

## Summary

585 responses were received from the UMCU (56%), UU Faculty of Science (24%), and Faculty of Veterinary Medicine (9%) amongst others

Most PhDs started in 2017 and were from the Netherlands

PhD Programs in the GSLS were generally comparable across different measures

A significant majority reported working 4-10 hours more, or 10+ hours more than what was agreed upon in their contracts

Emotional Exhaustion and Mental Distance from work were frequently found at mid to high levels

PhDs reported slightly higher stress levels than general population norm values

PhDs are generally aware of common support service available to them (supervisors, promotors, psychologist), but should be informed about less common ones (confidants, coaches, counselors, etc.)

Daily Supervisors and Promotors were generally scored highly in regards to scientific contribution to PhD work and personal relationships with the PhDs

Contact was often high with daily supervisors (one meeting/per two weeks or more), but much less frequent with promotors

Pursuit of educational opportunities was frequently supported by supervisors

Teaching was not required for most PhDs, those who did teach were generally satisfied with the requirements

PhDs are largely satisfied with pursuing their PhD in the GSLS

## Conclusion

The findings of this survey are meant to be used as a tool to help understand the current status PhDs in the GSLS. In general, PhDs seem to be satisfied with the support and supervision that they receive and their PhD in general. Most PhDs know about ways to access help when needed, and many of these options have been utilized by PhDs. Many of the positive findings from the 2018 survey were found again in 2019. However, there are clearly some areas that need attention.

A possible 1 in 5 PhDs reported some sort of behavior in their workplace that made them feel unsafe, and less than half felt that they could report this behavior. Steps may need to be taken to allow for better reporting of these incidents. Further, PhDs showed high levels of Emotional Exhaustion and Mental Distance from their work and low feelings of Competence. It is hard to say if this is just the nature of academic research in which you are often comparing yourself to other highly competent researchers and for which progress can often be slow and tedious, or if this is an issue that should be addressed. Consultation with the PhD psychologist and other counselors in the UU system may provide more insight if and how to address these issues.

Unfortunately, the mental health outcomes were not comparable between years due to differences in measurement instruments. Future surveys will be able to better compare the mental status of PhDs and how that is changing over time. This will be especially relevant due to the large impact that COVID-19 is having on the ability for PhDs to conduct research.

## Recommendations

Mental health of PhDs remains a primary area of concern. While this survey did not find that the GSLS is doing poorly in regards to PhD mental health, there remains a substantial group of PhDs in the GSLS who may need extra support in order to succeed. The actions recently taken by the UU to bring on a PhD psychologist are a good first step, but this one-on-one service may not be the style or format that all PhDs would benefit from. The GSLS PhD Council recommends an expansion of services available in order to be more accessible and beneficial to a larger group of PhDs. Specifically, the addition of guided group sessions that target less serious issues would represent a lower threshold for participation than individual support. These would also provide benefits related to problem normalization by allowing PhDs to interact with their peers in a safe environment which may not be present in individual departments.

Related to this, an increase in visibility of services with the goal of informing PhDs about availability and stigma reduction would likely see an increase in usage and improvement in mental health. An emphasis when informing PhDs of services available should also focus on the identity and availability of confidants within each program and UU-wide so that PhDs know who to contact when they experience unwanted behaviors.