Empowering Doctoral Candidates Through Personal and Professional Development Planning
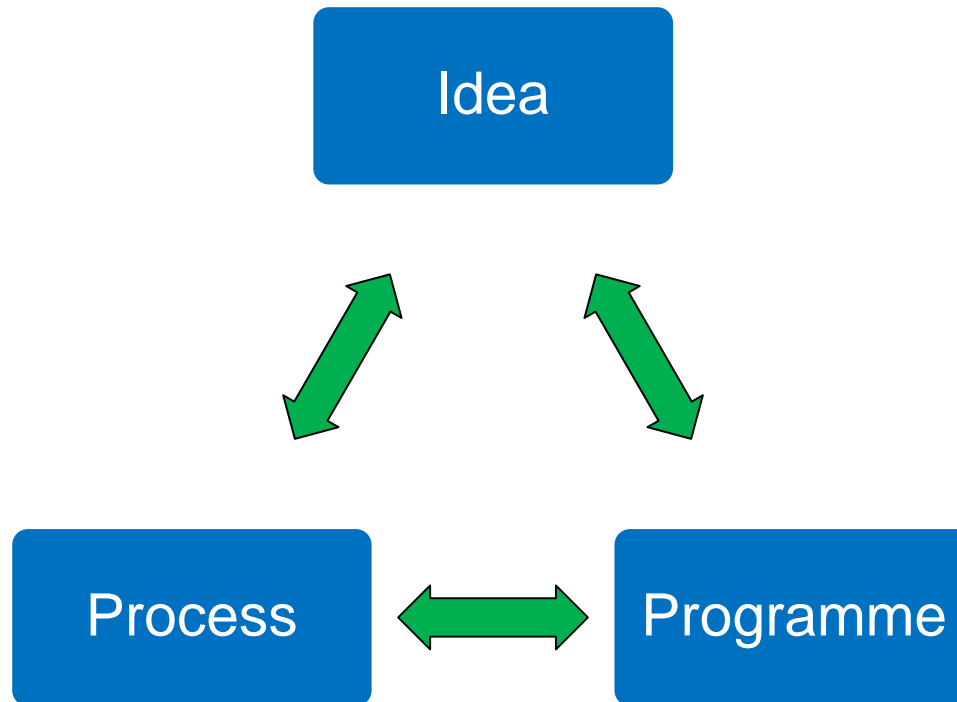
Workshop II, 24 – 26 February 2014

Proposal Writing

How to approach it and apply for funding!

How to prepare for an application

Preparations – Basic Tips

Idea

- What is your research question? And why is it relevant?
- Why bother with this project? What will be different when your are done?
- What is new/special in your project?
- Which methodology will you use?
- Do you use novel methods and techniques? Explain them
- Do you have enough skills and knowledge?
- Why are YOU able to carry out this research?
- Which resources do you need?

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Preparations - Basic Tips

Process

- Timeframe: Can you meet the deadline?
- How do you have to hand in the application?
- Are the formalities/forms clear to you?
- Do you know the formal regulations (front size, number of pages, layout, …)?
- Do you have all necessary signatures?
- Who could support you in the application process?

Preparations – Basic Tips

Programme

- Does the funding scheme fit your project?
- What are the funding institution's intentions/goals?
- Which costs will be covered by the programme?
- Are you familiar with the time and budget frame?
- Do you know of other projects, funded by the same programme?
- Do you know successful applicants?
- Do you know the evaluation criteria?

Preparation – Basic Tips

General Recommendations for Proposal Writing

- Read the guidelines
- Write clearly and concisely
- Stick to formatting rules (page limits, etc.)
- Discuss your proposal with colleagues
- Don't forget the „big picture"
- Take time to prepare
- Put yourself in the shoes of the evaluators
- Make sure the final version is submitted!

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Read the Guidelines for Applicants

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Empowering Doctoral Candidates Through Personal and Professional Development Planning

General structure of a proposal

- Title and Abstract
- Project description   Why
  - Background
  - Goals   What
  - Methods
  - Time- and Workplan   How
  - Dissemination
- Collaborating individuals, Institutions
  - Project team   Who
  - Cooperating partners
- Financial Aspects
  - Budget   Needs

Peer review

"What do they mean, it's 'too ambitious'? How do they think I am going solve the Big Problem if I'm not ambitious? Who are these idiots? They aren't qualified to review my work! None of the experiments they say we need to do will tell us anything! They are just giving us busy work!"

