

Graduate School of Life Sciences
Course Guide
for Supervisors of PhDs



Utrecht University



UMC Utrecht

PhD Course Guide



Utrecht University



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Colophon



Course schedule

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Suggestions regarding the content can be emailed to pcc@uu.nl.

January 2024

PREFACE

Dear PhD supervisor,

We welcome you as a supervisor of one or more PhD candidates in the Graduate School of Life Sciences. As a supervisor, you hold the key to unlocking their potential and guiding them towards becoming outstanding, independent researchers. Not only do you have the power to shape their academic journey, but you also play a vital role in propelling them towards rewarding positions within and beyond the realm of academia upon completion of their PhD.

In the latest guide for PhD candidates and supervisors the Graduate School of Life Sciences has outlined guidelines for fostering a fruitful interaction and good working relationship between supervisors and PhD candidates. It reflects both sides as you are a team. When both you and your PhD candidates demonstrate dedication and commitment, this interaction becomes an exhilarating exchange of ideas, energy, and drive. It is an empowering, two-way process that fuels progress and creates a vibrant academic atmosphere.

Effective and inspiring supervision is a personal skill that evolves throughout the different phases of the PhD journey. Embracing this dynamic process not only benefits the PhD candidates but offers you an enriching experience as well. To support you in this endeavour, we are delighted to provide tailored training and engaging events exclusively designed for PhD supervisors. These platforms offer an avenue for sharing best practices, refining your skills, and expanding your horizons.

Next to the mandatory training for starting supervisors we have crafted a comprehensive toolkit exclusively for PhD supervisors featuring masterclasses, peer consultation (“intervisie”), professional consultations, and video coaching. These resources not only offer invaluable guidance but also serve as invaluable platforms for networking, idea exchange, and experiential learning. Whether you are an experienced supervisor or just embarking on this role, these sessions promise to energize your spirit and ignite your creativity.

The PhD Supervisor Course Guide has been made with great accuracy. However, our offer is constantly under development. Please check the website for the up-to-date offer. If you have any suggestions, please reach out to us.

We hope that you find inspiration in these offerings and seize this opportunity to enhance your supervisory skills. Together, let us embark on a remarkable journey of mentorship, empowering our PhD candidates to achieve excellence and make a lasting impact on the world.

The PhD Course Centre Team

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01 Interview

Interview with:

Dr. Marjolein Cremer

At the UU since:

1999

Position:

Senior educational advisor and trainer at O&T (Educational development & Training) UU

Best thing about my job:

Working with passionate people

“It’s really important that, as a supervisor, you dare to talk about what you expect from the PhD candidate and what the candidate expects from you”

Why is it important that supervisors actually take a course?

Many supervisors guide on intuition or act the way they’ve been guided themselves. It’s not something you’ve been trained for. You’ve been trained as a scientist. Teaching and supervising young scientists is something you haven’t learned in a course. And there are a lot of useful things to learn, from the literature, the trainers and peers, even in a short time span, so it’s a missed opportunity if you start to figure it all out by yourself.

Even for experienced supervisors, the course is a great chance to sharpen the saw, order your thoughts, and identify how to further strengthen supervision in your research group.

What makes a good supervisor?

A good supervisor is adaptable, and knows when to stand back and when to step in. It’s important to be a coach, for example, by

asking questions to find out what’s really going on. But it’s also important that you not only ask questions, but sometimes also be very clear in what you see. Is a student participating enough in meetings, processing your feedback or sending drafts on time?

It’s really important that, as a supervisor, you dare to talk about what you expect from the candidate and what the PhD candidate expects from you. And if you feel these are far apart, to mention this on time, and not let it stay in the background for too long. I’ve noticed that supervisors sometimes find this difficult. I think we all find this difficult. But by addressing this early, you might avoid escalation.

Are there any topics that have become increasingly important in recent years in the course for supervisors?

With COVID-19, I noticed that supervisors are concerned about the wellbeing of students

and PhD candidates. I think this is a good development, and supervisors are looking for tools to deal with this. In the courses for supervisors, we practice this with exercises about conversational skills. You need to find out what’s really going on with this person or what they need.

