

Your next step: a PhD?



- Miriam Egloff @UZH Research & Grants Office
- Milena Guthörl @UZH Graduate School Arts and Social Sciences
- Roger Gfrörer @UZH Career Services



uzhcareerservices

Program

Making your PhD a success

Dr. Milena Guthörl, Graduate School Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

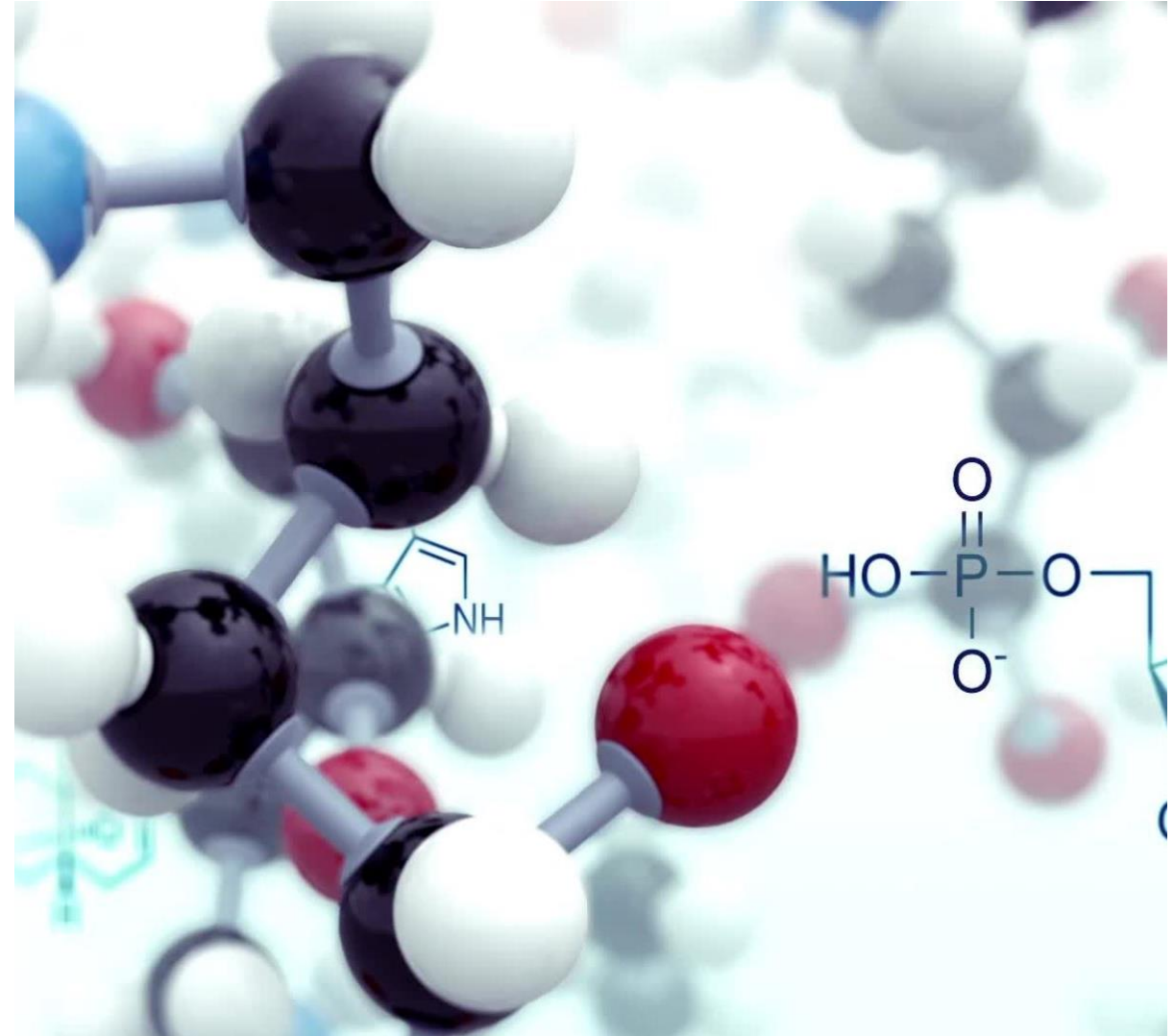
How to fund a PhD?

Dr. Miriam Egloff, 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}

Making your PhD a success!

Dr. Milena Guthörl

Graduate School Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences



Deciding Whether to Pursue a PhD

Reflect, Connect, Inform Yourself, Plan Ahead

Why do I want to do a PhD?

What are my expectations?



What is my current family/relationship situation?

Do I need a PhD to follow my career aspirations?

How will I finance my PhD?

What skills do I have or need to improve?

Reasons that *don't really speak for* doing a PhD



•**Opportunity:** *“A professor offered me a position.”*

→ A tempting offer alone isn't enough — make sure the topic and supervision fit your interests and goals.

•**Expectations:** *“My parents or peers expect it.”*

→ External pressure rarely sustains long-term motivation.

•**Uncertainty:** *“I don't have another plan right now.”*

→ A PhD shouldn't be a default option — it's a major, multi-year commitment.

•**Insecurity:** *“I'm not ready to enter the job market yet.”*

→ Doing a PhD out of fear of the next step can lead to frustration later on.

•**Prestige:** *“A PhD will make me look accomplished.”*

→ Reputation alone isn't enough reason — genuine curiosity and engagement matter most.

Reasons that don't speak against doing a PhD



- **Funding:** You haven't secured funding *yet* — options and grants can often be found later.
- **Topic:** You don't have a perfectly defined research question *yet* — it can evolve during your studies.
- **Confidence:** You feel unsure about your abilities — many successful researchers start that way.
- **Experience:** You haven't done much research before — a PhD is where you *learn* to do research.
- **Timing:** You're not sure it's the “perfect moment” — it rarely ever feels that way.

Good reasons to pursue a PhD



- **Career:** You aim for an academic or research career.
- **Qualification:** A PhD is required or advantageous in your field.
- **Expertise:** You want to deepen your knowledge in a specific area.
- **Curiosity:** You have a research question you're genuinely eager to explore.
- **Growth:** You enjoy research, critical thinking, and long-term challenges.
- **Impact:** You want to contribute to knowledge or address relevant problems.
- **Community:** You wish to be part of an international research environment.

What does a successful PhD look like?

Completion:

The dissertation is completed within a reasonable timeframe and demonstrates original scientific contribution.

Recognition:

Your research — and you as a researcher — are known and respected within your academic community.

Growth:

You have developed professional and personal skills that open up diverse and meaningful career opportunities.



"Dieses Foto" von Unbekannter Autor ist lizenziert gemäß [CC BY](#)

Good planning (early on) is key



- **Think like a project manager:** Your dissertation *is* your project – plan, track, and adapt.
- **Know the rules:** Learn about UZH guidelines, directives, and procedures.
- **Write early:** Start writing sooner than you think – it clarifies your ideas.
- **Seek feedback:** Regularly discuss your progress with your supervisor and peers. ***Be open for critical feedback.***
- **Keep learning:** Take courses and join activities that broaden your expertise.
- **Act responsibly:** Familiarize yourself with the principles of good scientific practice.
- **Build your network:** Connect with peers and researchers early on.
- **Engage academically:** Attend conferences and present your work.
- **Get involved:** Join university committees or associations (e.g., VAUZ).

