This PhD Supervisor Guide is composed by the Graduate School of Life Sciences of Utrecht University. It is compiled with the utmost care. However, it is for information purposes only and no rights can be derived from its contents. Suggestions regarding the content can be e-mailed to pcc@uu.nl.

For the most up-to-date information, please check the GSLS website. We update the information there when necessary. Throughout this guide, you will find QR codes guiding you to the relevant webpages.
Dear PhD supervisor,

We welcome you as a supervisor of one or more PhD candidates in our Graduate School of Life Sciences. Supervising students during their PhD journey is fun and has shown to be a key factor for their growth into high-quality independent researchers, and in obtaining worthwhile positions inside or outside academia after their PhD. Together with the other members of the PhD’s supervisory team, the independent advisors, your research group and the PhD community, we trust you will offer an inspiring and safe learning environment. Good research benefits from a good work-life balance and a healthy mental state: please keep a close eye on this for your PhD candidates and for yourself.

Supervision of young researchers can be a very energising interaction between you and your PhD candidate when there is endeavour and commitment from both sides: it is a two-way process. Effective and inspiring supervision is personalised, often varies in style during the different phases of a PhD journey and can be a learning experience for you as well. We therefore offer training and events specifically for PhD supervisors to share practices and to further your skills. We hope to see and hear from you there.

Welcome

Prof. Isabel Arends, PhD
Dean of the Faculty of Science

Prof. Debbie Jaarsma, PhD
Dean of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine

Prof. Arno Hoes, PhD
Dean of the Faculty of Medicine / vice-chair UMC Utrecht

Prof. Harold van Rijen, PhD
Director of the Graduate School of Life Sciences

Prof. Toine Egberts, PhD
Director of doctoral education of the Graduate School of Life Sciences
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INTRODUCTION
This guide is for PhD supervisors of the Graduate School of Life Sciences (GSLS) of Utrecht University. You are about to start supervising your first PhD candidate, or you already have experience. This PhD Supervisor Guide describes important topics related to the supervision of PhD candidates at the GSLS.

The GSLS is the collective responsibility of the deans of the faculty of Medicine (UMC Utrecht), the faculty of Veterinary Medicine (Utrecht University) and the Faculty of Science (Utrecht University): together the Life Sciences deans. In addition, there is close collaboration with the following non-university/non-UMC research institutes located at the Utrecht Science Park: the Westerdijk Institute, the Hubrecht Institute, and the Princess Máxima Center. If the first supervisor (promotor) of a PhD candidate is a professor (or associate professor granted ius promovendi) appointed at one of the three faculties (Faculty of Science only the departments of Biology, Pharmaceutical Sciences and Chemistry (Bijvoet Centre for Biomedical Research), the candidate is part of the GSLS.

If you flip this guide, it will become the PhD Guide, which includes important information that PhD candidates need to know about their PhD journey. We highly recommend looking at the PhD Guide as well, to learn more about the profile and training of a PhD candidate, rules and regulations, and the services that we offer as graduate school.

We hope that setting the guidelines for PhD supervision and organising additional training and events for supervisors will support you in the supervision process. If you have comments or suggestions for improvement, please let us know.

**THE GSLS PhD TEAM**

**Prof. Toine Egberts, PhD**
Director of Doctoral Education

**Saskia Ebeling, PhD**
Managing Director of Doctoral Education & PhD Course Centre

**Anke Hammerschlag, PhD**
Coordinator of Doctoral Education & PhD Course Centre

**Bianca Zomer**
Course Coordinator of PhD Course Centre

For the most up-to-date information, please check the website of the GSLS which is updated when necessary. Throughout this guide you will find QR codes guiding you to the relevant webpages.
THE PhD DEGREE AT
UTRECHT UNIVERSITY
& THE GSLS
2.1 The PhD graduate at the GSLS

In the past, a PhD position was seen as the first step in a long-lasting academic career. These days a PhD position is regarded more and more as the third and last phase in academic education, preceded by the Bachelor and Master cycles as defined by the EU Bologna Process. A PhD prepares candidates for a worthwhile position and job in or – predominantly – outside academia.

