

Mentor

February 2024

PhD candidates at the Graduate School of Life Sciences are supervised by their supervisory team, consisting of a minimum of 2 and maximum of 4 supervisors and co-supervisors. In addition, all PhD candidates have one or two mentors^a.

This document describes the role of the mentor at the Graduate School of Life Sciences.

^a Previously called 'independent advisors', 'supervisory committee' or 'AIO begeleidingscommissie'.

What is the role of mentors?

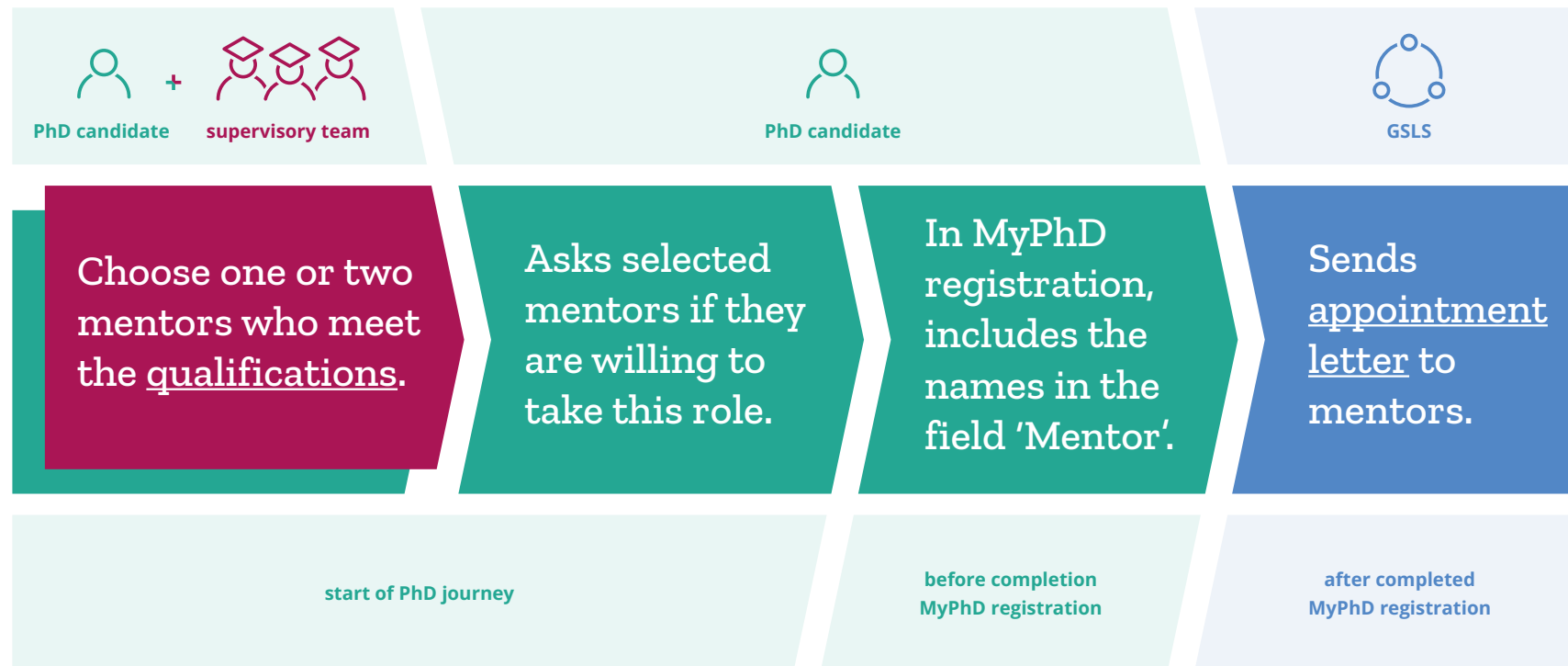
Role and responsibilities mentors

- Provide independent advice to PhD candidate and supervisory team concerning the progress of the PhD track.
 - Support and guide the progress and balance between research, teaching (if applicable) and training.
 - Stimulate the PhD candidate to critically look at and reflect upon their learning objectives and progress thereof.
 - The *Individual Training Plan* of the [TSA](#) and the *PhD Competence Model self-assessment tool* part of the [Annual PhD Progress report](#) can be useful to discuss the followed training and personal and scientific development.
- Do not need to advise on the content of research but can provide suggestions where appropriate.
- Provide advice to the PhD candidate concerning problems that cannot be discussed, or cannot be resolved with the supervisory team, and redirect the candidate towards the right support structures if needed.
- Advise the PhD candidate regarding their choices in the context of their ambitions and future career.
- Monitor quality of supervision.