Finding a suitable PhD supervisor



- **•Qualification:** Can Prof. X supervise me competently – both scientifically and in terms of time commitment?
- **•Position:** What is Prof. X's position within the university? (e.g. *Full Professor [Ordinarius/Ordinaria]*, *Titularprofessor without own funding*, or *SNSF Professor with funding but a limited-term contract*)
- **•Experience:** Is Prof. X established enough to guide my doctorate with expertise and critical feedback?
- **•Research environment:** Does Prof. X's group offer space for open, creative, and critical dialogue about my ideas, methods, and challenges?
- **•Networking:** Is Prof. X well connected in the academic community – and able to help me build my own network?

Common pitfalls during a PhD



- **Communication gaps and unclear expectations:** Irregular meetings or unclear expectations with supervisors.
- **Difficulty accepting and integrating feedback**
- **Lack of structure:** No clear plan, milestones, or timeline.
- **Isolation:** Working alone without exchange or feedback.
- **Perfectionism:** Spending too long polishing instead of progressing.
- **Procrastination:** Waiting for the “right moment” to write or present.
- **Neglecting well-being:** Ignoring stress, work–life balance, or mental health.
- **Ignoring rules:** Unawareness of university regulations or good scientific practice.
- **Late reaction:** Not addressing conflicts or problems early enough.

Formal and organizational essentials

- **Matriculation:** Enrol in the PhD program.
- **Supervision:** Sign the Doctoral Supervision Agreement.
- **PhD commission:** Define your PhD committee early on.
- **Meetings:** Set up regular meetings with your supervisors.
- **Coursework:** Take both subject-specific and transferable skills courses.
- **Be proactive:** Act immediately if any problems arise!



You are not alone during your doctorate! Support and resources at UZH



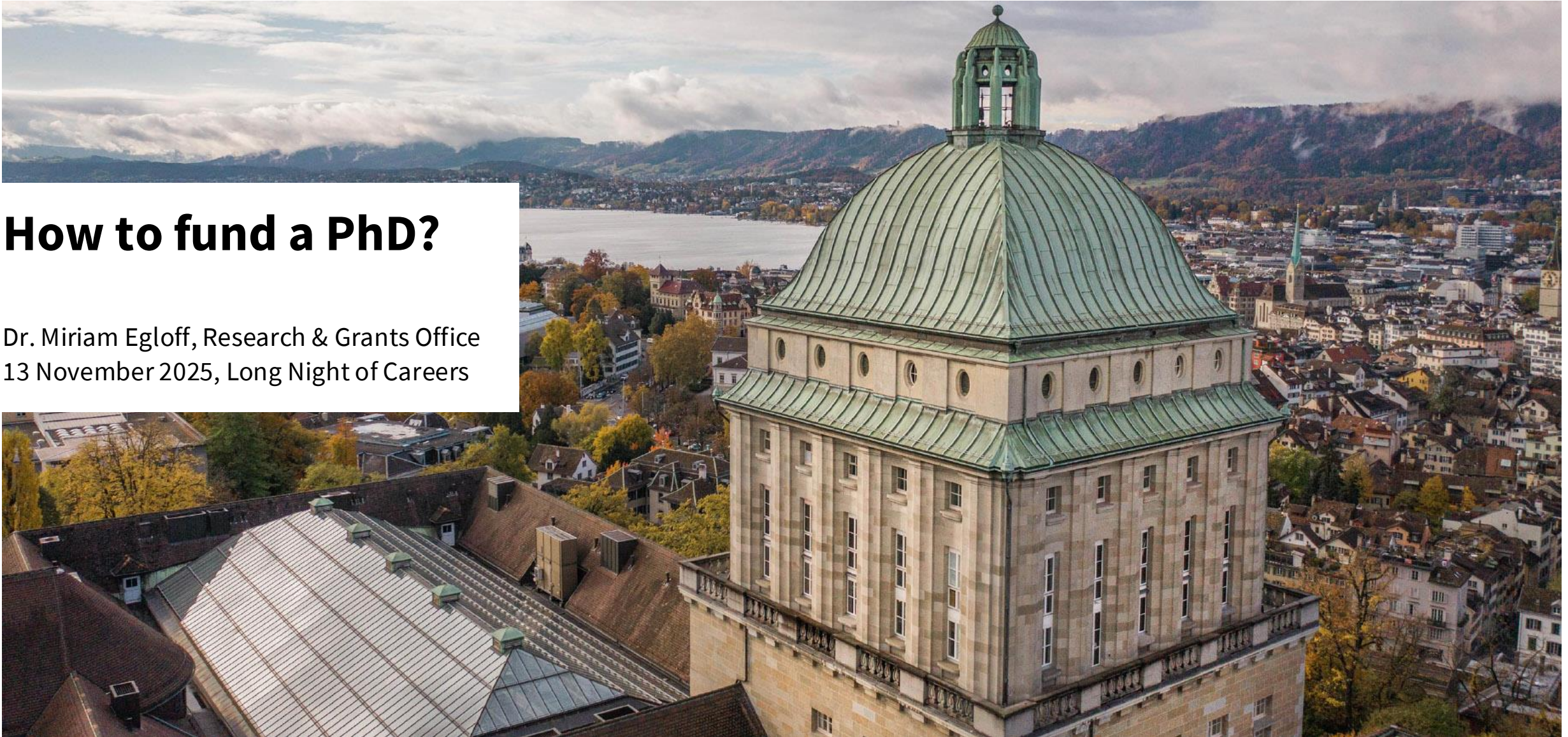
- **Graduate Campus (GRC):** Support, funding, coaching, courses, information, and networking at the *university level*
- **Doctoral programs / Graduate schools:** Structure, training, and networking at the *faculty level*
- **Research Development:** Guidance on research funding and grant applications
- **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 in case of personal or professional problems



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How to fund a PhD?

Dr. Miriam Egloff, Research & Grants Office
13 November 2025, Long Night of Careers



