

# Go/No Go evaluation procedure and method

*This document describes the procedure and method of the Go/No Go meeting that is held with doctoral candidates, providing a practical and more detailed version of the relevant articles mentioned in the Doctoral Regulations. Additional implementation regulations may apply at each faculty; see the website of the Faculty Graduate School (FGS) concerned.*

## Summary

1. The aim of the Go/No Go meeting is to explicitly state the expectation of a candidate's successfully obtaining their doctoral diploma within four years and, on the basis of this, to decide whether to continue the candidate's programme (Go) or terminate it prematurely (No Go).
2. The Go/No Go meeting takes place around twelve months after the start date.
3. Before taking a Go/No Go decision, the intended promotor is advised by a committee.
4. Each FGS is free to shape the process concerning the Go/No Go meeting further and to expand the committee if so desired (structurally or incidentally, in case of doubt concerning the results or potential of the candidate).

## Aim of Go/No Go

The first year of the Doctoral Programme is a crucial one for both the candidate and the intended promotor and other supervisors. During the first year, both candidate and supervisors continue to clarify the research assignment and get a clearer idea of whether the candidate will be able to successfully complete his or her Doctoral Programme within four years. Approximately one year after the research start date the expectations regarding the candidate's chance of success should be explicitly declared by all parties during the Go/No Go meeting, and this will result in a decision by the intended promotor as to whether the candidate should continue.

## Process and stages

### Six-month review

The result of the Go/No Go meeting should not come as a surprise to the candidate. It is therefore strongly advised that an initial progress meeting is held around six months after the start of the Doctoral Programme. During this review meeting, the intended promotor will express his or her impression of the process so far and his or her expectations of what the outcome of the Go/No Go meeting will be.

If, during this review, any reservations are expressed about the continuation of the Doctoral Programme, these will be clearly recorded together with agreements on improvements. In this case, the intended promotor ensures that the HR advisor is involved in this process at an appropriate juncture. Thus, the candidate is given the opportunity to make improvements over the subsequent months in preparation for the Go/No Go meeting.

### Composition of the Go/No Go committee

The intended promotor will take advice from a Go/No Go committee consisting of at least three members, including an independent professor or assistant/associate professor holding a doctorate, who is in principle from outside the department, but in any event from outside the promotor's research group (obligation in accordance with Article 7.3 of the Doctoral Regulations) and not involved in the research project.

The following is also recommended:

- The Faculty Graduate School should oversee the composition of the committee and/or should draw up more detailed guidelines for its composition.
- The mentor should not sit on the committee due to the confidential nature of his or her relationship with the candidate. He or she can provide information for the process and take part in the meeting, if the candidate agrees.
- For additional support, a secretary (e.g. an FGS employee) may attend the meeting to ensure a proper and uniform procedure and documentation.

## Preparation

Meticulous preparation of the Go/No Go meeting is necessary in order to properly assess the likelihood of successful completion of the Doctoral Programme within four years. This requires careful preparation on the part of the candidate and the intended promotor. In order to ensure that expectations are clear, at the start of the Doctoral Programme the candidate should be informed in brief by the intended promotor and the daily supervisor about the Go/No Go process. At that stage it is also advisable to discuss how the achievement of the objectives will be assessed during the Go/No Go meeting.

In consultation with the members of the committee, the intended promotor will set a date for the Go/No Go meeting in good time. The date will be communicated to the candidate and to the Faculty Graduate School.

In preparation of the Go/No Go meeting, the candidate will be asked to submit a portfolio to his or her intended promotor or daily supervisor well in advance (at least two weeks). Faculties are free to set guidelines as to its contents.

The portfolio may consist of:

1. An overview of the results achieved in the first year, including proof of competence (draft paper, technical report).
2. Perspective for the next three years (white paper, project plan), including a time schedule and the expected academic findings (such as papers and chapters of the dissertation).
3. The PhD agreement (form). If applicable, any agreements made in a (6-month) progress meeting.
4. An up-to-date overview of the Doctoral Education programme.
5. Self-reflection - a written commentary by the candidate on his or her performance and development in the context of the 9 competencies and last year's agreements. The candidate also formulates plans for improvement. This may be recorded on the Go/No go form.

