Conflict Resolution

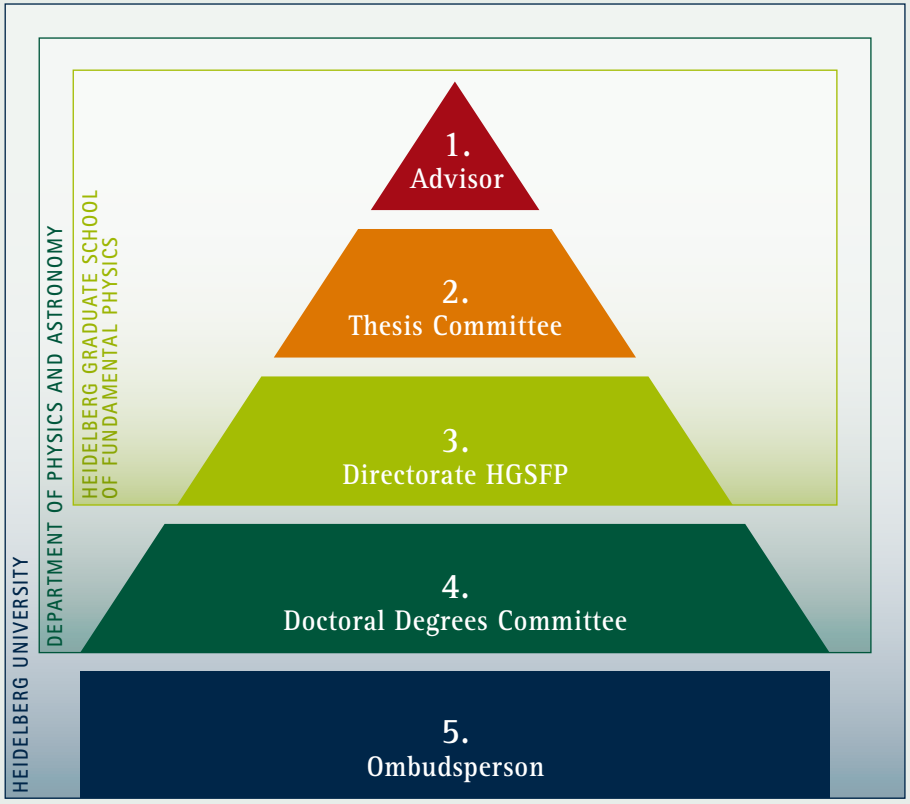
There are different levels of conflict resolution, which are shown graphically in the figure. Students should attempt to settle differences in discussion with their advisors, and failing this, within their thesis committee. Should this not succeed, there are further options. Extreme differences, which may place a lasting strain on efficient cooperation shall be settled by the help of the HGSFP Directorate.

If, however, no resolution is possible, the final instance is the Doctoral Degrees Committee, which takes its decisions according to the rules and regulations laid down by the Department of Physics and Astronomy.

At all stages of conflict, students may contact the University ombudsperson, who is independent of the Department.

All parties should note that it is in the best interests of everyone if conflicts are addressed as early as possible in order to avoid escalation.

Figure: Levels of conflict resolution for graduate students within the HGSFP and University



Supervision guidelines

for the Heidelberg Graduate School of Fundamental Physics

These guidelines were drawn up by the student representatives of the Heidelberg Graduate School of Fundamental Physics in conjunction with the Directorate of the School, and they have been approved in the Departmental Meeting (GFR) of the Department of Physics and Astronomy on 20.10.2010.

The Directorate, HGSFP

HGSFP

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Introduction

The planning and implementation of research projects involving students at the doctoral level should be characterized by intense cooperation between supervisors and doctoral students in a manner that will ensure a high quality of planning and implementation within the typically allocated time frame of three years. These guidelines should give an outline for securing adequate planning, comprehensive advice and supervision.

The student, the primary advisor, and the thesis committee oblige themselves to work efficiently on the doctoral research project in order to ensure its timely completion. This includes constructing a creative, open and fair collaboration based on partnership and impersonal reasoning and abiding by the rules of good scientific practice.

Project and Schedule

The scientific project should be defined by the advisor and the student jointly. It should specify the main goals, suggest a timeline, but also – especially if high risk is involved – include a brief backup plan. The initial plan is that which has to be submitted to the HGSFP within six months of starting the research. It is however expected that the project plan will be periodically revised, due to the inherent unpredictability of research. Should the time originally allocated for completion of the project be expected to be exceeded by more than one year, the student, advisor and thesis committee agree on a plan for a timely completion of the project which is to be reported to the HGSFP.

An adaptation period for the student – into the group and into the area of research – of approximately 2 months should be reckoned with, especially for international students.

As teaching is considered to be an important part of the education of doctoral students themselves, it is important for the faculty and doctoral students to ensure at an early stage that the basic conditions for teaching are clarified and that a suitable place can be found. Students of astrophysics can perform a teaching duty either in astronomy or in physics. All teaching coordinators can be contacted.

Students are expected to handle self-administrative tasks. These include registering for schools, workshops and courses, informing the Graduate School of courses taken and published research as well as the organization involved in suggesting examiners for the thesis defence. In some cases, additional administrative tasks may be seen as being educational and contribute to the development of the student as a whole – in particular if these involve presentation of the research done to a broader audience. In order however to alleviate pressure on students, additional administrative tasks should be kept to an absolute minimum.

The Student

The student commits himself to finish the doctoral project he/she has undertaken by the time given under the rules of the Department of Physics and Astronomy and the HGSFP and is prepared to invest the time and effort for continued and concentrated work on the scientific project, and in addition to fulfil the requirements on coursework and participate in teaching. The student should communicate his/her progress and advances regularly to the advisor, and inform the advisor and thesis committee in a timely fashion if serious problems arise in order to resolve them together. The student can initiate a meeting of the thesis committee – the meeting should then take place within a reasonable time period not to exceed two months.

The Advisor

The primary advisor is the scientific mentor and advisor of the accepted student for the whole period of the doctoral project until its successful completion. In accepting the student, he commits himself/herself to providing sufficient time for the supervision of the project. The primary advisor should inform the student in advance if there may be an extended period, when he may not be available, e.g. if his/her position is temporary or he/she plans an extended visit in a laboratory elsewhere. The advisor is expected to clarify the situation with respect to funding for the whole project right from the beginning, so that the doctoral student is aware of the expectations and risks and can take informed decisions.

As is usual in the concept of supervision, it is expected that the advisor discusses the results and their interpretation, and gives advice for methods and directions of the scientific work during the entire course of the doctoral thesis. It is also expected that he/she introduces the doctoral student to the relevant scientific environment of the institute/working group, and, depending on financial circumstances, enables participation at scientific conferences. It is expected that the advisor reads the complete version of the doctoral thesis before official submission and gives comments concerning content and style.

At an appropriate time, possibly in the final year of studies, the advisor should advise the student on possible future career planning. The HGSFP also offers information in this respect.

The Thesis Committee

The coadvisors in the thesis committee should be chosen such that they can function as independent third party advisors. The coadvisors can be changed at any time by the student. (Note that changing the primary advisor is the last escalation possible in conflict resolution (see below) and can only be altered by the Doctoral Degrees Committee, subject to the departmental regulations.)

The thesis committee is expected to support the project with scientific and organizational input. The thesis committee has the freedom to meet as it deems necessary. This can be on an annual basis, or more frequently, depending on the nature of the research and the needs of the student. It is expected to resolve problems of a serious nature.