At the heart of the PhD journey of course, lies the growth of a PhD candidate into an independent researcher, who possesses knowledge, skills and behaviours tailored for a position as a knowledge worker. For this, a candidate needs to develop both academic and transferable skills and competencies. Since only a fraction of PhD candidates will be able to pursue a career in academia, we also aim to provide them with skills, competencies and knowledge required for job positions outside academia (i.e. transferable skills and competencies). For this, the PhD Competence Model has been developed (www.phdcompetencemodel.nl) to help PhD candidates structure their development. Altogether, a PhD graduate is more than a doctoral thesis.
In the end, we would like our PhD graduate to:

- be an interdisciplinary critical thinker and worker;
- be someone who can create impact in the dynamics of science;
- demonstrate integrity towards science and society;
- show leadership;
- be a team player;
- be a lifelong learner.

2.2 Rules and regulations regarding the doctoral degree

In addition to this guide and the PhD Guide, you can find more information regarding principles, procedures and regulations relevant for the doctoral degree in the formal documents:

**UTRECHT UNIVERSITY DOCTORAL DEGREE REGULATIONS**

This document includes a number of legal stipulations as codified in the Dutch Higher Education and Research Act, as well as a number of conditions that have been set by the Utrecht University Board for the Conferral of Doctoral Degrees. The regulations stipulate, among other things, who has access to the PhD Defence, how the Supervisory team is appointed, guidelines and process for your doctoral thesis and how the Assessment Committee is to be assembled.

**UTRECHT UNIVERSITY PhD MANUAL**

This manual includes practical information about the PhD journey for both prospective and current PhD candidates at any faculty of Utrecht University.
2.3 GSLS PhD programmes

The GSLS has 15 thematic PhD programmes, each covering a specific domain within the Life Sciences. Together with your PhD candidate, you will choose one of the PhD programmes that the candidate will join. The PhD programmes offer the following:

- PhD candidates can participate in well-defined, high quality, in-depth thematic training. This includes courses, seminars, presentations at conferences, PhD candidate retreats, journal clubs, and teaching of Bachelor’s and/or Master’s students.
- PhD candidates will boost their knowledge on the programme’s research topic, as well as other exciting topics.
- The PhD programme coordinator can give PhD candidates advice on valuable courses related to the research field.
- Last but not least, the PhD programme offers an active and inspirational PhD community. PhD candidates can connect to fellow candidates, principal investigators, other researchers and alumni.

Each PhD programme is led by a PhD programme director and a PhD programme coordinator. The director is a professor of Utrecht University or UMC Utrecht and is accountable for an original and high-quality PhD programme and community. The PhD programme coordinator supports the programme director in the organisation of the PhD programme and is the main contact for PhD candidates. Each programme has a PhD programme committee to support the director and coordinator and consists of representative research leaders participating in the research focus areas and at least one PhD candidate. The PhD representatives from the different programmes form the PhD Council of the GSLS.

We strongly advise that each PhD candidate becomes part of the community of a PhD programme. Sometimes the research topic of a PhD candidate is in between two programmes. In this case, have them register with one programme and contact the coordinator of the other programme to discuss which activities of that programme can be followed (free of charge). Have a look at our website for a description of the PhD programmes, including the contact details of the director and coordinator of each.
2.4 Doctoral training programme

Obtaining a PhD is more than conducting a research project. The PhD candidate has the opportunity to develop, improve or refine personal and professional (transferable) skills. The combination of research capabilities and individual skills will prepare PhD candidates for a future career, inside or outside academia.

Chapter 5 of the PhD Guide contains information about the training programme that we, as a graduate school and Utrecht University, offer to PhD candidates. We advise you to read this chapter. It contains important information about composing an Individual Training Plan that fits your PhD candidate. This plan is part of the Training and Supervision Agreement (TSA) that has to be completed together with your PhD candidate within the first 3 months after the start of the PhD. During their PhD journey, candidates need to follow 20 ECs, of which some are mandatory (at the time of writing of this guide, these are Responsible Conduct of Research and specific courses about teaching, if the PhD candidate has teaching responsibilities). PhD candidates should apply for the GSLS Training Certificate at least 2 months before their defence, that can be presented at the end of their thesis defence ceremony.

