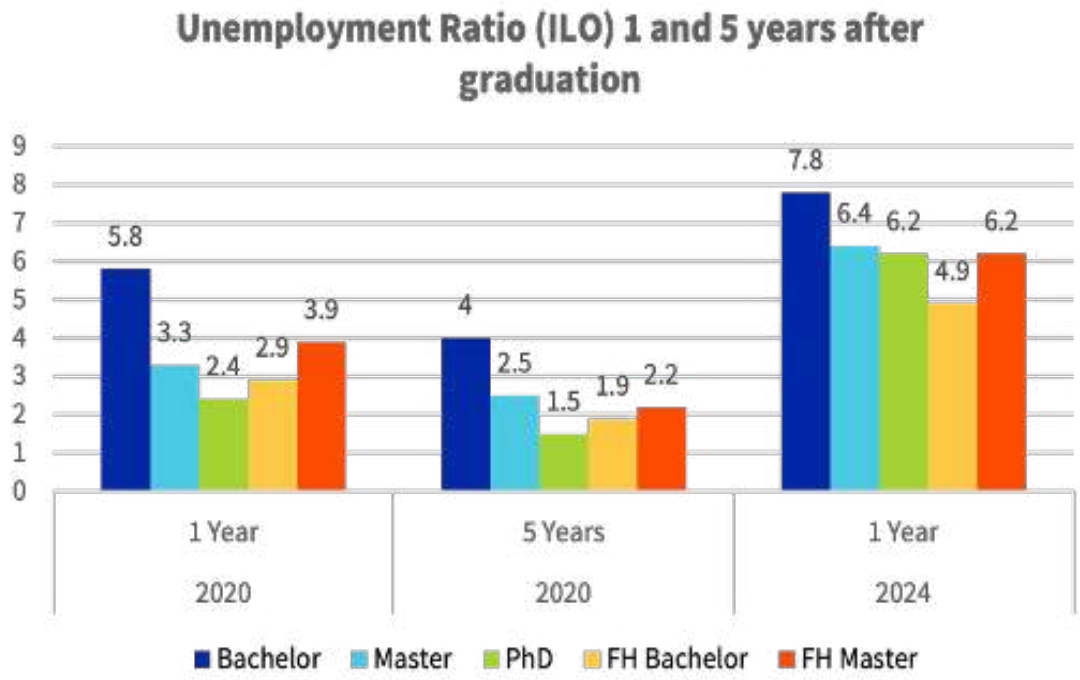
With a PhD, you get....

- ✓ Systematic understanding of a study field
- ✓ Proficiency in the skills and methods associated with this field
- ✓ Conception, design and implementation of a substantial research process with scientific integrity
- ✓ Ability to critically analyze, evaluate and synthesize new and complex ideas
- ✓ Communication skills with professional environment, wider scientific community and society in general
- ✓ Ability to promote progress within a science community

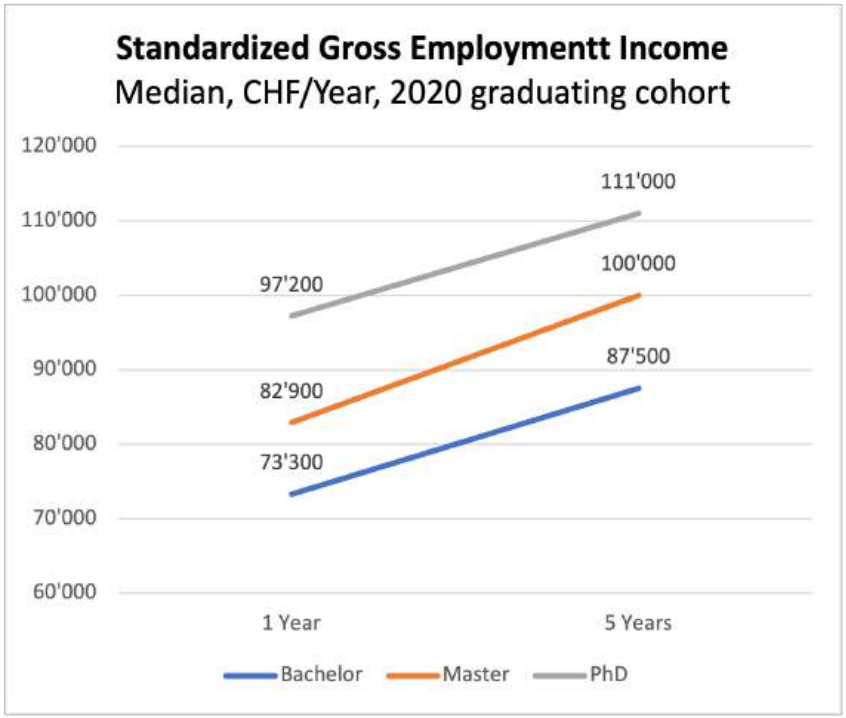
A doctorate is an advantage for the labor market if you are aware of these learning outcomes, if you are able to transfer these resources into other contexts and to communicate adequately.