Funding Pathways



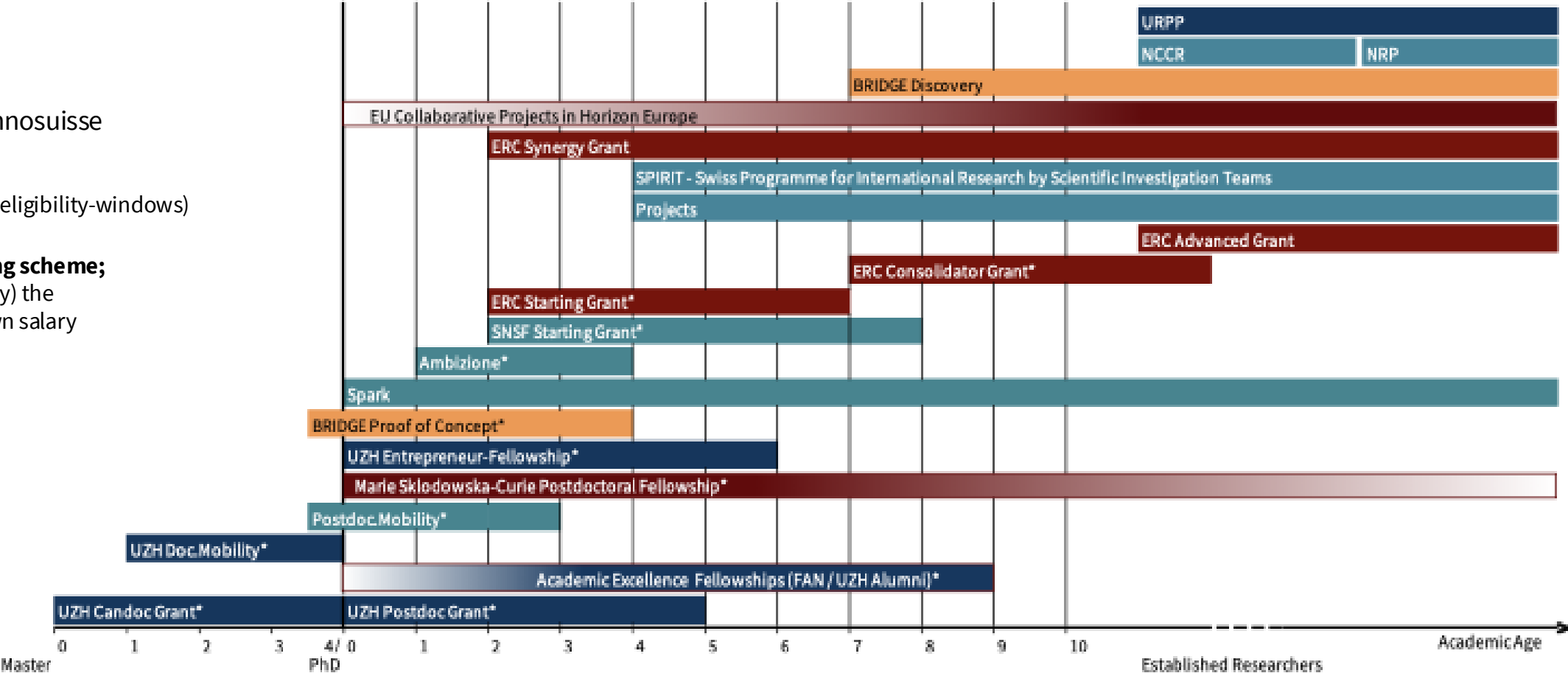
Download PDF (with links)
at www.research.uzh.ch
> Research Funding



- SNSF
- EU
- SNSF/Innosuisse
- UZH

(Bars represent eligibility-windows)

*** Career funding scheme;**
includes (partly) the
applicant's own salary



Looking for Funding: Overview

➤ **Employment:**

Qualification positions or part time work

➤ **Fellowships and Grants:**

Self-raised third-party funds



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))

- at least 80% of the employment time for own research (PhD thesis)
 - a maximum of 20% of the employment time for teaching tasks or other activities in connection with teaching
 - salary (in accordance with SNSF rates):
 - 1st year: CHF 49'855
 - 2nd year: CHF 51'445
 - 3rd/4th year: CHF 53'034
 - Usually limited to 4 years

- **a teaching / research assistant** (at a chair / in a lab / research group)

- at least 40% of the employment time for own research
 - a maximum of 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:

<https://www.uzh.ch/en/explore/work/jobs.html>

Doctoral Candidate 80 - 100 %

Start of employment 01.06.2025, temporary

The EcoVisionLab in the Department of Mathematical Modeling and Machine Learning (DM3L) at University of Zurich is seeking applications for a Doctoral Candidate in computer vision and machine learning for multimodal analysis of green spaces and nature to assess environmental and societal well-being in densely populated areas.

We offer an exciting and stimulating environment to study and work in. The University of Zurich has several internationally recognized research groups dedicated to data science, machine learning and remote sensing. We also collaborate with several other institutions and companies in the fields of computer vision, machine learning and earth observation, in Switzerland and abroad. The EcoVision Lab is member of the UZH Digital Society Initiative, the ETH AI Center, the new UN-ETH partnership, and the ETH for Development Center (ETH4D).

Your responsibilities

The successful candidate will work on a project in the EcoVision Lab in cooperation with a large project consortium to build a Public Data Lab for measuring societal wellbeing under changing circumstances together with more partners from the University of Zurich, the Statistical Office of the Canton of Zurich, and the Zurich University of the Arts. Emphasis for the doctoral project is on developing deep learning and computer vision methods to jointly analyse street-view and depth imagery, aerial and terrestrial laser scans, satellite imagery etc. in combination with auxiliary map layers provided by the project partners, cantonal and federal Swiss agencies to come up with dense, high-resolution, spatially explicit indicators of green spaces with emphasis on societal and environmental well-being. Potential indicator domains include biomass, vegetation density, plant species, plant health etc. while project leaves ample room to explore various exciting technical avenues like uncertainty quantification, interpretability, and explainability in deep neural networks, attention-based approaches, text-to-image/point cloud translation, or diffusion models, for example.

Your profile

- We are looking for candidates with an interest in performing innovative research, strong motivation, and an interest in software development. An ideal candidate will have: an excellent degree (M.Sc. or equivalent) in Computer Science, Machine Learning, or a related field (e.g. Electrical Engineering, Applied Mathematics)
- strong mathematical understanding
- experience in programming, preferably in Python, and engineering
- prior experience in machine learning, computer vision and remote sensing

Furthermore, the candidate should be fluent in English, both written and spoken.

Two PhD Assistantships in American Literature and Culture 60 %

Start of employment is 1 February 2025, temporary

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/>

Financing your doctorate through self-raised third-party funds:

Fellowships&Grants

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

Projectfunding:

- **UZH Candoc Grant:** 12 months own salary (rsp. 24 for PhD's 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)

Further / Other funding opportunities

- ❖ **Overview on "UZH for Researchers" website:**
<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)
- ❖ **Foundations directories** – e.g.
<https://www.research.uzh.ch/static/fnf/stiftungen/>
<https://www.fundraiso.ch>
<https://stiftungschweiz.ch>
- ❖ **Funding abroad**



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Career Services

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

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

13. November 2025



A background image featuring laboratory glassware. In the foreground, there is a clear plastic multi-well plate containing several wells of blue liquid. To the right, a glass beaker contains a vibrant pink liquid. In the background, a tall, narrow glass tube holds an orange liquid. The lighting is bright, creating soft bokeh effects and highlighting the transparency of the glass and plastic.

