Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences
Expert-Committee of the National MD-PhD-Program

Minimal Standards for the Supervision of MD-PhD-Students

The commissions of the local (MD-)PhD-programs, the supervisors and the individual thesis-committees have the primary responsibility for advice, coordination, surveillance and mentoring of MD-PhD-students. Both assure that the goals of the PhD are reached according to the local regulations. In addition, they have the following responsibilities and duties:

Local commissions:

- Selection and coaching of MD-PhD-students according to the "Joint Standards" (Verbindliche Standards) defined by the members of the Expert-Committee
- Definition of thesis-goals and approval of the MD-PhD-project at the beginning of the PhD

Supervisor and thesis-committees:

- Special control of the progress made after the first year: Independently written reports (max. 1 page) of the PhD student and the supervisor are handed to thesis-committee, who evaluates the reports and sends a condensed recommendation to the local commissions, whether the student should continue or not, and if any changes are required.
- Completion of the PhD according to the national and local rules should be assured within the time frame of three to four years
- Assurance of at least one first-author publication in a peer-reviewed journal during the PhD

Supervisors:

- Supervision (intellectual and methodological supervision) in the lab should be guaranteed. There should be a substitute, if the supervisor is frequently absent. Ideally, the same supervisor should supervise not more than 5-7 students.
- Students should be urged to
    - hand in written scientific reports (1 per year) to their thesis committee and to the SNF
    - give oral progress-reports to the thesis-committee (at least once a year) and to the research group (on a regular basis)
    - present their data at annual meetings (MD-PhD-retreat) in the presence of all local MD-PhD-students and representatives of the thesis-committees
    - participate in the biennial national MD-PhD-meeting

The General Secretariat of the Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences offers to serve as an independent office where MD-PhD-students can depose possible problems and complaints regarding insufficient supervision/coaching ("Ombudsstelle")