The portfolio as a whole should provide an accurate picture of the candidate's work during the preceding 12 months and a realistic prognosis of the academic challenges, targets and work activities for the next three years. The candidate will indicate whether they expect to complete the full Doctoral Programme within four years.

## The Go/No Go meeting and decision

During the Go/No Go meeting, the subjects to be discussed will include at least the following:

- A review of the preceding period with respect to research, the Doctoral Education programme, competences and personal development, in the context of the PhD agreement.
- Evaluation of supervision (frequency, content, etc.).
- Vision for the next three years, including time schedule.

This is followed by:

- 'Go' or 'No Go' decision, including motivation and recommendations for the candidate.
- In very exceptional cases: motivation for postponing the decision and conditions for achieving a Go within 15 months of the start date (at the latest).

### Example of how to conduct a Go/No Go meeting

1. Short presentation by the candidate (perhaps in public).
2. Evaluation discussion between the candidate and the committee. This discussion provides the committee with the opportunity to ask the candidate questions about his or her portfolio. How the review and evaluation are conducted depends on the preferences of the faculty.
3. The intended promotor and committee hold their deliberations behind closed doors. The committee members' advice and feedback and the promotor's response are recorded on the form and printed. The committee members sign the form.
4. The promotor will take his or her decision on the basis of the recommendations of the committee.
5. The candidate is informed of the decision and receives feedback.
6. If there is a 'Go' decision, the independent committee member may depart. The candidate and supervisors formulate agreements and goals and record these on the last page of the form. The candidate signs the form.
7. The completed form(s) are submitted to the Faculty Graduate School.
  - ✓ The Graduate School emphasises the importance of good and clear feedback for the candidate, regardless of whether the decision is a Go or No Go.
  - ✓ The Board for Doctorates advises the independent committee members to carefully formulate their recommendations on the Go/No go form. Furthermore, for the sake of transparency, it is advised to provide the candidate with a copy of the Go/No go form.

In exceptional cases, the intended promotor may decide to defer his or her decision by up to three months as a result of this evaluation. Clear additional agreements on improvement on the part of the candidate will then have to be made and recorded on the Go/No go form. It is up to the promotor how this is to be organised, although the committee must also be involved in the final decision. In any case, the final decision must be taken within 15 months of the start date.

If the recommendations by the committee members differ from the decision of the promotor, this will be reported, for information purposes, to the Director of the FGS, with a copy also being sent to the Departmental Director.

### Steps subsequent to a 'Go' decision

If the intended promotor has determined that the first year of research provides a sufficient degree of confidence that the candidate will be able to complete his or her PhD within the remaining three years, he or she will be allowed to continue. All agreements made during the Go/No Go meeting concerning the remaining Doctoral Programme, the competences that will be worked on and any other relevant observations will be incorporated in the Go/No go form. The Go/No go form and Form A are signed and completed.

The completed Go/No Go form, Form A and the portfolio documents are submitted to the Faculty Graduate School.

The documents will be uploaded into the DMA system by the Faculty Graduate School. The Go/No Go form will then be filed by the faculty HR secretarial offices. Form A will be submitted to the Board for Doctorates by the University Graduate School.

### Steps subsequent to a 'No Go' decision

If the decision is negative – a 'No Go' – the candidate's Doctoral Programme will be terminated. The promotor reports this to the FGS and HR, and submits the signed Go/No go form. The candidate then receives an invitation for an exit interview from the FGS and is unenrolled from the Graduate School.

The standard objection and appeal procedures apply to a formal dismissal (termination of employment) on the basis of a 'No Go'.

For information regarding the Go/No Go meeting and the settlement of disputes, see the Doctoral Regulations (Articles 7, 19 and 20) and the Implementation Decree (Section G).