“
It is important that your PhD candidate completes the MyPhD registration as soon as possible. The TSA has to be completed within the first 3 months after the start of the PhD.
"

PhD GUIDE

Flip this booklet and you will find the PhD Guide. We highly recommend to check the information in there. Chapter 5 includes information about our training programme for PhD candidates.
INTERACTION:

EFFECTIVE SUPERVISOR-PhD

a two-way process
A Dutch PhD is held in high regard. At the same time, we hope that everyone involved is always striving to improve. PhD surveys indicate that a good professional relationship between PhD candidates and supervisors is pivotal for a successful PhD journey. Sadly, about 25% of PhD candidates indicate that they consider their supervision inadequate, and we believe this illustrates suboptimal relationships between PhD candidates and supervisors. Therefore, we aim to provide better support for both, to help you and your PhD candidate build a healthy and professional relationship.

Supervision is a two-way process. Clear and frequent communication, management of expectations, and giving and receiving feedback are crucial components. Instrumental in this are the right attitude and behaviour of both supervisors and PhD candidates.

As a supervisor, you realize that, in accepting a PhD candidate, you take responsibility for an important phase in an individual’s career, not only for their research progress. Supervision is not always easy as you also have other obligations and the interests of your PhD candidate may not always be aligned with your own. Supervision is often a balancing act, and successful supervision is an art. The GSLS aims to support you, by providing an interactive training course on our view on what good supervision entails (see Chapter 5.1).

In the absence of a clear ‘job description’ for PhD supervisors, it is difficult to know what is required and expected from everyone involved. Currently, Utrecht University is working on a policy for PhD supervision to bring about transparency. This will make it easier for supervisors to focus on their responsibilities, and to encourage PhD candidates to take initiative and ask for support. While waiting for the policy, the Graduate School of Life Sciences has adopted the ‘Golden rules for PhD supervision’ of Leiden University. Because these guidelines are about expectations, attitudes and behaviours of both the supervisor and PhD candidate, we refer to it as Effective supervisor-PhD interaction: a two-way process. It is balanced for supervisor and supervisee. Underlying this is the understanding that the supervisor and supervisee enter into a professional work relationship with each other, with the shared goal to have the PhD candidate receive her/his doctorate and ready for next career steps. By setting these guidelines and offering training to develop these skills, we aim to help you establish a professional supervisory relationship with your PhD candidates.
EFFECTIVE SUPERVISOR-PhD INTERACTION: A TWO-WAY PROCESS

This table summarises our vision of the elements of a good working relationship between you and your PhD candidate. It reflects both sides, as you are a team, and management of expectations and providing feedback is very important for establishing a professional relationship.

Be aware that all PhD candidates are different, with their own individual story, culture, competencies and needs.

- Being a supervisor is a demanding job. There is no template for supervision. Keep an open mind and adapt to your PhD candidate.
- Co-supervision can be difficult. Invest time to come to a joint view on the process so that your PhD candidate is not left with uncertainty.
- For a professional environment to function well it needs to be a safe environment. Be aware of the hierarchical character that marks the supervisor-PhD candidate relationship. Build bridges to overcome the distance. Respect the social boundaries that mark a professional relationship.

Be aware that all supervisors are unique human beings, with strengths and weaknesses.

- During supervision, you will encounter your supervisors’ personalities and leadership styles. If something bothers you, discuss it.
- The four-eye principle (at least 2 supervisors) is here to help you and to support your supervision process. If you observe friction in the supervision, this has to be discussed, if necessary, with the help of your independent advisor(s) or another neutral conversation partner.
- A professional environment is created by all who participate in it. A professional relationship requires respect for the social boundaries that come with it. If you feel a lack of respect in the way you are approached, or if other problems occur that you cannot solve on your own, the independent advisors and confidential PhD advisor of your institute are here to give advice and support.
Be aware that doing a PhD is a lengthy process that requires long-term commitment from both sides.

✓ PhD candidates need to feel that you care about the project’s progress and outcome. Your input on the project and its development is essential for your PhD candidate to grow and carry on.
✓ Take responsibility for the project. Be up-to-date, provide your PhD candidate with valuable scientific input, and involve your network in the process. Be a coach when their spirit is low.

Be aware that the PhD journey will be lengthy and not always easy, and that it can, at times, be hard to maintain your initial motivation and enthusiasm.

✓ If things are tough and motivation is low, bring this up during conversations with your colleagues and supervisors. These are stages that all PhD candidates go through.
✓ If working conditions are not optimal, be aware that there is not one fixed structure. You are free to bring up suggestions for change if you think this will improve the situation.
✓ As a PhD candidate, you are member of a larger academic community that is here to support you and we invite you to contribute to it.

Be aware that your regular availability is key to the success of the project.