Vgl. Qualifications Framework for the Higher Education Area, nqf.ch-HS, S. 13

A PhD is a highly valued qualification on the job market.



Source for chart: FSO, Graduate Survey (EHA), graduating cohorts 2020 and 2024. Retrospective revision of weighting in 2025; revision of questions on labour market status.

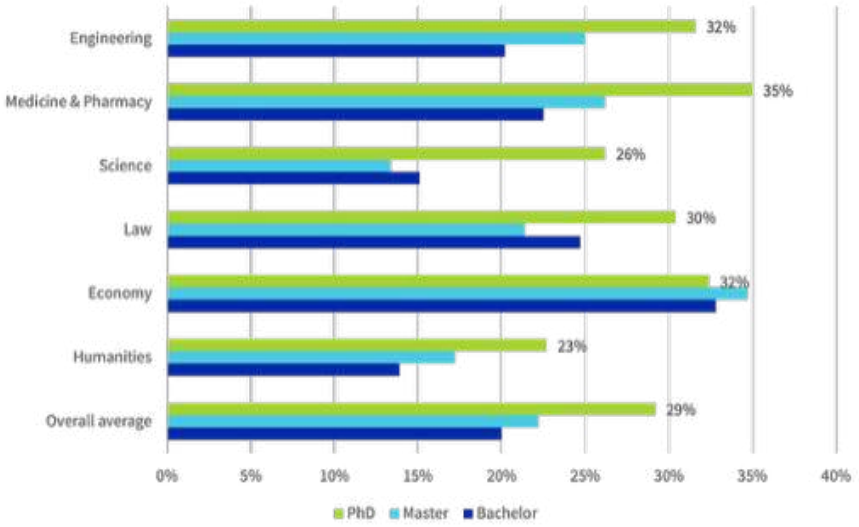


Standardised gross employment income by degree level, 2014 graduating cohort (FSO, 2020)(BFS, 2026)

A PhD is a grade with high employability

Share of managers by degree type and subject area group.

5 years after graduation



Source for this slide: Federal Statistical Office (FSO), Graduate Survey (EHA), 2020 graduating cohort, five years after graduation; retrospective revision of the weighting in 2025.
Important for this chart: The definition of managerial responsibility was revised in 2021. Since then, it has been based on the number of employees supervised and membership of senior management rather than on self-assessment. The current figures are therefore not directly comparable with the previous chart for the 2014 graduating cohort.