In addition, topics like intercultural relationships have become more important the last couple of years. How do you deal with a very diverse PhD population within your research group or department?

What are the options for more advanced supervisors to develop themselves?

We offer a short, tailor-made course of three afternoons for experienced supervisors. We discuss the issues people encounter. Here we can provide a much more customised approach than in the regular PhD supervisor course. The course starts with a personal intake so that we can adjust to what is needed.

We also offer consultation sessions that supervisors can participate in. Ideally you sign up with a group, say 4 to 7 people. It’s a beautiful way to professionalise, in a confidential setting with peers. It’s quite common and established in the medical field. Consultation is a very powerful way to spend 1.5-2 hours thinking about and working on a case. Eventually, you’ll save time and sleepless nights.

Supervisors can also get video coaching. We have trained video coaches who can help you analyse and learn from a recording you’ve made, for example of a supervision meeting. The focus is on what worked well and how to expand that. A unique opportunity

to understand the dynamics between supervisor(s) and candidate.

What advice do you have for new supervisors?

Think about what you find important in your collaboration with a PhD candidate. To what extent do you want to keep your finger on the pulse? What do you want to determine together? What should the candidate determine?

Also find out what the PhD candidate thinks is important. For example, if you have a more laissez-faire style, see if the candidate likes this or not. And also, how did they experience their thesis? What does the candidate already know about being a researcher?

Try to find out what style of working the student has and what’s important in the collaboration. But also follow your gut feeling. You need to work together. You don’t need to adjust yourself completely to the student’s way of working, but it is important to know what the student needs. Is it someone who needs some validation, support and compliments, for example? Is it someone who raises the alarm when issues arise?

It’s good to discuss this. This way, the student immediately understands that you’re open to discussing these aspects and that you’re working on this together.

So, discussing the supervision itself is perhaps the biggest tip I can give. But don’t fall into the trap of only asking what do you want and then trying to do it. You should also think about yourself, and preferably with your co-supervisor, ask the questions: How do we approach this? Who takes which role?

We describe in the PhD Guide that supervising is a two-way process. A supervisor and PhD candidate are in it together. But what can you do as a PhD candidate to ensure that the relationship with your supervisor is equal and that you get the best out of it?

There is, of course, always a hierarchical relationship. But it's important that, from the beginning, as a PhD candidate you share your doubts and your thoughts.

To a large extent, it's up to the supervisor to make sure it is an equal way of working. But the student needs to stand up for themselves as well. During research, you, as the PhD candidate, are an important part of this collaboration. So come to meetings prepared. If you have a question, think for yourself, and in which direction you'd look for the answer. Be proactive and try to take control of your project. This will be difficult in the beginning, but it's important that in your final year, you are in charge and that you stand there independently to defend your thesis.

So, you're going to take control at some point and try to see how far you can get, even in your first year already. Ask questions. Indicate if things are not clear. And so on. You're learning, so you're not supposed to know everything.

What do participants value most from the courses?

What is often mentioned as valuable is the exchange with others, time for reflection, and input from an experienced trainer.

The fact that we see participants over a longer period of time is incredibly valuable. They are invited to try things out. Ask new questions, try different approaches in meetings. At the end, we always look back at their learning points. Participants have often made such big steps in their development. That is very rewarding to see.

The PhD supervisor course has existed at the UU/UMCU for over 10 years. Recently, the course has been made compulsory for all new supervisors and for people wanting to get their SKOz. A celebrated course that allows researchers to sharpen their supervisor skills.



Supervising courses

02 Courses

TARGET AUDIENCE

This course is for (co-)supervisors and daily supervisors of PhD candidates registered at the GSLS. It is especially suitable for relatively new (co-)supervisors and daily supervisors, although more experienced supervisors are also more than welcome to develop themselves further during the course. Supervising PhD candidate(s) during the course is required, as well as some experience with supervising PhD candidates during the past. The course is compulsory for co-supervisors that supervise a PhD candidate for the first time.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Supervising scientific research is a complicated process. As a daily supervisor or (co) promoter, you are a content expert, but also a (co)researcher, coach, and assessor. This course aims to expand your skill repertoire as a PhD supervisor, enabling you to offer supervision more efficiently and effectively.