✓ It is part of your responsibility as a supervisor to take initiative in planning regular supervision meetings.
✓ You are expected to be sufficiently available to your PhD candidate in a professional way. The frequency of meetings and who participate(s) when may vary through the process. Be aware that previous arrangements may need regular adjustment.

Be aware that the success of your project is a joint responsibility.

✓ It is your PhD project and you have a responsibility towards the success of the regular meetings with your supervisors. Take initiative to plan regular meetings. Be well prepared when meeting with your supervisors and ensure that your supervisors can be prepared, too.
✓ Make sure that you get the time you need from your supervisors while being aware of their time constraints.
Be aware that your supervision includes team building.

✓ Supervision is by definition a joint enterprise: together with the other (co-) supervisor(s), you are a team. Make sure you define your roles and act as a team for your PhD candidate.
✓ If you supervise a team of young researchers, it is your task to balance the common good as well as each individual’s needs. The division of tasks within the team is your responsibility. Train yourself as a team builder and be a team player yourself.
✓ Be aware that you combine different roles and responsibilities as a supervisor and a project leader.

Be aware that you are, with your research project, part of a team that can have various shapes and sizes.

✓ Doing research is teamwork. Apart from you and your supervisors, there may be other researchers involved. Define your contribution to the team that you are part of.
✓ Be willing to develop as a team player and to contribute to the teamwork that you are part of, be it the collaboration with your supervisors, your local research team, the research institute or the GSLS.

Be aware that the (perception of) research progress should be discussed. Be open and realistic about your expectations.

✓ Doing research is, by definition, charting unknown territory. Your view on the best next step may change with the development of the project. Be honest about this and show ownership of your changing views. Remember what you say and advise.

Be aware that being honest about your progress is key to the success of your project. Be open about what you need and expect from your supervisors.

✓ Meetings are there to discuss progress as well as struggles and obstacles. Include your questions and uncertainties in the documents you prepare for your meetings. Make notes of the discussion and what next steps to take.
Be aware that the PhD projects you supervise are part of the GSLS.

✓ The relationship between a supervisor and a PhD candidate can suffer from (perceived) interdependence. At the same time, the GSLS forms the larger academic context in which you, as an academic supervisor, and your PhD candidate, as an academic researcher, work and relate to.

✓ Be aware of and commit to the rules and regulations of the GSLS as well as its expectations with respect to professionalism. Be aware of the responsibility the GSLS has towards the quality assurance of all PhD journeys. Please read the Quality Assurance Plan for more information.

Be aware that realistic planning is essential for a PhD candidate.

✓ The plan as initially foreseen, will undoubtedly change during the course of the project. Be prepared for a change by thinking about a plan B when the original plan needs revision. Set short-term goals and celebrate the successes with your PhD candidate.

✓ Make certain that your PhD candidate knows what, in terms of thesis content, is sufficient to graduate.

Be aware that your PhD journey is part of the GSLS.

✓ The relationship between a supervisor and a PhD candidate can suffer from (perceived) interdependence. Be aware of the larger context in which you work as a PhD candidate and member of the GSLS.

✓ Be aware of the possibilities the GSLS offers in terms of professional development and support. The GSLS also offers support in cases of difficulties with regard to your supervision.

Be aware that planning is one of the harder things to do in research and that the original plan is almost certainly going to change.

✓ Keep track of the time you spend on a particular issue. Discuss planning issues with your supervisor on a regular basis. Discuss short-term goals with your supervisor and celebrate your successes together.

✓ Be informed about the expected level and scope of your dissertation and be realistic about its contents. You will write a master proof, not your life’s work.
Be aware that feedback is a two-way exchange.

- You should expect feedback from your PhD candidate just as the latter expects it from you. Be open to the feedback you receive and take it seriously. If no feedback is given, ask for it. You are encouraged to do so a couple of times a year, and at a minimum, during the annual PhD progress meeting with the PhD candidate.
- Remember that your reaction to feedback will have an impact on the openness of your discussions with the PhD candidate.

Be aware that receiving feedback is very helpful for your progress.

- Keep in mind that feedback is meant to help you and is not targeted against you as a person. Feedback is needed to advance your project. If it is not forthcoming, ask for it and use the feedback to your best advantage. Do not be afraid to ask for feedback at an early stage; this prevents you and your supervisor from going in separate directions.
- If you experience the feedback as unhelpful, reflect on it for a while (with others) and discuss it with your supervisor in a professional and inoffensive way.