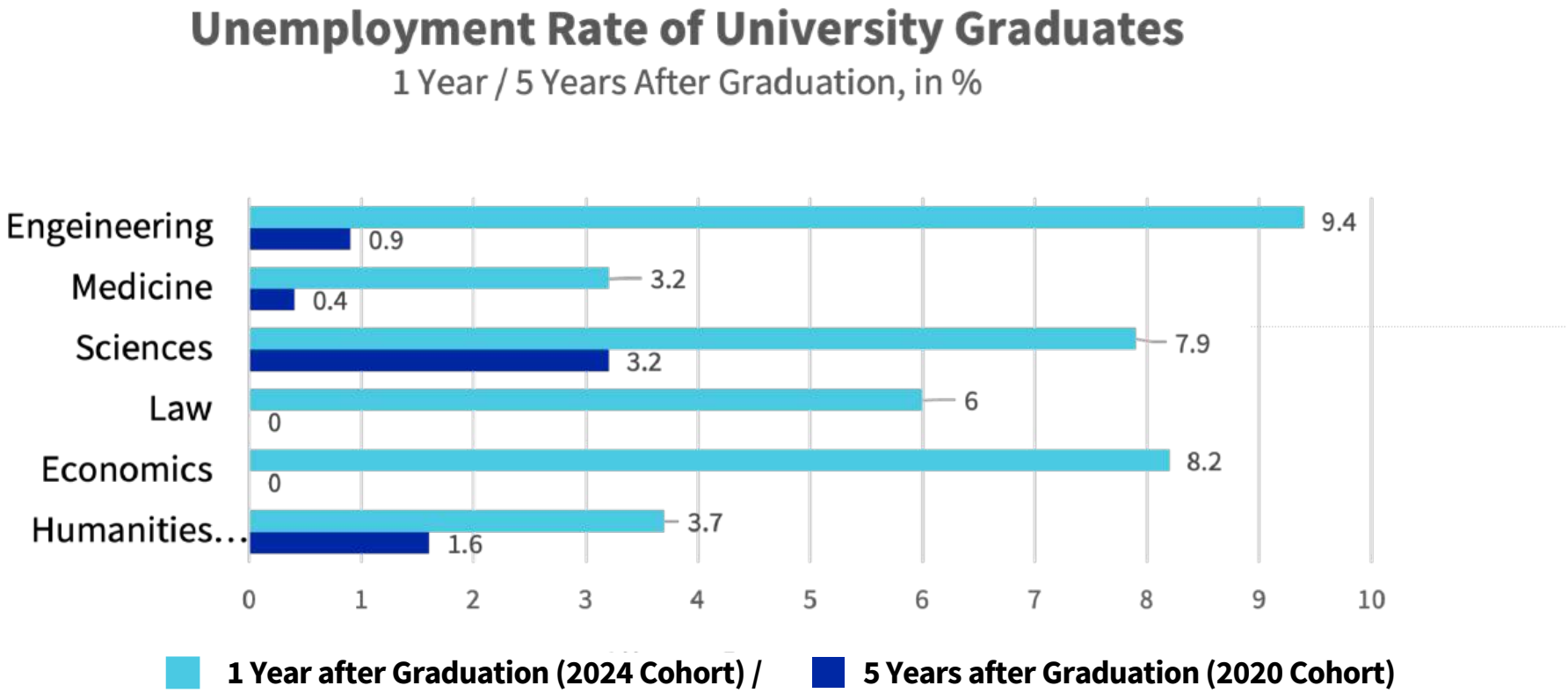
Share in employment commensurate with level of education						
	Bachelor		Master		PhD	
	1 Year	5 Years	1 Year	5 Years	1 Year	5 Years
All fields of study	51.6	70.6	86.3	87.3	90.6	90.2
Humanities and Social Sciences	51.6	66.1	81.2	85.8	87.2	86.3
Business and Economics	61.8	74.3	84.6	82.6	94.0	92.9
Law	32.5	75.1	90.0	94.2	90.4	92.7
Exact and Natural Sciences	46.2	69.2	87.1	85.2	91.4	88.2
Medicine and Pharmacy	46.3	87.6	97.2	96.5	91.9	95.4
Technical Sciences	49.0	72.9	86.4	84.4	89.0	88.8
Interdisciplinary and Other	43.3	70.4	74.9	89.1	**	**

Source: Swiss Federal Statistical Office (FSO), Graduate Survey (EHA), 2020 graduating cohort, second survey 2025; retrospective revision of weighting.

Question: Was a university degree required by your employer for your current employment?