- **Applying for funding is a fundamental part of any scientific career!**
- **Don't be scared of failing and keep reapplying!**
- **You fail only if you stop applying.**

What do reviewers look for – General recommendations

- Clear description of research questions, methods

- Realistic/feasible timetable

- What is special about your project, what makes your proposal innovative, relevant for the discipline

- To what extent does your project enhance the knowledge in your field

- ……

Coffee break

Empowering Doctoral Candidates Through Personal
and Professional Development Planning

Project idea: Summer/Winter School for Doctoral Candidates

- Topic: **Preparing (y)our Career – Summer School for Doctoral Candidates**
- Funding Agency: "*Aktion Österreich - Slowakei*"
- Submission Deadlines: March 15, May 15, October 15
- It will be YOUR project – we offer support

Writing the Proposal:
„Preparing (y)our career" –
Summer school for Doctoral Candidates

1. Section: Background & Goals

2. Section: Methods & Workplan

3. Time - and Budget Plan

General structure of a proposal

- Title and Abstract
- Project description   Why
  - Background
  - Goals   What
  - Methods
  - Time- and Workplan   How
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- Collaborating individuals, Institutions
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Background/State of the art

The background chapter allows you positioning your research within the current debate. In this chapter/section you discuss

- the current status of research
- theories related to your research question
- why bother with this project? What will be different?
- how you will contribute to literature
- and how you bridge a reserach gap

Project Goals and Objectives

"Unless the major and minor steps in the project are planned, there is no project — but only a vague idea."

Goals

- justify your project plans & activities,
- are the core of the review process. Thus, reviewers are most interested in this part of your proposal,
- should be related to the funding programme,
- should be devided into research goals and measurable objectives

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Task 1: Define the goals and objectives for your project

- Possible goals and objectives?

Do it in four steps:

1. Brainstorm → bullet points
2. Prioritize
3. Circulate

4. Formulate a **PARAGRAPH**

Dinner

Writing the Proposal
„Preparing (y)our career" –
Summer school for Doctoral Candidates

1. Section: Background & Goals

2. Section: Methods & Workplan

3. Time - and Budget Plan

Methods and Workplan

Funding institutions as well as reviewers want to know how you carry out your reserach. In this section you should

- describe techniques, methods, and approaches as concise as possible
- link your methods with your goals and workplan
- methods can also be used to highlight cooperations

