Welcome

$YourName!

by Doctoral Convent of KIT Department of Informatics
Hello $YourName,

Welcome to the Department of Informatics at KIT!

This is the quickstart document by the doctoral convent, the group of all doctoral researchers (PhD students) in the department of informatics. We want you to feel welcome and at home here, while you work at the your institute.

For an easier start, this document provides tips and check lists. You will find boxes in the margins. These are meant to be checked once completed.

☐ I understood the introduction up to this point.

This document is a work in progress. If you find things that are missing or wrong, please tell us or fix it yourself. Information on contributing is at the end.
1 New KIT employee?

As a new employee at the KIT, you should get a letter from the SCC within a few days. In there you will find instructions and the password to access your SCC account. This gives you access to various services. Most importantly, it includes an @kit.edu e-mail address.

I have received my KIT SCC account for my @kit.edu e-mail account.

If you did not receive the letter, you can visit the SCC help desk yourself in building 20.20. You need your KITCard (see below) to authenticate.

You can get a shorter email address, like surname@kit.edu, at intranet.kit.edu. There is an “E-Mail Alias” option on the left.

You will also want to get your KITCard, which you can use to pay for food at the Mensa, for example. You get this card in the library in building 30.50. When you are there and got your card, it is a good opportunity to unlock the library card functionality. You need to use one of the PCs in the library.

Got my KITCard

You can enable your KITCard to unlock doors. Call the key management \(^1\) of the facility management department at 43006. They need your KITCard number.

\(^1\)www.fm.kit.edu/851.php
As an employee of KIT, you also have to invest into a pension insurance offered by the Versorgungsanstalt des Bundes und der Länder (VBL), a government-founded insurance provider. That requirement remains from the time when all KIT employees were actually employed by the state. By default, you will be enrolled to an insurance called “VBL Klassik”. You can opt for the “VBL Extra” instead, if you are likely to be employed at KIT for less than three years.²

It could be argued that the VBL Extra makes more sense for a doctoral candidate. However, if you plan a career as a public servant in Germany, the VBL Klassik could likely be the way to go. In any case, do not listen to us for financial advice. We give no warranty of any kind. Take this information just as an FYI that you have a choice here.

You have to be enrolled in the Klassik insurance for at least a waiting period of three years before you are eligible for any services, whereas in the Extra you could receive insurance services right from the begin. If you opt for the Extra, you will fall back into the Klassik when you get your contract renewed beyond three years of employment at KIT – that happens automagically right when you renew your contract. If you seek a career in public service in Germany, you could likely carry on a Klassik insurance to other public institutions (e.g., universities). On the other hand, you can continue paying into an Extra insurance once you leave KIT (talk to VBL early, there are deadlines).

I have given the VBL Klassik / Extra choice some thought

² [https://www.vbl.de/de/versicherte/pflichtversicherung/vblklassik/](https://www.vbl.de/de/versicherte/pflichtversicherung/vblklassik/) and [https://www.vbl.de/de/versicherte/freiwillige_versicherung/produktinformationen_vblextra/](https://www.vbl.de/de/versicherte/freiwillige_versicherung/produktinformationen_vblextra/) offer details on the VBL Klassik and Extra, respectively.
Since you are a member of your institute, you have a profile website there. Check whether it is as you want it to be and keep it up to date.

**My profile page is up to date.**

You have access to two computing centers. The Steinbuch Centre for Computing (SCC) is the campus-wide institution in building 20.20. The Abteilung Technische InfraStruktur (ATIS) is specific for the computer science department in building 50.34.

As a computer scientist, you usually write some code and you will want to keep it in some kind of repository. If you like git, the SCC provides a Gitlab instance, which gives you repositories, an issue tracker, wiki, and more at [git.scc.kit.edu](http://git.scc.kit.edu). If you prefer Subversion, the ATIS provides repository hosting.

The Karlsruhe House of Young Scientists (KHYS) provides various training opportunities. As a doctoral researcher you have to register there. In return you can participate in various workshops, for example about writing or presenting.

KHYS also provides a handbook “Doing Your PhD at KIT”\(^3\), which is worth looking into.

**Read “Doing Your PhD at KIT”**

\(^3\)www.khys.kit.edu/english/guide.php
Another useful resource, if you are involved in the teaching of students is the “Dozenten FAQ” of our department⁴.

Read “Dozenten FAQ”

In addition to other duties, you might find students bothering you. What do you do with those? Students are a precious resource, at least the good ones. Consider the bad ones leadership training for you. Students sometimes build useful stuff, so treat them well.