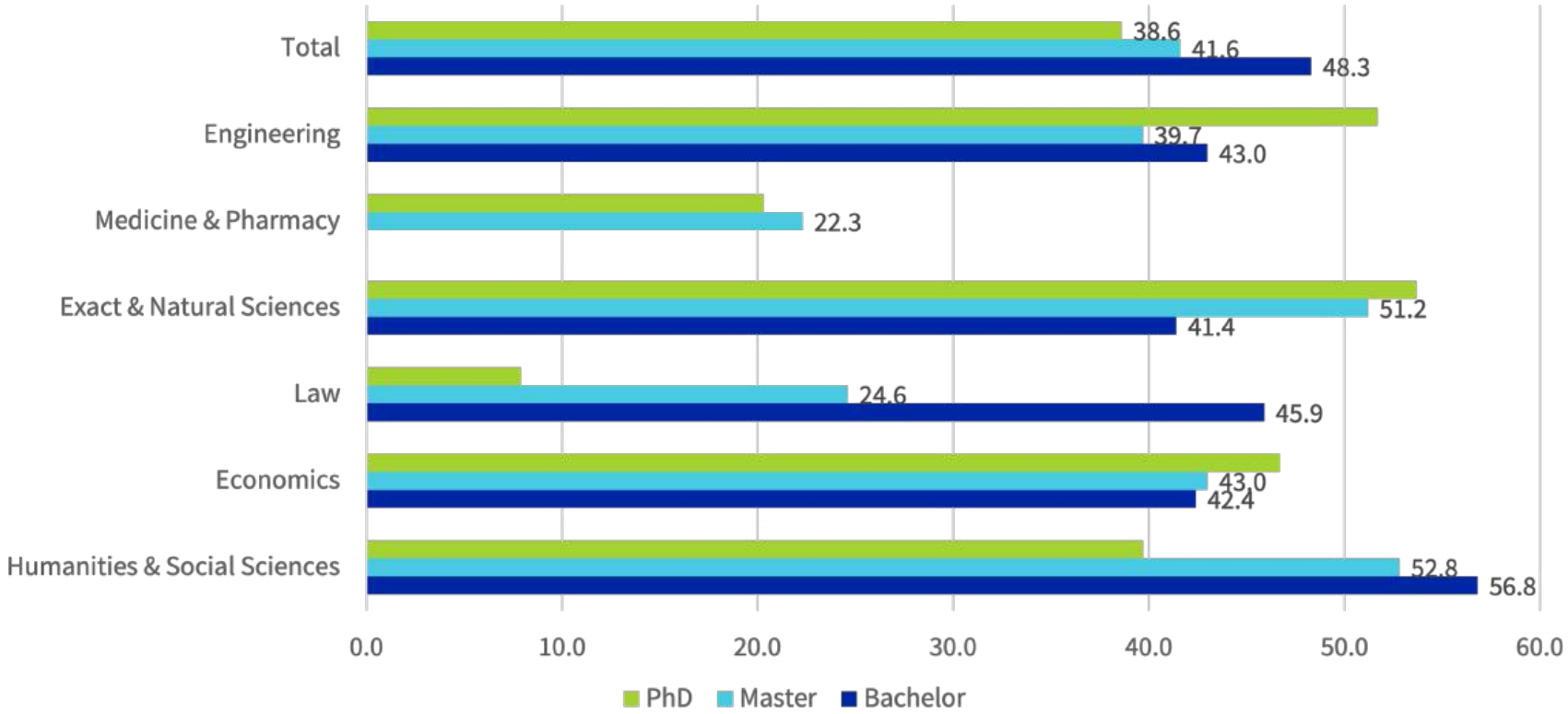
3 What are the challenges?

Although the PhD is a grade with high employability, it varies between disciplines..