In the next 15 minutes I want to tell you about

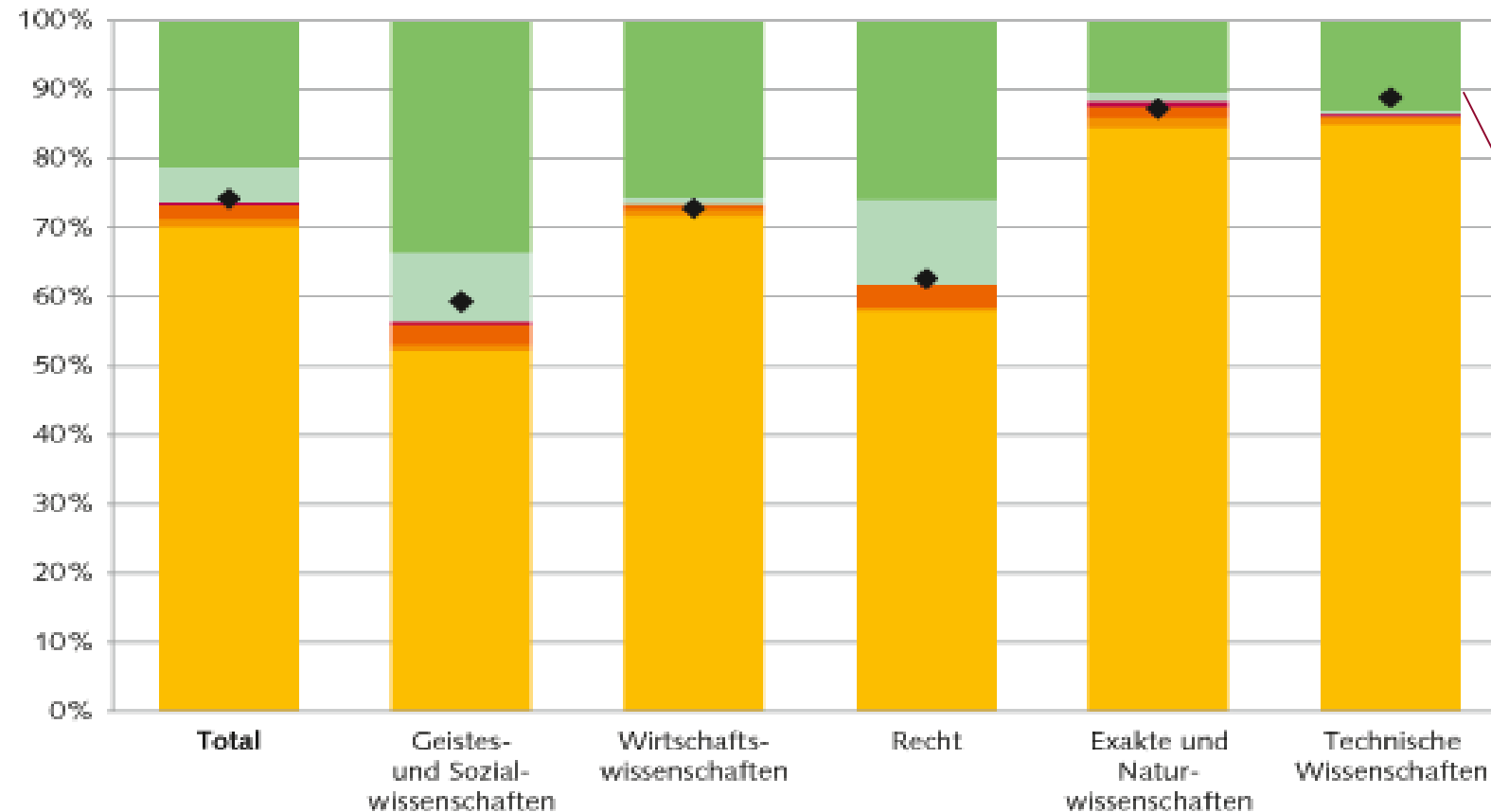
- **Where a PhD can take you**
- **The challenges after the PhD on the way to the job market**
- **The advantages of a PhD for the job market**
- **My conclusion for your PhD**

Where a PhD can take you

1

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

A PhD not always leads to a graduation



No graduation

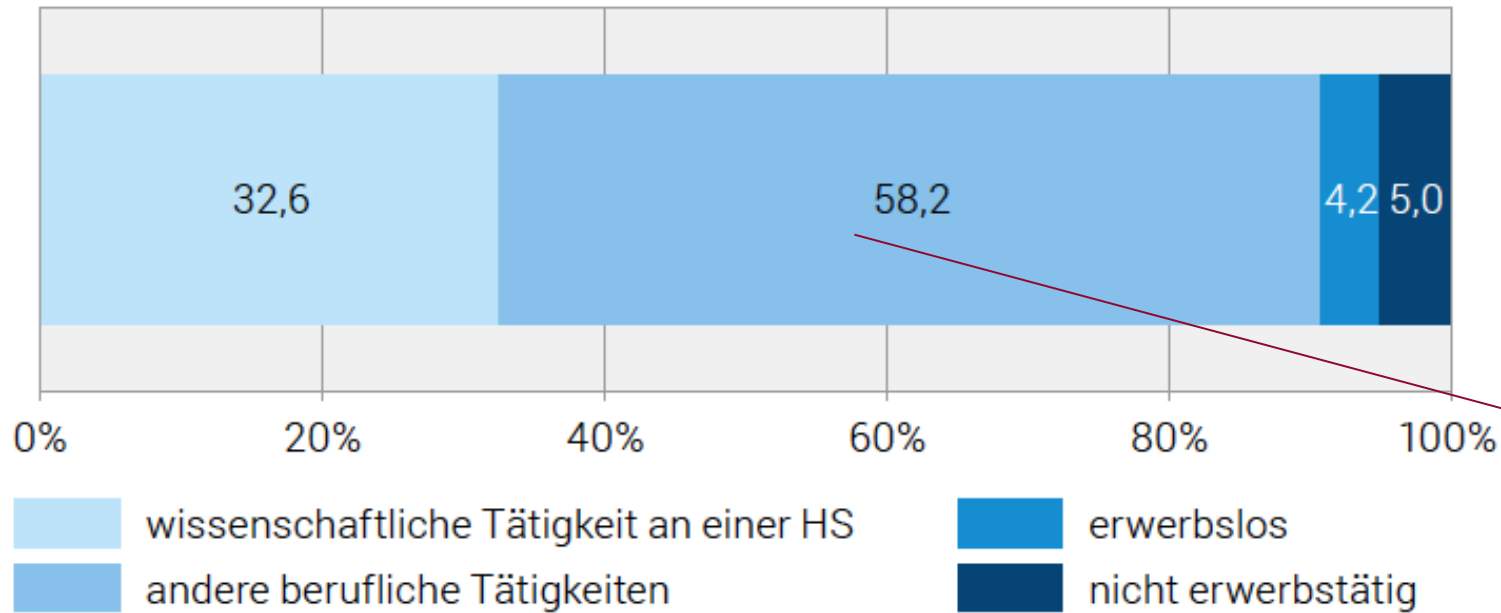
- Mit einem Doktorsabschluss der gleichen Hochschule und in der gleichen Fachbereichsgruppe
- Mit einem Doktorsabschluss der gleichen Hochschule aber in einer anderen Fachbereichsgruppe
- Mit einem Doktorsabschluss einer anderen UH aber in der gleichen Fachbereichsgruppe
- Mit einem Doktorsabschluss einer anderen UH und in einer anderen Fachbereichsgruppe
- Verbleibensquote (an einer UH immatrikuliert)
- Abbruchquote
- ◆ Kohorte 2000: mit einem Doktorsabschluss einer Hochschulen zwölf Jahre nach Studienbeginn

A PhD does not always lead to employment in science

Karriereorientierung der Doktorierten

Stand ein Jahr nach Doktoratsabschluss, Abschlussjahr 2012

G2.2.1



Other professional activities

Quelle: BFS – Befragung der Hochschulabsolvent/innen

© BFS 2018

Advantages of a PhD



With a PhD, you get....

