

The Golden Rules for PhD supervision¹

1. EYES ON THE CLOCK

Supervisors	PhD candidate
Create a <i>realistic and doable</i> planning <i>within the allotted time period</i> , balancing the research work, including time to redo failed experiments, writing, and training & development. Also, ensure time is reserved for reflection and synthesis	Balance your ambitions and the available time period, include time for setbacks, a healthy work-life balance, and holidays in the planning
Jointly set short term, longer term and end goals; including indicators and milestones to be able to discuss progress	Keep track of how you spend your time and timely take the initiative to discuss delays and adaptations of the plan with your supervisors
Jointly develop a strategy or a plan B in case of setbacks and calamities	Plan meetings and reading time for your supervisors, stick to your deadlines or communicate a change early
Inform the PhD candidate about your availability (e.g. holidays, sabbaticals, intense teaching periods)	Inform your supervisors about your holiday and course planning, and about sick leave and personal situations which can cause delays
Check in frequently, do not skip regular meetings with the PhD candidate, avoid long periods with no contact, avoid responding slowly	Check in frequently, actively approach your supervisors and talk about failures and setbacks immediately
Plan the dates of the go/no-go evaluation and the annual Progress & Development meetings	Remind your supervisor that you are interested in having annual Progress & Development meetings, if these are not (being) planned

2. TRANSPARENCY ABOUT EXPECTATIONS

Supervisors	PhD candidate
Regularly discuss your mutual expectations using the WGS worksheet "conversation about expectations" and make clear agreements	Regularly discuss your mutual expectations using the WGS worksheet "conversation about expectations" and make clear agreements
Discuss your style of supervising and cultural differences, if applicable	Be open about your wishes and needs for the process and the collaboration
Be open about the limits of your expertise and the involvement of others	Discuss available network of experts, also outside the supervisory team
Be clear about your expectations for a go decision and explain the procedure towards this decision	Discuss and agree on how you organise meetings and feedback
Discuss the expected thesis format, see the guidelines . Discuss quality criteria and the Academic Board's rubric for the final evaluation of the thesis	Be firm about your ideas regarding your thesis and check with your supervisors whether you have the same expectations
Discuss research integrity, publication ethics and co-authorship. See the Code of Conduct , the Integrity Code , the authorship guidelines . Discuss applying for ethical approval if needed	Put agreements regarding co-authorships and involvement of others on paper, seek ethical clearance from the relevant ethical committee, if applicable
Keep track of, and discuss progress	Keep track of, and be honest about progress
Discuss involvement in teaching & supervision and the PhD candidate's learning objectives given the WUR teaching rules	Discuss involvement in teaching & supervision and your learning objectives given the WUR teaching rules

3. PROFESSIONALISM IN COMMUNICATION AND BEHAVIOUR

Supervisors	PhD candidate
Act with responsibility and commitment. There is a mutual dependency between you and the PhD candidate. Use your position and legitimacy in a way that makes the collaboration open, pleasant and fruitful	Be active and open. Act with responsibility and commitment

¹ Wageningen Graduate Schools has adapted the 'Golden rules for PhD supervision' of Leiden University

Inform yourself about the doctoral degree regulations, publishing and integrity regulations	Inform yourself about the doctoral degree regulations, publishing and integrity regulations
Be self-reflective and seek advice and support if needed, from colleagues, peers or the graduate school PhD advisor	Be self-reflective and seek support if needed
Be an academic role model, give sufficient autonomy and trust the PhD candidate	Live up to your deadlines and agreements, learn how to deal with critical comments, be a pleasant colleague, help others, speak up when necessary
Set realistic requirements and remember what you say or advise (or put it on paper)	Prepare your meetings, set the agenda, make notes, put agreements on paper and send them to your supervisors
Provide a safe environment: get to know the PhD candidate, be socially attentive, stimulate. Be available in person and by email	Get to know your supervisors and be available
Be willing to give and receive feedback	Be willing to give and receive feedback
Be responsible for good team work. Do not involve the PhD candidate in personal battles with other supervisors or scientists	Be responsible for good team work
Jointly celebrate successes	Jointly celebrate successes

4. LEARNING TRAJECTORY

Supervisors	PhD candidate
The PhD trajectory is a learning trajectory towards an academic degree. But as a supervisor you also learn: it is a mutual learning process. Make sure the scientific output is not solely dependent on a successful PhD trajectory	Actively take charge of your own learning process; think about what you need in terms of new experiences, knowledge and skills, and how you will acquire them. You have the freedom to choose courses for your TSP
Discuss academic freedom. PhD candidates need a certain degree of freedom to develop the project into their own unique way, within certain boundaries. A PhD candidate is not an executive junior researcher following your orders (you better then hire a junior researcher)	You are entitled to the academic space to develop your own unique expertise within the aims of the project. Your major task is to do PhD research. Discuss your supervisors' responsibilities towards the project and the boundaries of your academic freedom with your supervisors
Open your network for the PhD candidate	Work on your network. Make use of the networks of your supervisors and chair group to meet other experts, present your work to the outside world
Make use of the TSP: a useful tool to talk about expectations, keep track of the progress, evaluate learning and development, and discuss the career plan after the PhD	Regularly discuss the adaptations of your TSP, you have the freedom to also choose courses to widen your knowledge or in light of your future career

5. STRESSORS and MOTIVATORS

Supervisor	PhD candidate
Be aware that you are a role model and that your work attitude may be seen as a professional standard for the PhD candidates in your group	Expect good supervision; your supervisors' overly busy work schedules cannot be an excuse for insufficient supervision
PhD candidates should not become the victim of your own stressors: discuss these with your own manager and solve them	Be open to your supervisors about your worries and insecurities, talk to peers or your graduate school's PhD advisor. Discuss what makes you thrive and gets you inspired
Inform the PhD candidate about their rights (HR regulations) and available help and support. You are the first contact, not a social worker or therapist. Refer the PhD candidate to the available support structure if needed	Inform your supervisors about any personal issues that may affect your PhD project and contact the PhD advisor or others in the support structure if necessary
If you ask the PhD candidate to perform tasks outside the PhD project, discuss the consequences and be sure that you give the space to say no	Allow yourself the space to say no to requests for extra activities that have no relation with your PhD research (e.g. extra teaching, deliverables)