Be aware that a PhD candidate needs regular feedback that has to be professional, objective, constructive, and balanced.

- Feedback may have a large (emotional) impact on a PhD candidate. Be cautious in choosing where and when to give feedback and be aware of the cultural/ethnic/gender/etc. variation in the research group. Employ language that is inclusive and not hurtful to people with different backgrounds and traditions. Positive feedback is as important as critical comments.

Be aware that your project will benefit from your feedback on the supervision.

- Supervision is meant to guide and accompany you through your PhD journey. You can contribute to your supervision by giving open feedback to your supervisors, always with respect and consideration.
Be aware, that as a supervisor, you are a role model for your PhD candidate, also in terms of stress management and work-life balance.

✓ Be aware that your work attitudes are easily seen as a professional standard. Stimulate your PhD candidates to take breaks and set an example with your own practices.
✓ Be aware that your PhD candidate’s personal life can affect their work and have an open ear for signals that might indicate (too much) stress.

Be aware that your life involves more than your work.

✓ Manage your stress level and respect your boundaries. Also talk to your colleagues and peers about their struggles with doing research. Sharing experiences may help make life as a PhD candidate more agreeable.
✓ Maintain communication with your supervisor and remember that your supervisor has followed the same path before you and can help you put things into perspective.

Be aware that your PhD candidates need stimulation to think about their career after graduation.

✓ Many PhD candidates focus on an academic career only, where jobs are rare and competition is fierce. Anxiety about future career development triggers and increases stress. You can make a difference in discussing this point timely and with well-balanced frequency with your PhD candidate.
✓ Make your professional network available to your PhD candidates.
✓ Help your PhD candidates become aware of different ways to explore the job market.

Be aware that you need to think about your post-graduation career.

✓ Consider your future career, in or outside academia. Spend some dedicated time on this issue. Pursuing a career in science can be stressful and is highly competitive, with fewer jobs in academia. Your supervisor knows you well and can advise you, including about the job market outside academia.
✓ Work on building and growing your network. Let the outside world know who you are.
✓ Invest time in (university-wide) career events.
The **PhD Competence Model** comes with an outer ring of elements that need to be arranged by the institute and/or supervisors. At Utrecht University, **good supervision** is stimulated in several ways. A PhD candidate needs to have a minimum of 2 supervisors, one of which acts as a daily supervisor, and the supervisors have to follow a training in supervision. The supervisor and research institute need to foster a safe **work atmosphere**. **Training and courses** are offered by the PhD programme and PhD Course Centre. PhD training also includes a broad variety of activities, courses outside Utrecht University, and presenting at (inter)national conferences. Furthermore, the institute has to ensure that PhD candidates are only allowed to start their PhD journey if proper funding for the whole PhD journey has been arranged. The supervisors are responsible for arrangement of this (financial) **project security**. The GSLS and Utrecht University Career Services organise activities that help PhD candidates explore **career opportunities** after graduation. It is your responsibility as a supervisor, to give your PhD candidate the time to attend such activities. Utrecht University and the UMC Utrecht have organised a **safety net** for PhD candidates (and supervisors) consisting of confidential advisors with specific expertise if safe work atmosphere has been breached. See Chapter 7 of the PhD Guide for a more detailed description.
4.1 Role and responsibilities of the supervisory team

As defined in the Utrecht University’s Doctoral Degree Regulations (see Chapter 2.2 for the QR code guiding you to this document), the formal supervisory team of each PhD candidate consists of minimal 2 and maximum 4 supervisors (promotors and co-promotors). The supervisory team divides the various tasks and communicates these to the PhD candidate. One member should be assigned to daily supervision. The supervisory team is responsible for the quality of the research, the quality of the doctoral thesis, the development of skills and competencies of the PhD candidate, and the availability of resources, including budget for the entire PhD journey. The latter should be arranged before the PhD candidates starts. Of note, if, at the end of the PhD track, the manuscript is rejected by the Assessment Committee and requires additional work, the supervisory team is responsible for the required budget (salary and bench fee), and extension of the track needs to be approved by the relevant department (Faculty of Science and Faculty of Veterinary Medicine) or division (UMC Utrecht). The supervisory team is also responsible for the formal go/no-go decision at the end of the first year of the PhD journey and – together with the PhD candidate – for the completion plan approximately one year before the provisional end of the PhD journey.