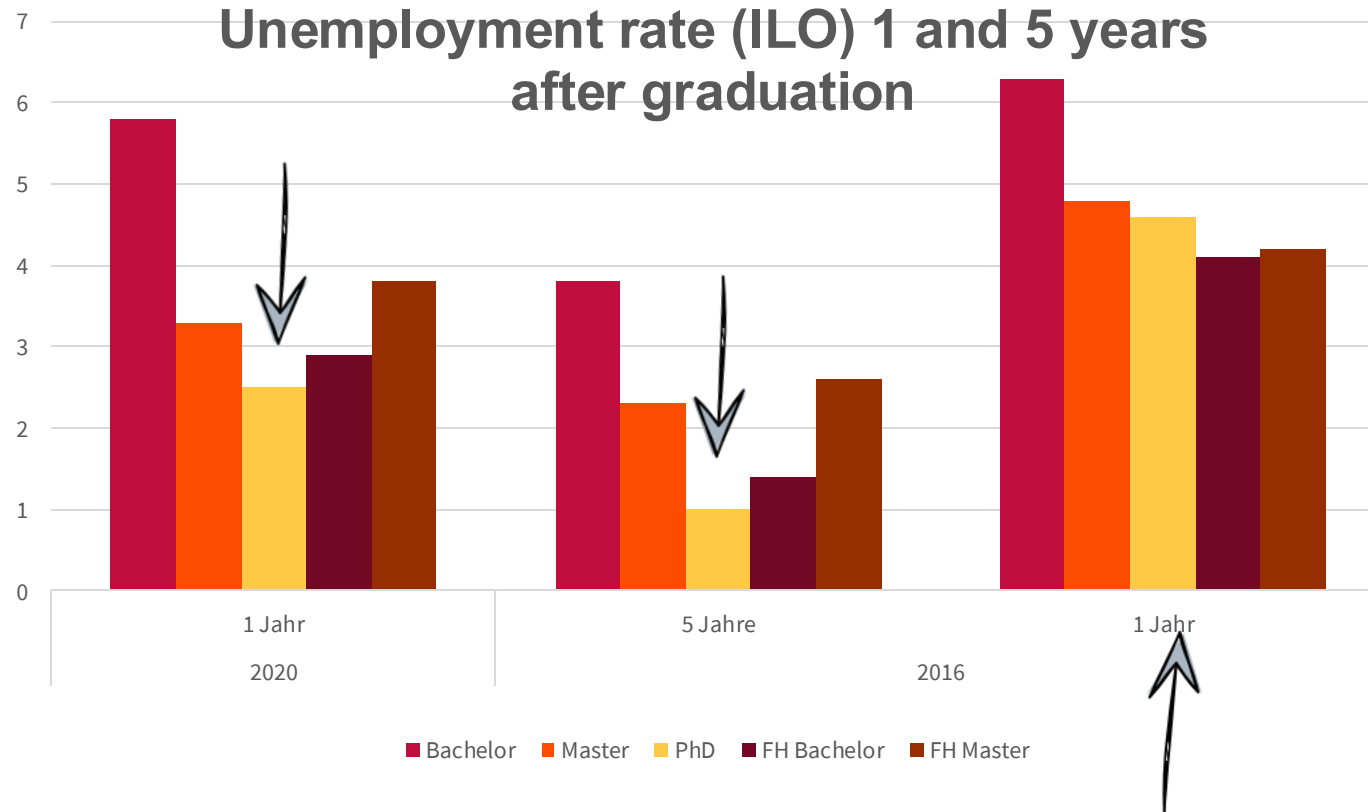
- ✓ Systematic understanding of a study field
- ✓ Proficiency in the skills and methods associated with this field
- ✓ Conception, design and implementation of a substantial research process with scientific integrity
- ✓ Ability to critically analyze, evaluate and synthesize new and complex ideas
- ✓ 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.

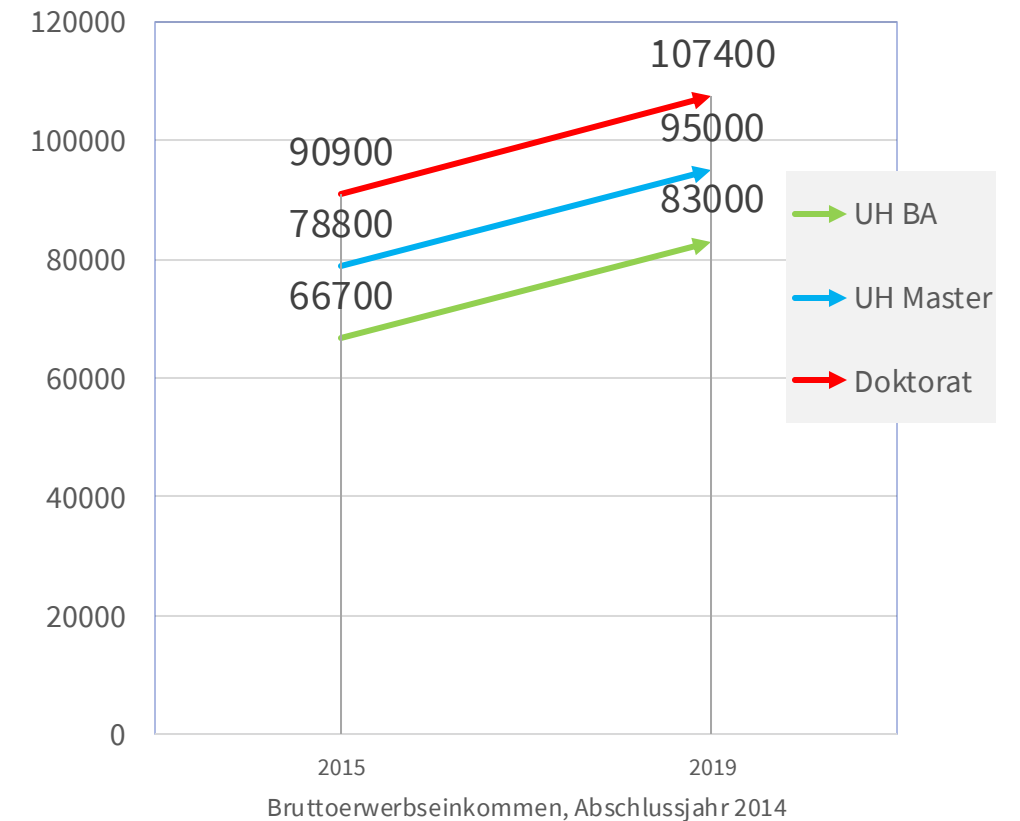
Vgl. Qualifications Framework for the Higher Education Area, nqf.ch-HS, S. 13