Topical questions that are raised are: How can I help the PhD candidate become an independent researcher? How do I signal problem behavior of my PhD candidate in time and how do I deal with it? How do I take different personal, work, and learning styles into account? And how do I communicate about mutual expectations?

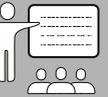
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

During this course, you will discuss the Organisation & Regulations of the GSLS. You will talk about the selection of PhD candidates, intercultural communication, progress assessments, and recognising risks and warning signals. Furthermore, you will discuss goal-oriented supervision: giving balanced feedback, adjusted to learning needs, type of PhD candidate, and research phase. Interaction is a key element during this training, and input from all participants is highly appreciated. After finishing the course, each participant can opt for individual coaching sessions with an experienced coach.

TRAINER

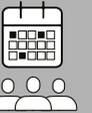
All trainers are related to Educational Development and Training at the UU. ED&T train (educational) professionals over the entire duration of their career and offer custom solutions for educational problems. Some sessions will be run by guest lecturers.

USP



Face-to-face course

6



Number of sessions

21



Total hours of course participation

18



Total study time

12



Maximum number of participants

3



Number of times the course is offered per year

Supervising PhD candidates: Next Level

Peer consultation

TARGET AUDIENCE

This advanced course is for experienced supervisors of PhD candidates registered at the GSLS. Participants have supervised at least 5 PhD candidates until the finish line. Generally, they have their own research group/lab, are at (associate) professor level, and have a formal role within their department or faculty. Language of instruction is English. Are you a relatively new supervisor? Have a look at the course Supervising PhD Candidates at the GSLS.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This advanced course is designed for experienced supervisors who are familiar with the principles of research supervision but want to enhance their effectiveness in specific situations. These may include complexities in team supervision, addressing unpleasant behavior, giving feedback efficiently, or dealing with time management issues as one's responsibilities increase.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

During this course, you will reflect on your own supervision practices, gain insights into your own strengths and areas of development, apply didactical insights to your own practice, and broaden your supervision skills.

TRAINER

All trainers are related to Educational Development and Training at the UU. ED&T train (educational) professionals over the entire duration of their career and offer custom solutions for educational problems.

Great to share experiences on supervision and learn to deal with challenging situations

8

TARGET AUDIENCE

The sessions are for all (co-)supervisors and daily supervisors of PhD candidates registered at the GSLS.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Would you like to discuss a current situation or dilemma from your own supervision practice? Would you like to learn from your peers? Join one of the Peer Consultation sessions.

The aim of these sessions is to improve your professional effectiveness. Central issues may be content related or they may be personal questions in relation to work. For example:

- ▶ how can I motivate my PhD candidates or other team members;
- ▶ how can I collaborate effectively;
- ▶ how can I deal with personal doubts and insecurities;
- ▶ how can I find time for supervision and my own research.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Your question or dilemma will be investigated to understand underlying bottlenecks and to expand your intervention strategies. Two to eight participants commit themselves to the confidentiality of the meeting. During one meeting one case is dealt with; it is possible, however, to deal with multiple cases. A Peer Consultation session takes two hours and you can take part whenever you like.

TRAINER

All trainers are related to Educational Development and Training at the UU. ED&T train (educational) professionals over the entire duration of their career and offer custom solutions for educational problems.

Consulting my peers is important to me because talking to each other gives me a better understanding of what is really going on. I tell, the others listen and ask questions. When we are clear about what we are facing, we try to look together at what is possible to improve this.