At the start of the PhD journey, arrange the following together with your PhD candidate:

1. Appoint one or – preferably – two independent advisors (see Chapter 4.2).
2. Choose one of the GSLS PhD programmes (see Chapter 2.3).
3. Complete the Training and Supervision Agreement (TSA). An Individual Training Plan is part of the TSA. The TSA has to be completed in MyPhD by the PhD candidate, and approved through MyPhD by all members of the supervisory team, the independent advisors and the PhD programme coordinator. The Individual Training Plan has to be uploaded in MyPhD. It is mandatory to do all of this within 3 months after the start of the PhD journey.
4. The PhD candidate has to register in MyPhD. The PhD candidate has to do this as soon as the points above are arranged. The GSLS and PhD programme have to be entered in MyPhD.
4.2 Independent advisors

The role of the independent advisors is to provide independent advice to both the PhD candidate and the supervisory team concerning the progress (rate, direction) of the PhD track. An independent advisor is a researcher in a field related to that of the PhD candidate, but who is not involved in the PhD candidate’s research project. The minimum contribution of the independent advisors is to discuss the PhD candidate’s annual PhD progress report (see Chapter 4.3) with the PhD candidate and supervisory team. They may also be consulted by your PhD candidate at any time in a confidential setting. Therefore, we advise sufficient distance between you and the independent advisor for your PhD candidate to feel comfortable for confidential consultation.

A letter of appointment is available through the GSLS website that you can use to inform the independent advisor about their role during the PhD journey of the candidate.

4.3 Monitoring your PhD candidate

As detailed in the Collective Labour Agreement (CAO) of Utrecht University and UMC Utrecht all employees – including the PhD candidates with a paid contract – need to have a yearly performance interview. The supervisor has an annual Performance & Goals interview (UMC Utrecht) or Assessment & Development Interview (Utrecht University) with the PhD candidate, according to the rules and guidelines of the institute. A written report of the interview is provided to the HR department of the relevant faculty/research institute.

Besides being an employee, a PhD candidate can also be regarded as a student, pursuing an academic title. To monitor the progress of this educational track, the PhD candidate will provide a written PhD progress report each year, to be discussed with the supervisory team and independent advisors during the annual PhD progress meeting. The report contains a standardised evaluation of all aspects of the work from the past period, insights into the project’s progress and re-evaluation by the PhD candidate and supervisors concerning the expectations of the PhD project. Evaluation of the training activities is included as well. The last progress report contains a completion plan of the PhD journey. A copy of the PhD progress report is sent to the candidate’s PhD programme coordinator. The format for the annual PhD progress report is available on the GSLS website. Although the content partially overlaps, this report is separate from the yearly performance review of PhD candidates employed by Utrecht University or the UMC Utrecht. Both annual reviews may efficiently be combined.
4.4 Timetable arrangements

This timetable refers to PhD candidates with a full-time research mandate of 4 years.

![Diagram showing the timetable]

**Preparation**
- **When?** Minimum 4 weeks before the start of the PhD (2 months for foreigners)
- **What is expected from the supervisor?**
  - Arrange practical aspects with HR. Make sure there is research funding for the entire PhD journey.
  - Compose the supervisory team (Chapter 4.1) and divide the various supervision tasks.

**Registration & admission to PhD track**
- **When?** At the start of PhD
- **What is expected from the supervisor?**
  - Choose one of the GSLS PhD programmes together with your PhD candidate (Chapter 2.3).
  - Appoint 1 or – preferably – 2 independent advisors (Chapter 4.2).
  - Have your PhD candidate register via MyPhD. It is important to do this as soon as possible (Chapter 1.4 of PhD Guide).

**Completion of Training & Supervision Agreement (TSA)**
- **When?** Within 3 months after start of PhD
- **What is expected from the supervisor?**
  - Complete the TSA, including the Individual Training Plan, together with your PhD candidate (Chapter 5.5 of PhD Guide).

**PhD progress meeting**
- **When?** End of Year 1, 2 and 3
- **What is expected from the supervisor?**
  - For all PhD candidates: have a PhD progress meeting with PhD candidate and independent advisor(s). Use the Annual PhD Progress Report form, available through our website (Chapter 4.3).
  - For employed PhD candidates only: have an annual assessment interview according to your institute HR regulations. This can be combined with the PhD progress meeting.
WHEN?  
End of Year 1  
(between 9-11 months)

WHAT IS EXPECTED FROM THE SUPERVISOR?  
- Have a formal go/no-go meeting with your PhD candidate. This can be part of the first annual PhD progress meeting.