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

Lowest unemployment rate and highest gross income among college graduates



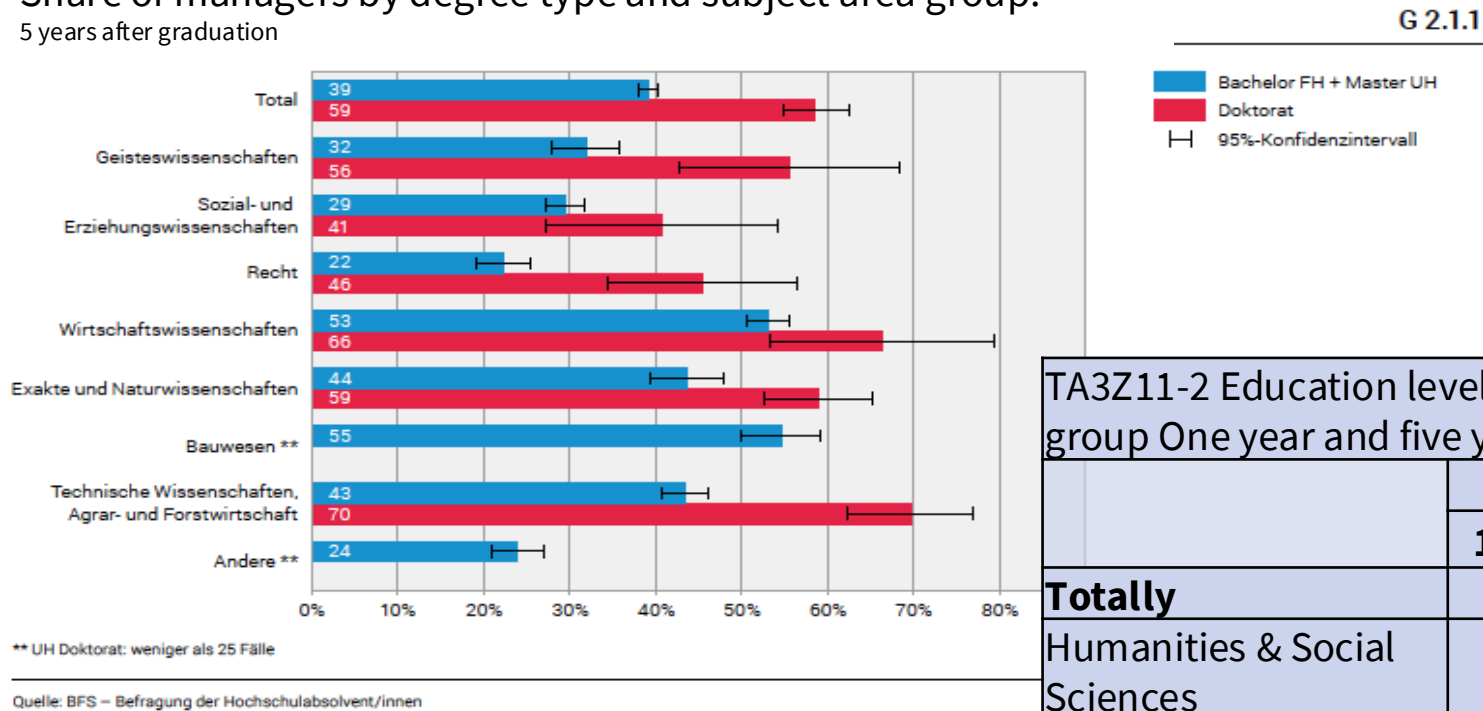
Swiss Federal Statistic Office, Hochschulabsolventinnen und Hochschulabsolventen auf dem Arbeitsmarkt, Neuchâtel, 2021, Excel-Files



Standardisiertes Bruttoerwerbseinkommen der UH-Absolvent/innen nach Examensstufe, Abschlussjahr 2014 (BFS, 2020)

A PhD is a grade with high employability

Share of managers by degree type and subject area group.
5 years after graduation



BFS, Befragung der Hochschulabsolvent/innen, 2022, numbers in %
In green: The class of 2022 has higher scores
In red: The class of 2022 has lower scores
Black: not much changed between the years

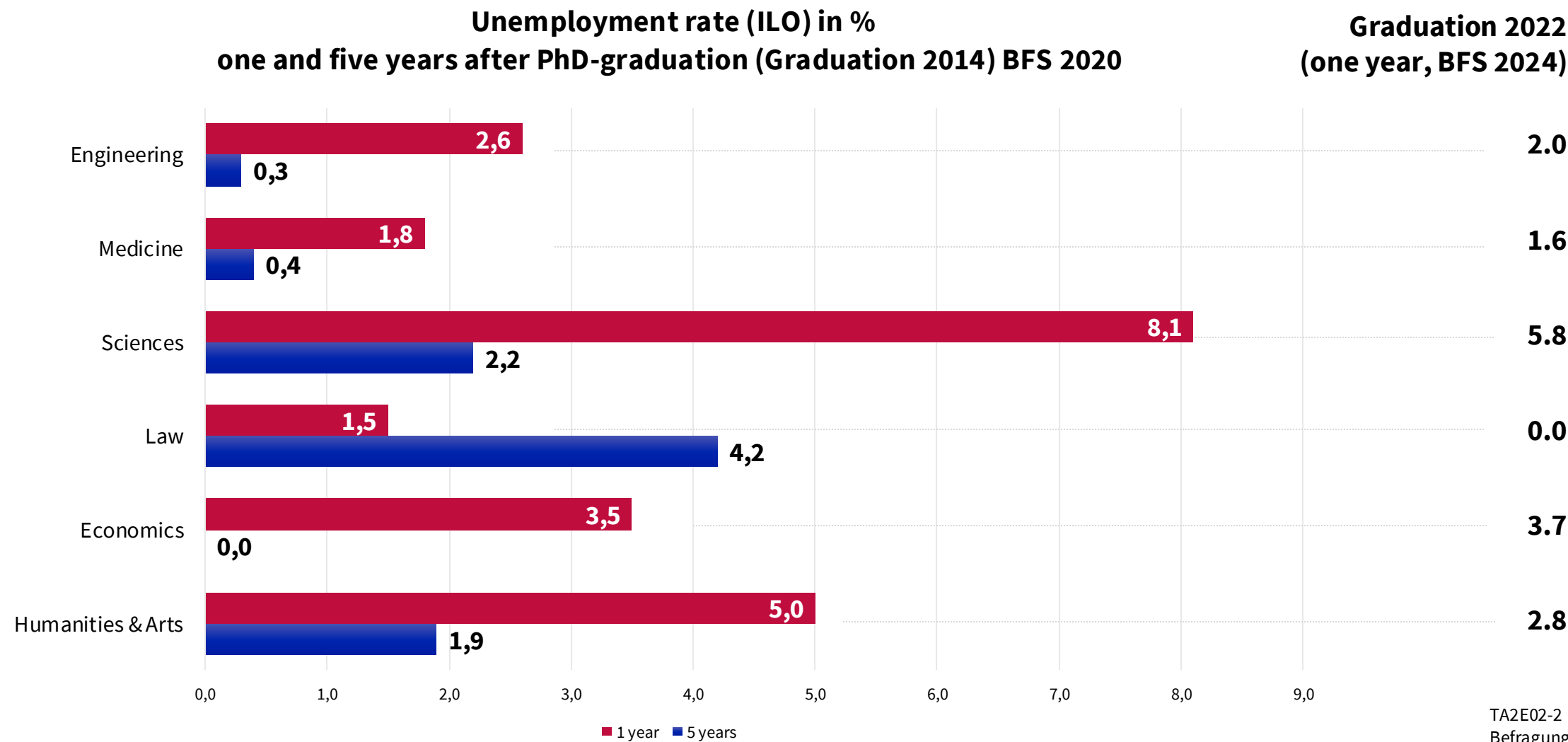
TA3Z11-2 Education level adequacy of UH graduates by exam level and faculty group One year and five years after graduation, graduation year 2014