Time and Workplan

Both, funding institutions as well as reviewers want to know how you plan your research activities. The time and workplan should be
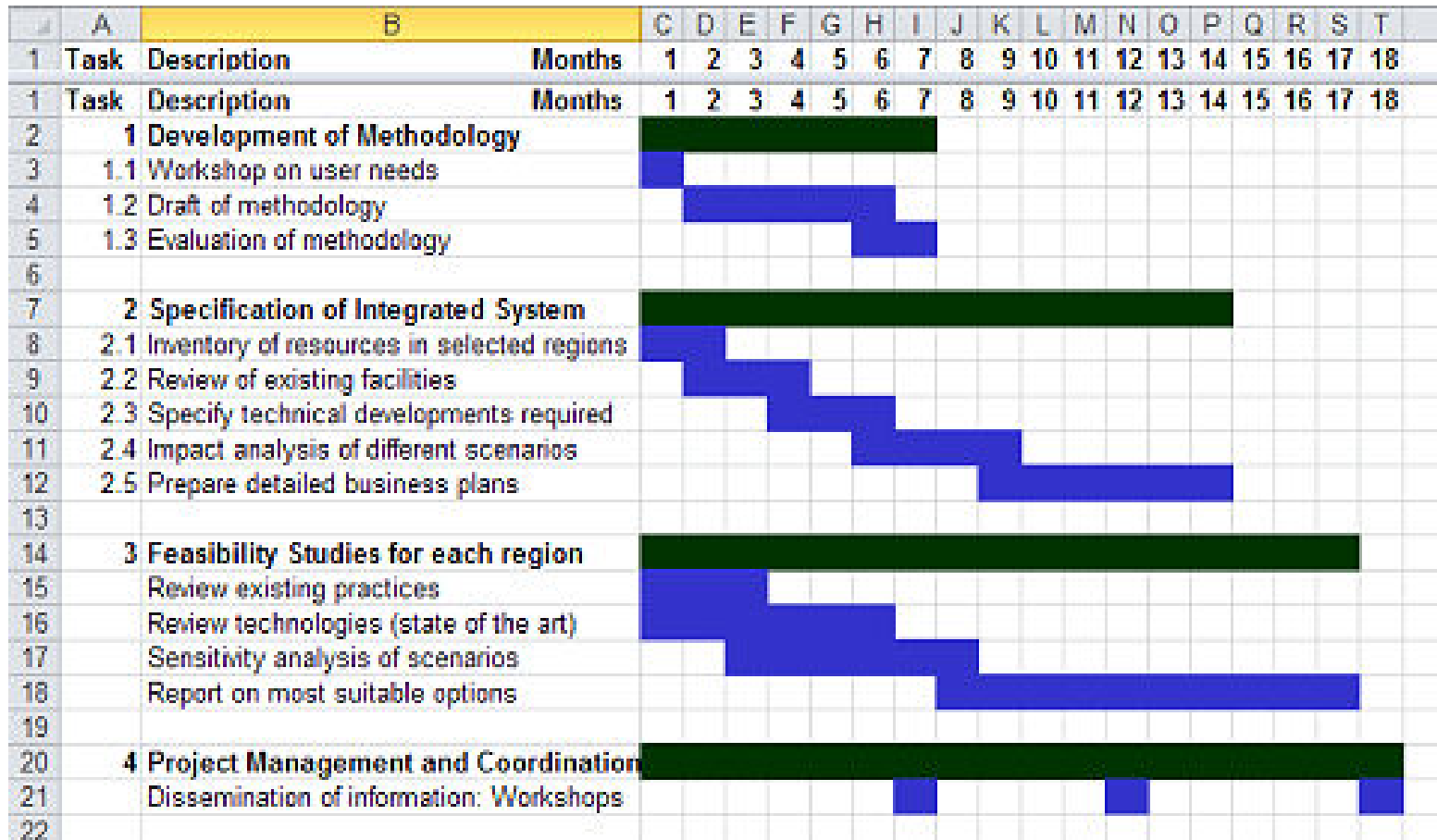
- realistic but not too detailed
- linked to objectives
- linked to methods.

Don't forget ongoing activities like project management and dissemination.

Make sure your milestones and deliverables are clear.

Graphs, like the Gantt Diagram can be useful.

Works and Time plan: Gantt Diagram

		Months	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T
Task	Description	Months	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
1	Development of Methodology																			
1.1	Workshop on user needs																			
1.2	Draft of methodology																			
1.3	Evaluation of methodology																			
2	Specification of Integrated System																			
2.1	Inventory of resources in selected regions																			
2.2	Review of existing facilities																			
2.3	Specify technical developments required																			
2.4	Impact analysis of different scenarios																			
2.5	Prepare detailed business plans																			
3	Feasibility Studies for each region																			
	Review existing practices																			
	Review technologies (state of the art)																			
	Sensitivity analysis of scenarios																			
	Report on most suitable options																			
4	Project Management and Coordination																			
	Dissemination of information: Workshops																			

Dissemination

Funding institutions want to know, how you will communicate the results of your project. Thus, your proposal should include a section about dissemination strategies and which activities you plan in this direction.

- Papers, Monographs,
- Conference presentations and **Workshops**
- **Websites**
- **Communication to the public**
- Open Access Policy

Dissemination: Example

We will provide a website to promote PDP practices so that other institutions, programmes or individuals can benefit from our experience and findings. Furthermore, in the scope of the international annual conference of the Center for Doctoral Studies, a preconference event is envisaged to promote PDP for doctoral candidates. Additional avenues of dissemination of project results and activities are publications and presentations at international conferences and meetings through for example the European University Association Council for Doctoral Education (EUA CDE) or the Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe. (UNICA)

Task 2: Define the methods and the workplan for your project

- How do you want to achieve your goals?