Some institutions of KIT use social media. If you do as well, you might want to follow them. There is an overview at http://www.kit.edu/kit/english/10103.php.

KIT provides business cards ⁵ with its corporate identity style. Printing costs 25€, which your institute should cover, so ask your institute secretary about the process.

We cannot help you with the details at your institute, since this is very specific. Ask your colleagues, they surely are a friendly bunch.

⁴www.informatik.kit.edu/english/7193.php
⁵intranet.kit.edu/visitenkarten.php
2 New as Doctoral Researcher?

What am I supposed to do as a doctoral researcher? The primary function of researchers is to turn coffee into papers.

The Gesellschaft für Informatik is the biggest national community of computer scientists and officially advocates the term “doctoral researcher” instead of “PhD student”, because we are not students anymore.

- Do proper science!

For inspiration, we recommend Richard Hamming’s “You and Your Research”. You can find it online as text or video.
The DFG has published “Rules of Good Scientific Practice”\(^1\), which the KIT adopted\(^2\).

- **Write great papers!**

Writing papers is your main job. There are other worthy goals, which try to distract you: making students happy, making your professor happy, making colleagues happy, or saving the world.

- **Present your work!**

People will not notice your great work by themselves. You have to advertise it. Most often, this means giving talks about it at conferences. Also try to explain your research to normal people once in a while.

- **Get a PhD!**

The end goal of your current phase in life is to make a significant original contribution to knowledge. You probably have to solve a relevant problem in a novel way.

Need inspiration? Look for Randy Pausch’s talks “Last Lecture” and “Time Management”.

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\(^1\) [http://www.dfg.de/en/research_funding/principles_dfg_funding/good_scientific_practice/index.html](http://www.dfg.de/en/research_funding/principles_dfg_funding/good_scientific_practice/index.html)

The Process

At first, you will probably start working for a professor. A few ideas to get you started:

1. Convert your bachelor’s or master’s thesis into a proper publication. You already have something and it gets you started with publishing.

2. Read a lot. Once you get fully invested into teaching and other tasks, it becomes harder to find free time.

3. Help your co-workers. This gives you karma, experience, and maybe even co-authorship.

The steps to become an official doctoral researcher are:

1. You and your advisor sign a doctoral agreement (Promotionsvereinbarung)

2. Send signed doctoral agreement to our department

3. Register at KHYS

4. Apply for acceptance at our department

You should start this process after roughly one year and the doctoral agreement might limit the time until step four. The doctoral agreement is required by law (LHG BaWü §38 (5)). There are a few requirements what must be in there and our department has a template. However, this is a contract between you and your advisor. You are free to change it and we encourage you read carefully and to negotiate. In rare cases, this can lead to conflict with your advisor. Be glad that you found out early!

Looked into doctoral agreement stuff
The doctoral agreement requires a provisional title of your thesis. You can easily change it, so don’t let this discourage you.

Being officially accepted gives you some security. If your advisor is run over by a bus, our department is still responsible for you and your thesis.

☑️ **Officially accepted as PhD candidate by department**

For further reading, here are a few books that we recommend.

- “A PhD Is Not Enough! – A Guide to Survival in Science” by Peter J. Feibelman (partly more focussed on the US research system but still worth reading)

- “Writing Your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day” by Joan Bolker (gives some useful tips on getting started with writing)

- “Tomorrow’s Professor: Preparing for Academic Careers in Science and Engineering” by Richard M. Reis (fairly expensive but should be a good advisor on deciding whether to aim for a career in science (professorship) or not; was recommended by a professor in 2016’s UbiComp Doctoral School)
3 Doctoral Convent

If you want to get a PhD in computer science at KIT, then you implicitly are part of the doctoral convent. Technically, you need to be officially accepted at our department, but in practice we also support not-yet-accepted doctoral researchers and post-docs. You can write an e-mail to informatik-doktoranden-vorstand@lists.kit.edu.

We want to help you and each other. If you can contribute, please do so.

For example, we appreciate Pull Requests for this document if you find any mistakes or miss something. You can find the repository at git.scc.kit.edu/InformatikDKVorstand/welcome.

No errors in here (anymore).

We maintain a wiki at doktorandenkonvent.informatik.kit.edu with additional information.

Checked out the wiki

We wish you a good time until you get that “Dr.” in front of $Your-Name.

Let us advance the knowledge of mankind together!

v1.0.0 built on 2018-09-15.