	Bachelor		Master		PhD	
	1 year	5 years	1 year	5 years	1 year	5 years
Totally	51.0	61.0	86.1	86.6	89.9	92.1
Humanities & Social Sciences	47.5	56.8	79.3	81.9	85.8	92.6
Economy	62.5	68.2	86.4	84.7	87.7	97.5
Law	53.3	51.0	92.9	91.7	89.6	98.4
Sciences	37.5	52.5	84.5	84.9	91.4	91.2
Medicine & Pharmacy	**	**	96.9	97.6	92.6	97.6
Engineering	62.1	81.6	88.3	87.7	90.9	84.8
Interdisciplinary & others	43.0	60.5	78.6	84.5	**	**

What are the challenges?

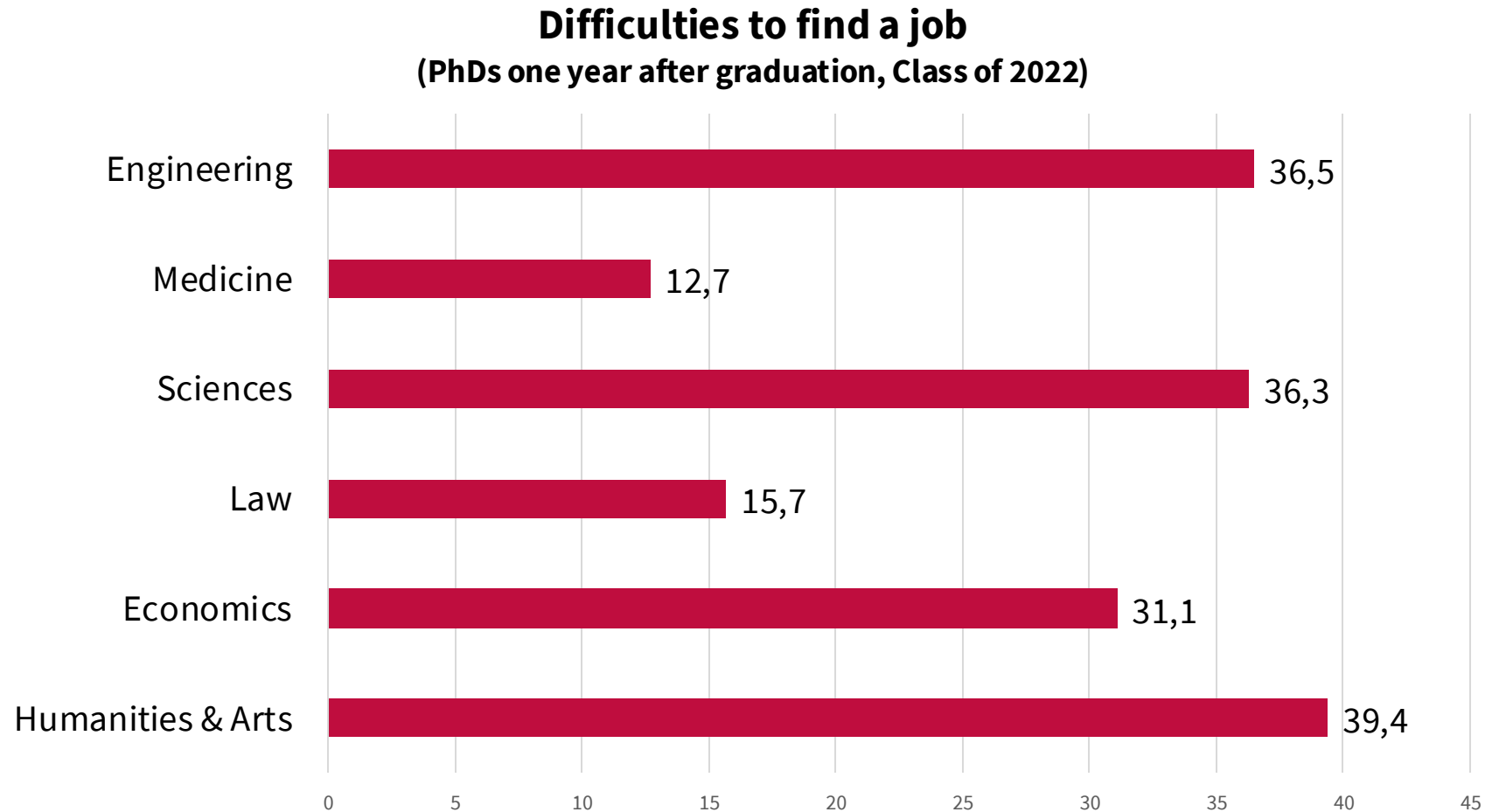
3

Although the PhD is a grade with high employability (across all disciplines)..



