

Annual PhD Progress Report

for PhD candidates of the Utrecht University Graduate School of Life Sciences

Accompanying explanatory notes

For PhD candidate, supervisory team (*promotoren* and *copromotoren*) and mentors: please read these explanatory notes carefully before planning the annual PhD progress meeting.

The annual PhD progress meeting

The annual PhD progress meeting, involving the PhD candidate, supervisory team (*promotoren* and *copromotoren*), and mentors, aims to monitor project progress and supervision (including pace, direction, quality, and support). Additionally, it addresses personal and academic development, and future career plans. It is a key opportunity for the PhD candidate to assess their scientific and personal growth alongside yearly project goals. The PhD candidate takes the lead as the meeting focuses on their future. While scientific progress is crucial for a successful thesis, the candidate may also introduce other topics. The focus of the meeting may shift during the PhD, with career planning gaining importance in later years.

All types of PhD candidates must have annual PhD progress meetings because monitoring progress throughout their PhD is crucial. PhD candidates with employee status also have an annual assessment interview as required by their institute. It is recommended that these candidates combine both meetings. Note that the form and explanatory notes for the annual PhD progress report differ from those for the annual assessment interview. However, the annual PhD progress report form can often be used and uploaded in the HRM system.

Organising the annual PhD progress meeting

The first meeting should be scheduled one year after the start of the PhD, with subsequent meetings at yearly intervals. The final meeting, one year before the end of the PhD, requires completing the separate 'completion plan' form.

The PhD candidate is responsible for organising the meeting, typically involving the PhD candidate, supervisory team, and mentor(s). One or two mentors, appointed and registered in MyPhD at the start of the PhD (compulsory for all PhD candidates), provide independent advice to the PhD candidate and supervisory team on the progress (rate, direction) of the PhD. More details on the mentors' role can be found on the GSLs website.

After a joint session with the PhD candidate, supervisory team, and mentor(s), the PhD candidate and supervisory team may meet individually with the mentors. In some PhD programmes, the PhD candidate prepares the meeting with the mentors. The meeting generally lasts one hour but can be extended if needed.

To prepare, the PhD candidate should complete sections 1-6 as instructed below and send the final document to the supervisory team and mentor(s) at least one week before the meeting. The PhD candidate should also highlight any specific issues from sections 1-6 that require special attention.

During the meeting, recommendations should be documented on the form (section 7). The form should then be electronically signed (section 8) and submitted to the PhD programme. Additionally, the form can be stored for personal records. Currently, it is not possible to upload the report in MyPhD.



Organising the annual PhD progress meeting



Different meeting formats are possible.

Detailed instructions

1. Research

1.1 Background

Provide a brief introduction or summary of the background of your research and objectives of your thesis, including the general research field, goals, and methodology. Ensure it is clear and understandable for your mentor(s). You may refer to existing documentation, such as the grant proposal, if available. Keep it under half an A4 page.

1.2 Project description

Give brief descriptions of your subprojects, including their current status: not yet started, in initial stages, well-developed, almost finished, finished and submitted, or published. Include estimated timeframes or a timeline for each subproject. The entire description should not exceed one A4 page.

For the final meeting, one year before your PhD completion, you can skip this section and instead complete the 'completion plan' form, which outlines the proposed thesis chapters.

1.3 Current research progress

Summarise the progress made over the past year compared to the targets set in your previous progress report or those agreed upon with your supervisory team at the start of your PhD. Address each subproject and consider the following:

- Briefly describe any issues that hindered your progress, such as supervision or support issues, training limitations, equipment shortages, financial constraints, or personal circumstances.
- Explain how these issues were addressed and outline plans to meet any unmet targets.

1.4 Research progress targets for the coming year

Outline the targets and milestones for your research progress during the coming year, including a timeline. Do this for each subproject. Ensure to include deadlines for completing each milestone. When completing this section, consider the following points:

Outline the targets and milestones for your research in the coming year, including timeline and deadlines for each subproject. Consider:

- How were these targets set?
- How do you plan to achieve them? Will your approach differ from previous periods?
- Do you foresee any potential challenges? How will you address them?

If you are entering your final year, skip this section and complete the 'completion plan' form instead, detailing your plan for finishing your PhD and submitting your thesis.

2. Teaching and/or clinical activities

2.1 Teaching activities

If applicable, list your teaching responsibilities (lecturing and student supervision) and workload (in FTE or %). Consider:

- Is there a good balance between your research and teaching activities?
- Have you received the necessary training for teaching tasks (compulsory for all PhDs with teaching responsibilities following UU regulations)?
- What are your upcoming teaching activities for the coming period?