9



Face-to-face course



Number of sessions



Total hours of course participation



Total study time



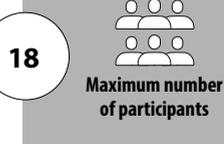
Maximum number of participants



Number of times the course is offered per year



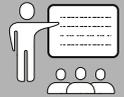
Face-to-face course



Maximum number of participants

Professional consult

Video Coaching



Face-to-face course

USP

TARGET AUDIENCE

The sessions are for all (co-)supervisors and daily supervisors of PhD candidates registered at the GSLS.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Sometimes a short consultation is all you need to further optimise your way of supervision and consequently better support your PhD candidate in their learning process. You can easily enlist the help of a consultant from Educational Consultancy & Professional Development (O&T) who has expertise in this field. Professional consult is available for all (co-)supervisors and daily supervisors of GSLS PhD candidates that would like to further develop their way of supervision.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

During this course, you will reflect on your own supervision practices, gain insights into your own strengths and areas of development, apply didactical insights to your own practice, and broaden your supervision skills.

TRAINER

All trainers are related to Educational Development and Training at the UU. ED&T train (educational) professionals over the entire duration of their career and offer custom solutions for educational problems.



Face-to-face course

USP

TARGET AUDIENCE

The sessions are for all (co-)supervisors and daily supervisors of PhD candidates registered at the GSLS.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Would you like a better insight in how you use your didactic and coaching qualities in your supervision practice? Know how to optimise your interaction with students? Or would you like to focus on how you provide your feedback? These questions about your own supervision practice are the focus of the video coaching trajectory.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Video coaching is a powerful form of coaching. The recordings of a meeting with your PhD candidate clearly show how you supervise and how the PhD candidate responds to this. In addition, you have the opportunity to look at yourself with some distance and with room for reflection, which gives a realistic self-image of your own skills. You will be coached by a certified video/didactic coach using video recordings of one of your supervisory meetings. Insights gained are directly applicable in your own supervision practice, and used to strengthen your didactic and coaching qualities. Video coaching can also be used when you want to optimise team supervision, for instance by using a video recording of a meeting with a co-supervisor.

TRAINER

All trainers are related to Educational Development and Training at the UU. ED&T train (educational) professionals over the entire duration of their career and offer custom solutions for educational problems.

Courses offered in the Development Guide

Employees of the UU (including supervisors) are given the opportunity to follow courses and training. The Development Guide offers a lot of possibilities to employees to enjoy work and learn new skills.

Dealing with inappropriate behaviour

Everyone has the right to a socially safe working environment in which inappropriate behaviour does not belong. But it can still happen that students or employees are approached in ways they find inappropriate, such as ways that involve (sexual) harassment, discrimination, aggression, violence or bullying. In order to deal with and stop this, this online course has been developed for supervisors.

The training provides you with content that can serve as a guide to create and maintain a socially safe working environment. You will be able to recognise situations involving inappropriate behaviour. You are informed on your role as a supervisor in this, as well as the procedures you can follow if and when a report of inappropriate behaviour is made.



Development Guide

03

Events

GSLS Supervisor of the Year Awards

Supervision is one of the key factors that influence the course of your PhD journey. PhD surveys indicate that a professional relationship between PhD candidates and supervisors is pivotal for a successful PhD journey. Within the GSLS, we aim to provide support for both the PhD candidate and the supervisors to help them build a good and professional relationship. Good and frequent communication, management of expectations, and giving and receiving feedback are crucial components of this relationship. Because supervision is such an important component, the GSLS PhD Council organises the Supervisor of the Year (SoY) award ceremony.

Once a year, you receive an invitation to nominate your (co-)supervisors. You can describe why you think that your (co-)supervisor is a brilliant scientist, a role model, accessible, enthusiastic, or just great in any other way. By nominating your (co-)supervisor, you show your appreciation for the way of supervision, and we would like to inspire other (co-)supervisors to guide their PhD candidates in the best way possible.

From the list of nominees, the SoY committee of the PhD council carefully creates a shortlist and subsequently interviews the PhD candidates that nominated their (co-)supervisor. Based on this, the committee then selects a supervisor of the year (promotor) and co-supervisor of the year (co-promoter). Make sure to attend this event and be inspired by how (co-)supervisors and PhD candidates interact and communicate in a great and satisfying way!

Interested to become part of the organising committee? Contact the GSLS PhD Council.



GSLS Supervisor of the Year Awards