



# Innovative Policies for Fostering Academic Careers in Switzerland

## Policy Highlights

### HSG Writing Retreat

#### Motivation

A closer look at the PhD endeavour revealed that this journey may at times be strenuous and a somewhat lonely path. Students tend to underestimate the time required to actually sit down and write and are at times somewhat lost. Writing is a core business in science and also a practice. Yet, students simply feel stuck at times when it comes to structure, content, argumentation, time management, balancing family life and writing time. A kind of writer's block may even pop up and that's when things become a bit bumpy.

When they come to realise, it might be a little late, but far from too late, and writing may become an intense endeavour that can induce both stress and discomfort. This is a spell that can be broken. In recent years HSG has taken measures to support students toward their PhD.

#### Action

Everything started off with an online training called "Online Writing Retreat" when it became clear that a secured time away from everyday life as well as expert support on "how" to write are of great benefit for phd students. The idea of a PhD Writing Retreat came up and was launched for the first time in 2021.

Groups of PhD Students (3-5) were invited to formally apply for funding. Successful applicants were given the opportunity to spend 5-7 days away on a Writing Retreat.

During the retreat the group had to dedicate their time exclusively to writing papers or chapters that are part of their thesis. Selection criteria included, amongst others, the progress of the dissertation, how individuals and the group are expected to benefit from the retreat, the diversity of the group members, the destiny as well as environmental sustainability aspects.

Prior to leaving for the retreat, successful groups are asked to arrange a kick-off meeting with a writing coach to jointly develop a weekly structure and learn about productivity methods. In addition, every group member has the option of booking an individual coaching session during the retreat to overcome possible difficulties (i.e. writing blocks) in one's own writing process. Every PhD student made use of this.

Upon finishing the retreat, groups have to hand in a detailed report about the output achieved as well as activities during the retreat.

Up until now we had a total of 31 groups (121 PhD students) applying and the funding to let 12 Groups (44 Phd Students) go on a writing retreat within the DACHL Region.

Overall, the writing retreat is a great success for all participants, and we are excited to continue to support more HSG PhD students in the years to come.

Quotes from participants:

*"This unique week during our PhD at the University of St. Gallen will remain a special memory for us. We would like to thank you very much for all your valuable support."*

*"We can all say with the utmost satisfaction that we were able to achieve a significant jump in our writing during "Writing Retreat".*

*"Thanks to our favorable and constructive team dynamics, we were not only successful in making great progress in our individual papers, but we also gained long-term motivation for the continuation of our dissertations."*

*"Our joint time away allowed us to make dedicated progress on our individual projects, exchange ideas on each other's work and take a break from the daily tasks at our respective chairs. We are very grateful for having been selected for the grant."*

### **Contact**

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