End of Year 3, minimum 1 year before the end of the PhD track

- Together with PhD candidate and independent advisors, make a completion plan that leads to submission of the thesis manuscript to the Assessment Committee by the end of the paid contract. This can be part of the last annual PhD progress meeting.

End of Year 4, submit manuscript before end of contract  
(manuscript has to be submitted at least 4 months before the intended defence date)

- See the Utrecht University website for the arrangements that have to be made, including composition of Assessment Committee, submission manuscript and doctoral thesis defence.

2 months before doctoral thesis defence

- Submit a request for a GSLS Training Certificate to pcc@uu.nl. Use the form available on the GSLS website.
5.1 Training in supervision

If you are supervising a PhD candidate at the GSLS for the first time, it is mandatory at Utrecht University to follow the training course, **Supervising PhD candidates at the GSLS**. You need to follow this training during the first two years of supervising a PhD candidate. If you have had similar training for supervising PhD candidates from other graduate schools of Utrecht University or at another university, you can apply for a waiver with the dean of the faculty where you are appointed or with the director of doctoral education of the GSLS. If you are supervising for the first time, the other member(s) of the supervisory team of your PhD candidate has to be more experienced in PhD supervision.

You will have achieved the following learning objectives after the training:

- ✔ You have reflected on your own supervision practice.
- ✔ You have gained insights into your own strengths and development points, but also into those of your PhD candidate.
- ✔ You will be able to apply didactical insights (theories) to your own supervision practices.
- ✔ You have broadened your supervision skills (e.g., coaching & conversation skills, feedback skills).
- ✔ You have practiced how to use effective ways to handle intercultural work situations.
- ✔ You will be able to signal problem behaviours in time, and deal with difficult situations in your supervision practices from a broader perspective.
- ✔ You have formulated, implemented and evaluated plans of how to optimize your supervision practices to meet the needs of your PhD candidates.
- ✔ You have developed a personal supervision plan.

You can find more information about the training on the website.

completion of the training **Supervising PhD candidates at the GSLS** is mandatory for individuals applying for a Senior University Teaching Qualification (SKO).

5.2 Evaluation of supervision

The quality of supervision will be discussed during your annual assessment/performance interview according to the HR procedures of the faculties and associated institutes where you are employed (Performance & Goals at the UMC Utrecht or Assessment & Development Interview at Utrecht University). The quality of supervision can, for example, be measured by 360° feedback from peers and possibly also PhD candidates. Furthermore, duration of the PhD track and success rates can be discussed.

In addition to this formal interview, the quality of supervision by the supervisory team is monitored informally by one or two independent advisors.
5.3 Supervisor of the Year Awards

Each year, members of the GSLS PhD Council organise an event for supervisors focusing on quality of supervision. This event includes the festive Supervisor of the Year Award, including Daily Supervisor and Supervisor of the Year. PhD candidates can nominate their (co-) supervisors and illustrate why they find them brilliant scientists, role models, highly accessible, enthusiastic, or just great in any other way. They can inspire you to guide your PhD candidates in the best possible way. The PhD Council will interview a selection of the nominations to decide the award winners.
6

THE

DOCTORAL

THESIS
6.1 Thesis requirements

The doctoral thesis needs to be submitted to the Assessment Committee before the end of the PhD candidate’s contract. If this cannot be achieved, a paid extension of the PhD journey is necessary. The requirements, procedures, responsibilities and rules pertaining to the doctoral thesis are described in the Doctoral Degree Regulations of Utrecht University. You can find it on the university’s website in English and Dutch (see Chapter 2.2. for the QR code guiding you to the documents). The supervisory team, as well as the PhD candidate, are responsible for the quality of the research in the doctoral thesis according to the prevailing standards.

In addition to these general requirements, the GSLS has formulated several additional guidelines for the thesis of a GSLS PhD candidate. These guidelines reflect our vision on doctoral education. A PhD journey is the training of a young academic towards an independent scientist, who is fit for a career inside or outside academia. The doctoral thesis is a written document demonstrating the scientific development of the PhD candidate.

