

Leaflet – Contribution of IMK-Doctoral Students to Teaching

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Introduction

The contribution of PhD students to teaching has a tradition at the IMK and without them teaching could not be maintained in its current form and quality. Typical activities are conducting tutorials or practical courses as well as sitting in on examinations. Most of the PhD students at the IMK are enrolled in the Department (KIT-Fakultät) of Physics, but participation in teaching is in principle also open to PhD students of other faculties. The following leaflet is intended to help PhD students (and their supervisors) to find an appropriate participation in teaching in order to improve their academic qualification in an appropriate way.

Why should I participate in teaching?

Most doctoral students at IMK are funded through third-party funded projects and they have in principle no contractual obligation to participate in teaching. In individual cases, the contribution to teaching is not possible or reasonable due to their thematic background, their language skills or their place of work. Consent of the supervisor (and the head of the institute if applicable) is always required.

Participation in teaching offers doctoral students an excellent opportunity to gain professional qualifications in an academic environment and thereby improve their chances of a career in higher education. By supervising a practice group or exercises, doctoral students train their skills in explaining and presenting in a clear and structured manner. They learn to give understandable and targeted feedback or to react spontaneously to questions. These skills are not least helpful for the doctoral examinations and for presentations at conferences, and are also in demand for many jobs in non-academic areas. The examination sitting in is also a good preparation for the own doctoral examination. Teaching is thus a positive aspect of any CV that should not be underestimated, and it boosts the job search after the PhD.

For these reasons, participation in teaching is an explicit wish of the KIT-Faculty of Physics to all PhD students. It is regularly requested from the institutes (Faculty Council resolution of 2.5.2012) and the result is discussed as part of the doctoral examination. Since 2014, there is also a written doctoral agreement between the doctoral student and the supervisor, in which usually the following passage is included (§7(3)): "The supervisor and the doctoral candidate discuss at regular intervals whether and discuss at regular intervals whether and what participation in teaching should support further qualification."

The doctoral students involved in teaching are listed in the course catalog, so that their valuable contribution to teaching is more visible to the outside world.

How do I organize my involvement in teaching?

In principle, the topic of teaching participation should already be addressed during introductory discussions with the supervisor, e.g. when it comes to the qualification measures within the framework of the doctoral agreement. In terms of time, for many PhD students, participation in teaching in the 1st and/or 2nd year of the doctorate is certainly preferable, so that the PhD student can fully concentrate on completing the thesis in the third year. By looking at the BSc and MSc Meteorology and Climate Physics curricula under studium.kit.edu, courses can be identified that best match the knowledge and interests of the PhD student. Subsequently, an arrangement can then be made with the relevant lecturers on the timing, nature, and extent of the student's participation. In addition, it is of course also possible to participate as a tutor in courses of physics (e.g. tutorial Theoretical Physics I) or in other courses of study.

In the past it has been shown that some PhD students need some time to get used to their new role as tutors. To facilitate this, there are two things that can be done before entering active teaching:

- Occasional attendance at the chosen course(s) and Sharing experiences with current stakeholders ("shadowing").
- Attending the four-day course organized by the Hochschuldidaktikzentrum Baden-Württemberg (HDZ) "Fit für die Lehre"/"Fit for teaching".