PhD supervision philosophy at the Graduate School of Life Sciences

The mission of the Graduate School of Life Sciences is to improve life, by providing an inspiring and innovative academic environment that enables our graduates to thrive in the dynamics of life sciences and society. After the bachelor and master phases, the PhD track is regarded as the third phase in academic education. The goal of the PhD track is to provide the opportunities to the candidate to develop into a person with competences, skills and behavior tailored to a position as an independent knowledge worker, in or outside academia. This implies that at the end of a PhD track, we graduate a person with specific skills and competences rather than merely delivering a thesis. For this purpose, the PhD competence model has been developed (www.phdcompetencemodel.nl).

In the end, we would like our PhD graduate to be:
- An interdisciplinary critical thinker and worker
- Someone who can create impact in the dynamics of science
- Demonstrating integrity towards science and society
- Showing leadership
- A team player
- A life long learner

The PhD candidate is the driver of his/her own development. Your supervision style aims at letting the PhD candidate develop into an independent scientist. As a supervisor you realize that, in accepting a PhD candidate, you take responsibility for an important phase in the career of a person, and not only for progress in research.

This means that you as a member of the supervisory team:

**You pay attention to work-life balance**
You respect the personal circumstances of your PhD candidate and have an eye for work-private life balance.

**You set expectations**
From the beginning, you should be clear in your expectations of your PhD candidate, and acknowledge the expectations of your PhD candidates, so clarifying mutual expectations (making the implicit explicit). Throughout the PhD trajectory, you should monitor if these expectations are met.

**You care and inspire**
You are enthusiastic and show real interest in your PhD candidate’s project, and you have and take the time to be actively involved in it. You motivate your PhD candidate.
You create a safe environment
You create a safe environment in which discussing and asking questions is easy. You are a good listener, communicate respectfully and can also admit to being wrong.

You impart your wisdom
You share your knowledge, experience and network with your PhD candidate in order to advance the project and his/her personal development. No amount of literature study or hard work can replace this. This will help your PhD candidate to build a personal network and experience base, which is an important part of becoming an independent researcher.

You make yourself available
You are available for your PhD candidate when needed. Regular and - when necessary - emergency meetings with your PhD candidate are required. Urgent requests from PhD candidates should be handled as soon as possible: sometimes it is better to talk for 15 minutes right away then to postpone a meeting for a week to be able to talk for an hour. However, meetings should also be scheduled well ahead of time to ensure the undivided attention of the supervisor.

You work through the PhD project together
You critically review the raw data, data management and data analysis together with your PhD candidate. You critically review manuscripts, abstracts and other texts within the mutually agreed period of time.

You are a good role model
You act as a role model with respect to scientific integrity and you monitor and coach the behavior of your PhD candidate in this respect.

You provide constructive criticism
You provide constructive feedback about work and progress of your PhD candidate, both positive and negative. As with any training program: we encourage giving compliments, but also discuss problems as soon as they arise. Problems should be faced directly. No one benefits when a problem is not brought out into the open. You are open to feedback from your PhD candidate about yourself.

You enable project management
Together with your PhD candidate, you track the progress of the research project and, where possible, you prevent erroneous planning by your PhD candidate. The project should be finished within the time of the PhD candidate’s appointment or stipend.
You give career advice
You stimulate and facilitate career orientation for the life after obtaining his/her PhD degree.

You guarantee the appropriate funds and resources
You guarantee the availability of money, facilities and support staff needed to finish the project. These aspects can hardly ever be directly influenced by the PhD candidate, but will seriously affect progress and success when unavailable.

You coach
You are the coach for the personal development of your PhD candidate and as such, actively recommend courses and conferences to attend.

You walk the fine line of being a mentor
You find a good balance between independence and guidance for each PhD candidate, dependent on and meeting the needs of the candidate, and the stage of the PhD trajectory.

You address problems
Together with your PhD candidate, you signal problems in a timely manner and/or suggest improvements.

You provide support
You provide support and structure, correct when necessary and finally, let go.

You strive to be the best supervisor you can be
You actively strive to continuously improve your supervision skills. Asking for feedback from your PhD candidate can be very valuable.