The role of mentors needs to be viewed in a broader perspective on PhD supervision as different actors—supervisory team, institution, and the institution's available services—play important but different and complementary roles in supporting PhD candidates. All the different actors as a whole need to foster a stimulating and safe environment that is beneficial to the development of the PhD candidate.

Here we only list the role and responsibilities of the mentors. You can find more information about the role and responsibilities of the supervisory team, the institute and the PhD candidate in the [PhD Guide](#) and [PhD Supervisor Guide](#).

How should a mentor be selected and registered?



The PhD candidate and supervisory team together select one or two mentors. The PhD candidate has the possibility to choose mentors if they know suitable researchers (e.g. former supervisor of MSc internship). If they do not know, they can discuss with their supervisory team whom to invite to this role.

When needed, the PhD programme coordinator can be asked to give advice who to select.

The programme Clinical & Experimental Neuroscience selects a mentor for their PhD candidates.

What qualifications should a mentor meet?

When selecting mentors, remember that they should meet the following qualifications.

- **Researcher with doctoral degree who has successfully directly (co-)supervised at least one graduated PhD.**
This means, an assistant/associate/full professor, PI or comparable level with a permanent position at a Dutch academic institution or research institute. Can be a non-Dutch academic institution or research institute in exceptional cases (annual evaluation may have to be online in that case). Because the advisor needs to be approachable for PhD candidates, our advice is to be reserved in assigning scientists that are very senior and have limited time.
- **Works preferably—but not necessarily—in a research field related to that of the PhD candidate.**
It is important that the mentor can evaluate the progress of the PhD candidate and feasibility of the project.
- **Has critical distance from the members of the supervisory team.**
This means
 - i) not part of the same research group, depending on its size and structure;
 - ii) not involved in the research project of the PhD candidate, i.e., no co-author;
 - iii) no hierarchical relationship with a member of the supervisory team;
 - iv) not tight with one of the members of the supervisory team, i.e., no family, partner or friend.
- **Can be affiliated with UU/UMCU but may also be affiliated with another research institute** (e.g., a KNAW institute, other UMC or university).

When do I meet with my mentors?



introductory meeting



when

after selecting
the mentor



what

planning of
PhD track



documents

TSA



annual PhD progress meetings

yearly

- progress of both research and training (evaluation of last year and timeline for next year)
- personal and scientific development
- quality of supervision
- career plans
- well-being

- Annual PhD Progress Report form & instructions
- Self-assessment tool
- List of example questions mentor



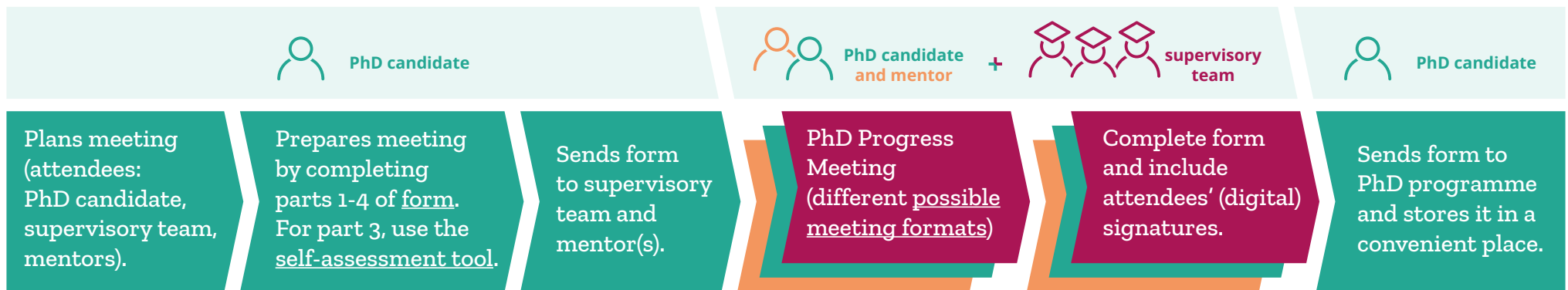
informal meetings

whenever needed

advice on matters
that cannot be
discussed or
resolved with
supervisory team

The PhD candidate is responsible to invite the mentor for meetings.

How do I arrange the Annual PhD Progress Meeting?



The mentors join the annual PhD progress meetings. All types of PhD candidates are required to have these meetings. It is different from the annual assessment interview for PhD candidates who are employee at an institute. However, we advise to combine both meetings.



The annual PhD progress meeting can have different formats. To the left you can find the two most common formats.

Contact your PhD programme to ask if a specific meeting format is required.