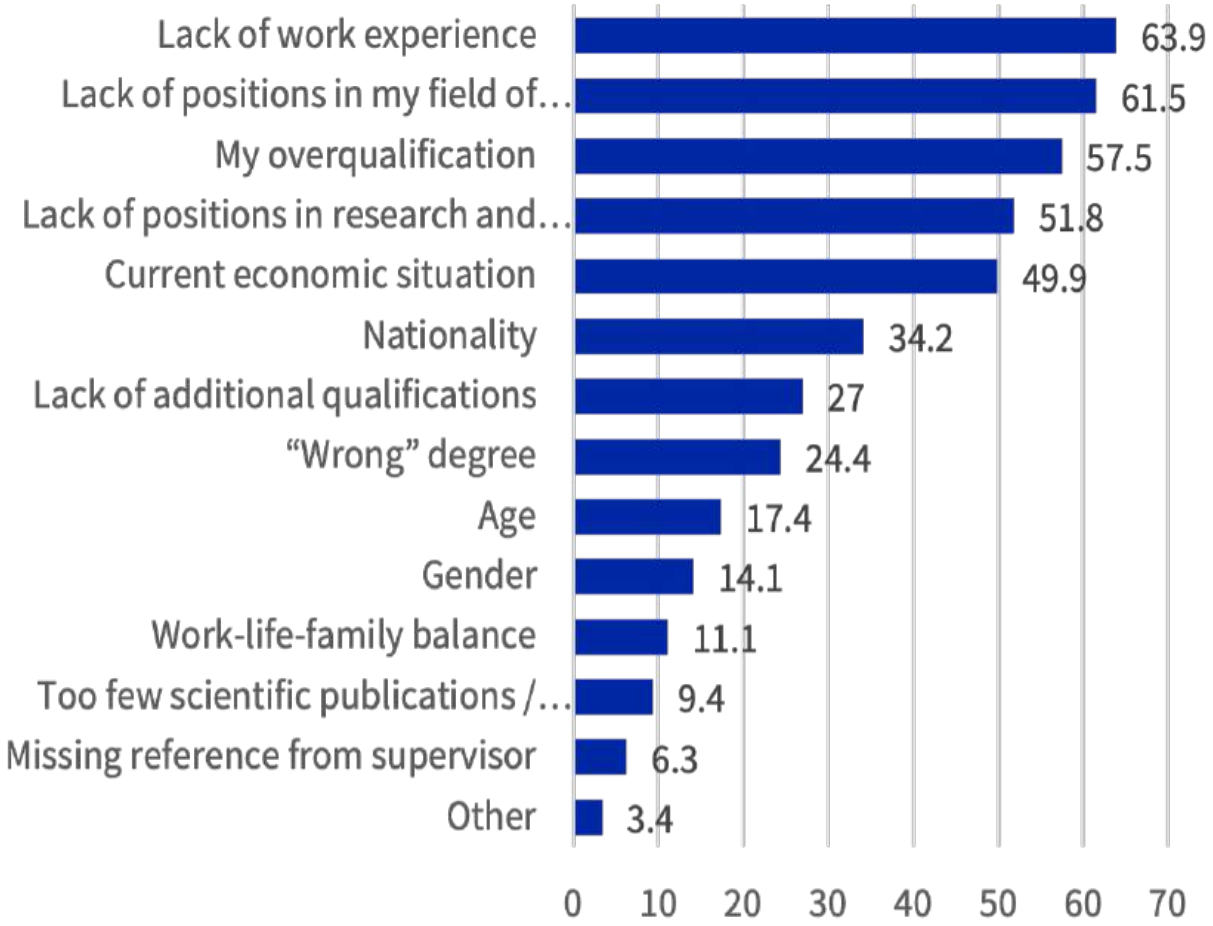
The figures refer to the latest available cohorts: the 1-year results are based on the 2024 graduating cohort, while the 5-year results refer to the 2020 cohort. They should therefore not be interpreted as a longitudinal development of the same cohort.

… as the perceived challenges during the transition varies.