THESIS CONTENT

In contrast to common belief, the thesis does not need to contain papers published or accepted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. The thesis must contain at least a general introduction, publishable research chapters and a general discussion. The chapters in a PhD thesis form a collective unit, which contains a thread through the thesis that is reflected upon in the general discussion.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

In the general introduction, your PhD candidate describes their view of the current state-of-the-art in your discipline. They highlight gaps in scientific knowledge and introduce an overview of the thesis research. The general introduction contains information that readers need to know in order to comprehend the context of the research chapters. A review article may be used as part of the general introduction. In this case, a short general introduction and overview of the thesis has to be added. There is explicitly no minimum length for the introduction; quality is the only criterion.

RESEARCH CHAPTERS

Each research chapter contains work, demonstrating that your PhD candidate followed the scientific research cycle:

- your PhD candidate identifies a gap in scientific knowledge;
- your PhD candidate outlines an approach;
- your PhD candidate describes an appropriate collection and analysis of data, or existing relevant databases;
- your PhD candidate reflects on the results within the context of the specific field.
The length and format of a chapter, the scientific depth, the quality of data collection and analysis thereof, should be of a level customary to the specific discipline. For further details, please read the separate section, *When can a manuscript be part of the doctoral thesis?*. There is no requirement for the number of research chapters in a PhD thesis: quality, coherence and the specific contributions of the candidate prevail over quantity. The guideline is 3 or more publishable chapters, but fewer can be justified for example by the extensiveness of the work. We define a publishable chapter as a (future) publication or a substantial part of a more extensive study.

**GENERAL DISCUSSION**

Where research chapters and sometimes the general introduction are collaborative efforts, the general discussion should be your PhD candidate’s own product. In this final chapter, your PhD candidate reflects with a bird’s-eye perspective on their research chapters and notable findings. Your PhD candidate identifies future opportunities for research, and discusses the impact on the research field and society. There is explicitly no minimum length for the discussion; quality is the only criterion.

**PERSONAL & SCIENTIFIC DEVELOPMENT**

Your PhD candidate’s development is typically broader than the scientific content of their research chapters. PhD candidates can reflect on their broader personal and scientific development in an attachment to their thesis. This is optional and may be used by the Assessment Committee to acquire a complete picture of your PhD candidate, as an academic in training. However, it falls outside the thesis content and will not be judged by the Assessment Committee. Your candidate may use the GSLS PhD Competence Model (see Chapter 5.1 of the PhD Guide) as a guideline to draft this attachment. Examples of such a PhD portfolio can be found on our website.
WHEN CAN A MANUSCRIPT BE PART OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS?

✓ The **degree of your PhD candidate’s scientific contribution** determines whether a manuscript can be part of their doctoral thesis. Not their position in the list of authors. Therefore, each chapter of their thesis should explicitly indicate how your PhD candidate has contributed to this work. If relevant, this also applies to the general introduction and discussion. Please use the QR code to find examples of author contribution statements on our website.

✓ Collection of data only by your PhD candidate is not sufficient in itself for inclusion of a chapter. Your PhD candidate should have **followed the scientific research cycle** (see the section ‘Research Chapters’).

✓ If your PhD candidate, as **part of a team effort**, has conducted a crucial part of a larger study, but your PhD candidate is not the first, second or last author, the work can still be included in the thesis, as long as your PhD candidate explains their role in the study. If your PhD candidate's contribution to that publication is not sufficient in itself to be a chapter, your PhD candidate may supplement the material with their own relevant work.

✓ A **(publishable) research chapter** does not already have to be submitted or accepted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal to be included in the thesis. However, the PhD candidate and the supervisors should strive to publish these chapters in peer-reviewed open-access scientific journals. For manuscripts that are published or will be in the future, your PhD candidate will be (co)author of the respective thesis chapters, in recognition of their scientific work.
6.2 Assessment Committee

In assessing the PhD thesis, the Assessment Committee uses an assessment form based on these guidelines and those in the Doctoral Degree Regulations of Utrecht University. The supervisor has to send the committee an instruction letter provided by the GSLS.

When committee members accept the invitation to take part in the committee, they are asked to document their decision within 1 month in MyPhD. They assess the thesis on four aspects, namely originality, scientific level, written presentation and an overall assessment. In addition, they will be asked if the thesis might be awarded *cum laude* designation, i.e., thesis quality is among the top 3-5% in the relevant field of research worldwide.