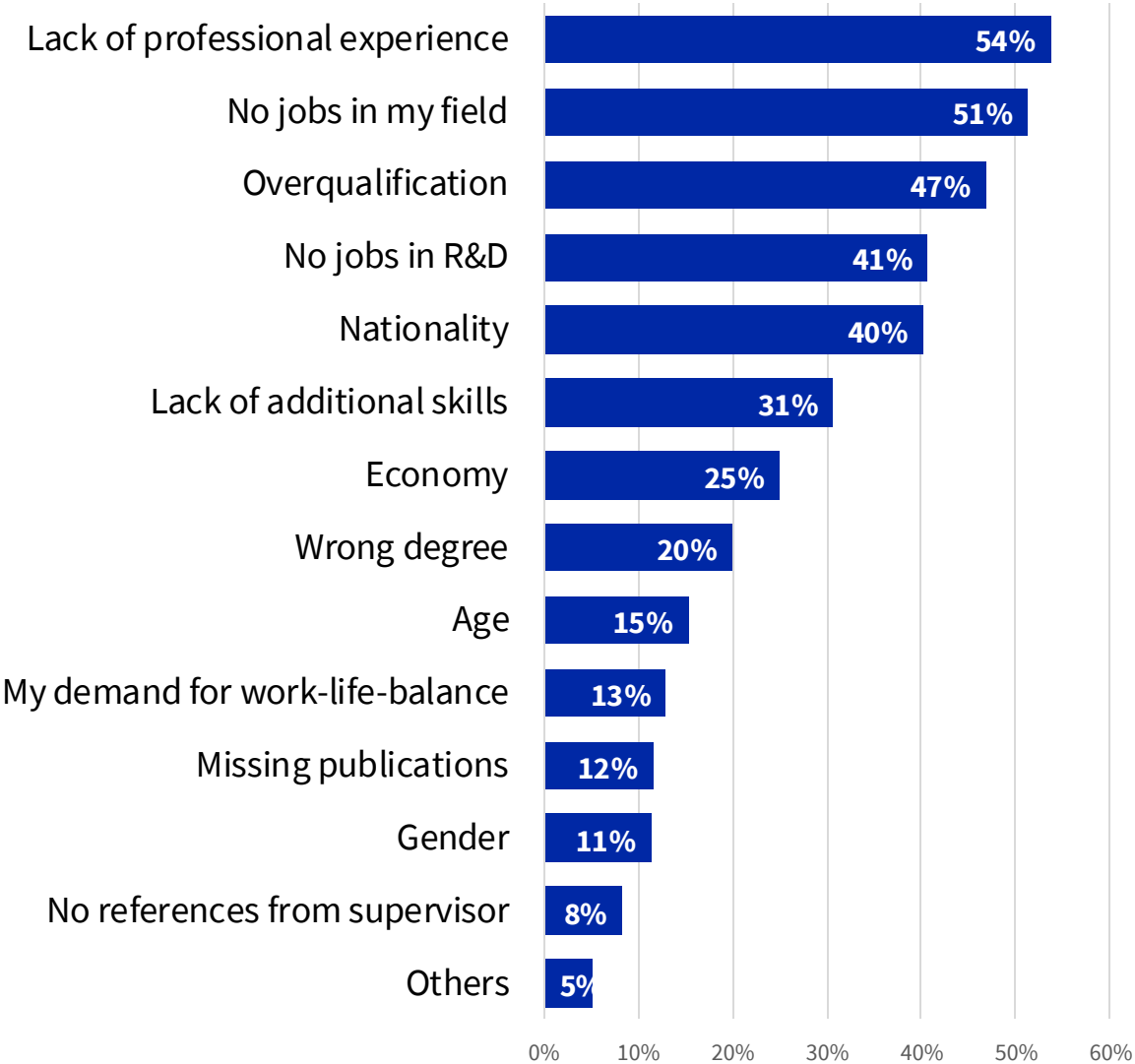
TA2E02-2 © BFS,
Befragung der
Hochschulabsolvent/-
innen (EHA) Swiss Federal
Statistic Office, 29.08.2024

... PhDs are facing challenges during the transition ...



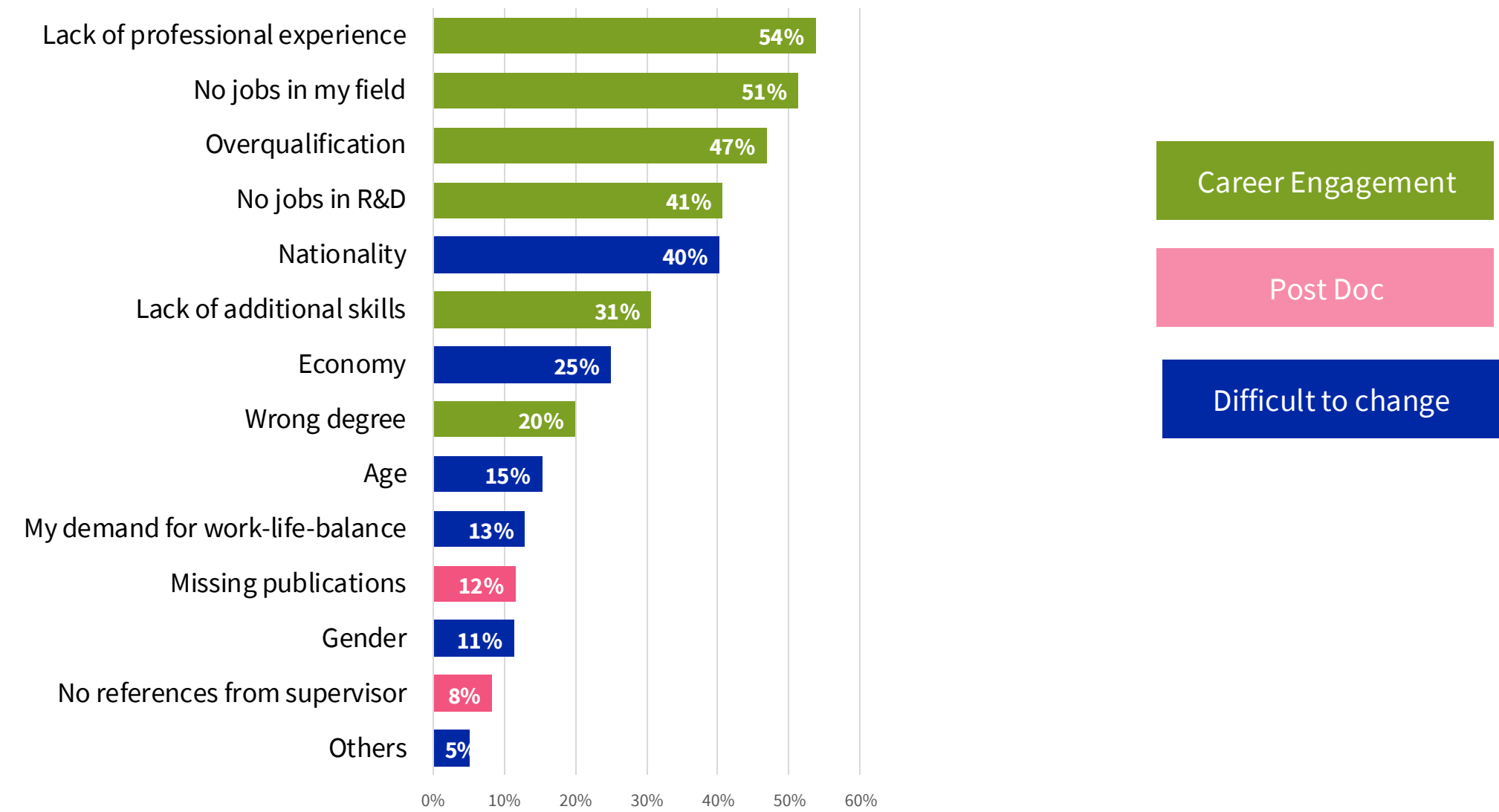
TA2E11-2 © BFS, Befragung der Hochschulabsolvent/-innen (EHA) Swiss Federal Statistic Office, 29.08.2024

... because of different reasons (BFS 2018, Class of 2016)



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

Most challenges can be solved with career engagement!



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

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

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.**

My conclusion

A PhD is of high value on the labour market. There are challenges in the transition, but you can prepare for or even avoid them. Make use of the ecosystem at the UZH and around, that supports you.

- Do your PhD with joy and pride → You
- Develop a university-related network → Graduate Campus
- Develop your non-university network → Alumni, Career Services
- Develop important competencies for the job market → Graduate Campus, Center for University Teaching and Learning, Business Tools
- Develop communication skills → Language Center (**german!**), IT Services, Career Services (Self Branding)
- Think about to use your research results for a Startup/Spin Up → Innovation@UZH
- Start your transition planning in time (12 months before defense) → Career Services
- If you are from outside EU/EFTA („Third Country“) → Learn about the rules for work permits in CH!

Control your career development by yourself, do it explicitly and don't wait after the doctoral ceremony.

Have fun and enjoy the time of your PhD – it will be an extraordinary time!