Do it in six steps:

1. Clarify your methods
2. Link it to your goals and objectives (is something missing)
3. Define the workpackages
    1. Brainstorming → bullet points
    2. Circulate
4. Link the WPs to the methods and goals
5. Formulate a **PARAGRAPH** for **methods**
6. List and describe your **workpackages**

Lunch break

Writing the Proposal
„Preparing (y)our career" –
Summer school for Doctoral Candidates

1. Section: Background & Goals

2. Section: Methods & Workplan

3. Financial Issues & Budget Plan

Financial Issues

Clarify which costs will be covered.

Clarify the administrative issues and the finanical rules of your host institution.

Usual categories:

- *Personnel*
- *Consumables and equipment*
- ***Travel and subsistence costs***
- ***Subcontracting (trainers)***
- *Indirect costs*

Budget Plan: Example

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Personal Costs				
N.N. (Phd student)*	34.750	35.793	36.866	107.409
Subtotal				107.409
Material Costs	2.000	2.000	2.000	6.000
Laptop	700			700
Dictaphone	100			100
Subtotal				6.800
Travel Costs	2.500	3.200	4.000	9.700
Sum direct costs				**123.909**
Overhead costs (20%)				**24.782**
Total costs				**148.691**

* inkl. Valorisierung von 3%

Task 3: Quantify your costs in relation to the work plan

- How much do you need?
- What is eligible?

Draft a **COST TABLE**

Short coffee break

Abstract

"A good abstract is like a postcard-sized reprint of a famous work of art: It captures and illustrates the entire research picture without leaving the reader puzzled or confused."

Vid Moham-Ram, Science Careers Magazine

Content of the Abstract

- Research question(s)

- Background

- Goals

- Methods

- Contribution to and relevance for the discipline

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Abstract: An Example

Universities use a variety of strategies to encourage PhD candidates to reflect upon and evaluate their own research experiences and plan for their own development. Influenced by the Higher Education System in the UK the term Personal Development Planning (PDP) became popular to describe this process. Several institutions especially in the UK such as QAA have produced guidelines to promote this as a core educational process. […] However, although the value of PDP practices is recognized in higher education, so far these practices received little attention in Central Europe.

The project is a joint venture between Matej Bel University, Comenius University Bratislava, and the University of Vienna, with the aim to contribute to a change of the PhD training perspective towards a primarily human centered individualized outcome of the PhD trajectory.

We want to identify possible means to introduce PDP in our respective universities by starting with a thorough study of best practices and matching these examples with practices which are locally already in place. […] This will be accompanied by a survey to clarify demands from PhD candidates as well as supervisors. Within a pilot exercise with a critical number of volunteering PhD candidates from participating universities we want to introduce and test PDP practices.

Background

Problem

Goal

Methods

Abstract: An Example

Global warming is arguably one of the most pressing concerns of our time. However, we lack an effective model to predict precisely by how much the temperature will rise as a consequence of the increased levels of CO_2 and other factors. The width of this range is due to several uncertainties in different elements of the climate models, including the variability in the Sun's rate of energy output. To gain greater insight into the relationship between solar energy output and global temperature, we propose to launch the internationally led ABC satellite in April 2012. Our aim is to collect for 2 years data on the solar diameter and shape, oscillations, and photospheric temperature variation. We will assess these data to model solar variability. Our findings will dramatically advance our understanding of solar activity and its climate effects.

Background

Problem

Objective

Strategy

Significance

Final check

- ☐ **Are all formal criteria fulfilled?**
- ☐ **Is the layout clear and user/reader friendly?**
- ☐ **Is the setup of the proposal logical and consistent?**
- ☐ **Is the hierarchy of the titles clear?**
- ☐ **Is the proposal crystal clear without "unnecessary noise"?**
- ☐ **Is the proposal understandable for the expected evaluators?**
- ☐ **Are figures and tables understandable?**
- ☐ **Is the proposal read- and understandable on a printed black-and-white-copy?**
- ☐ **Is the language, esp. English for non-native speaker, close to perfect?**

You can get it if you really want

You can get it if you really want

You can get it if you really want

But you must try, try and try

Try and try, you'll succeed at last

Jimmy Cliff

Next steps