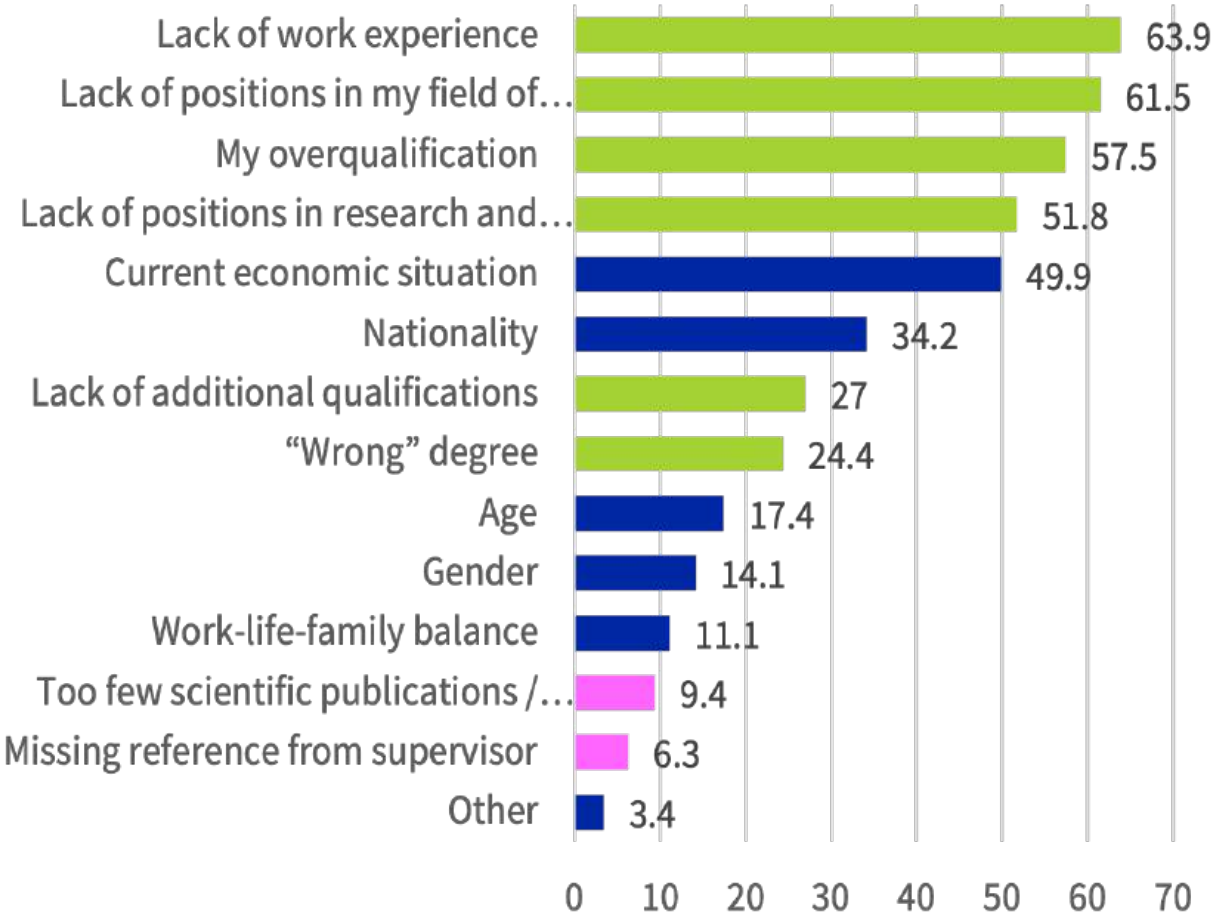
TA2E11-2 © BFS, Befragung der Hochschulabsolvent/-innen (EHA)Swiss Federal Statistic Office, 29.08.2026

Reported difficulties finding a job after PhD (BFS 2026, Class of 2024).



2024	**2022**	**2020**	**2016**
1	1	1	1
2	2	2	3
3	3	3	2
4	4	5	4
5	5	6	8
6	6	7	7
7	7	4	12
8	8	8	5
9	9	9	6
11	10	11	10
10	11	10	11
12	12	12	9
13	13	13	14
14	14	14	13

Good news: Most challenges can be solved with career engagement!



Career Engagement

PhD

Difficult to change

The challenges (based on our observations) are

MISMATCH because PhDs and Postdocs
- do not know their skills,
- do not know how to transfer their skills into non-academic areas because the requirements in this areas are unknown
- are seen to be overqualified but underexperienced by employers

→ **Take on responsibilities beyond research, collaborate with external partners and document your achievements.**

DISORIENTATION because PhDs and Postdocs
- do not know the non-academic labor market
- do not know the academic labor market [sic!]
- do not know the career paths of the alumni

→ **Analyse job ads · Talk to alumni · Explore workplaces**

MISSING CAREER MANAGEMENT as PhDs and Postdocs lack
- of profiling as experts during the doctoral studies
- of internal and external networking during the doctoral studies
- of explicit control of their own career: Doctoral students wait too often too long for their supervisors to make career decisions for them.

→ **Build your expert profile · Network beyond academia · Develop your own career plan**

Career readiness doesn't start after your PhD – it develops through active career engagement during your doctoral studies.

My conclusion

A PhD offers valuable career opportunities, both within and beyond academia. However, a successful transition requires preparation and active career engagement throughout your doctoral studies.

Make use of the ecosystem at the UZH and around, that supports you.

- Enjoy your research and take pride in your achievements.
- Build your academic network.
- Build your network beyond academia.
- Develop skills relevant to your future career.
- Strengthen your communication skills. (German!)
- Explore the entrepreneurial potential of your research.
- Start exploring career options early and plan your transition well before completing your PhD.
- If you are from outside the EU/EFTA (third-country nationals), learn about the rules for work permits in Switzerland.

Take ownership of your career development – start during your PhD, not after it.

And above all: Enjoy your PhD journey – make the most of this unique opportunity!