2.2 Clinical activities

If applicable, list your clinical duties and workload (in FTE or %). Describe whether these activities are separate from or integrated with your research. Consider:

- Is there a good balance between your research and clinical activities?
- What are your clinical activities for the coming period?

3. Training activities

3.1 Attended courses and meetings

List the courses and (inter)national meetings you attended over the past year compared to the targets set. Assess their value. Refer to your Individual Training Plan from the Training and Supervision Agreement (TSA) and update it as needed. Store the updated TSA in a place that is convenient for you. There is no need to upload it in MyPhD.

If you have suggestions for improving the training support of the GSLS, please share them with your PhD programme.

3.2 PhD Competences and skills

The PhD Competence Model is a tool designed to support individual development in research-related competencies. Use the self-assessment tool to prepare this section, including the compulsory competence *Research Skills and Knowledge* and two additional competencies of your choice, selected based on their relevance to your personal growth and professional advancement. For each competence, set goals and outline strategies to achieve them, such as attending courses, leading research meetings to acquire leadership skills, supervising master's students, or focusing on enhancing a particular skill throughout the year.



3.3 Conferences during the coming year

List the (inter)national conferences you plan to attend in the coming year. If you plan to present, note which (sub)projects need to be completed beforehand and include a timeline with deadlines for completing experiments, analyses, figures, etc.

4. PhD successes, challenges and wellbeing

4.1 PhD successes

From the activities detailed in parts 1 and 2 of the past year, select the two successes you are most proud of. Elaborate on their impact, whether scientific, personal, local, or societal. Examples of successes include overcoming setbacks, effectively managing multiple projects concurrently, drafting protocols, abstracts, or articles, receiving awards or prizes, securing grants, delivering lectures, and organizing events. Please provide reasons why these achievements stand out.

Select the two successes from the past year (sections 1 and 2) you are most proud of and explain their impact – whether scientific, personal, local, or societal. Examples include overcoming setbacks, managing multiple projects, drafting significant documents (protocols, abstracts or articles), receiving awards, securing grants, delivering lectures, or organizing events. Describe why these achievements stand out.

4.2 PhD challenges

Identify the most significant challenge you faced during the past year and elaborate on its personal impact. Examples include setting up experiments, failing experiments, managing multiple projects or activities, writing manuscripts, or collaborating with others. What steps will you take to overcome this challenge in the coming year?

4.3 Wellbeing

Are wellbeing, social safety, and a safe working environment discussed regularly in a satisfying and appropriate way? Topics might include:

- General life satisfaction.
- Project and work environment satisfaction.
- Work-life balance.
- Available support for addressing problems.

If issues persist or become more serious, address them early to prevent escalation. If you need help or just want to talk to someone, reach out to the support services at Utrecht University. More information is available on the [website](#).

5. Career planning and support GSLS

Detail your long-term career goals, fostering discussions about your research and other talents. This section is an opportunity to explore how you can be supported in discovering a career path that aligns with your aspirations. Utrecht University offers assistance with [career planning](#).

6. Supervision

6.1 Meetings

List the different meetings with all members of your supervisory team, including frequency and attendance. Is this in line with your agreements? Do all (co-)supervisors attend, and do they all contribute to your project? Are the meetings effective and are the meeting goals met? If adjustments in frequency or content are needed, provide suggestions.

6.2 Support

What can your supervisory team do to improve their support? Highlight what works well and suggest changes that would better meet your needs. For the coming year, how can they support you in achieving your goals? Also, consider what changes you can make yourself to receive better supervision. Effective supervision is a two-way process, as described in the chapter 'Effective supervisor-PhD interaction' of the [PhD Guide](#) and [PhD Supervisor Guide](#).

6.3 Feedback

Before completing this report, ask your supervisory team if they would like feedback on any specific aspects of supervision. They may refer to the chapter 'Effective supervisor-PhD interaction' of the [PhD Supervisor Guide](#) or [PhD Guide](#) for inspiration. Discuss whether to include this feedback here or address it in a separate meeting with one (co-)supervisor individually.

Include any additional feedback you might have and would like to discuss here.

7. Recommendations and remarks annual interview

Recording recommendations on the form is crucial, as they can serve as the foundation for subsequent annual PhD progress meetings. It is essential that both the PhD candidate and the supervisory team, along with mentors, collaboratively complete this section during the meeting.