



### Graduate School of Geosciences View on PhD supervision

A successful PhD project requires dedication and commitment of all persons involved. The mutual expectations of PhD candidates and supervisors within the [Graduate School of Geosciences](#) are formulated in the GSG View on PhD supervision.

This view is taken from the Graduate School of Humanities View on PhD supervision<sup>1</sup>, which is based on Leiden University's ['Golden rules for PhD supervision'](#).

	Supervisor	PhD Candidate
<b>Be professional</b>	<p><b>Be aware that all PhD candidates are unique human beings, with their own individual story, culture, competences, and needs.</b></p> <p>Being a supervisor is a demanding job. There is no template for supervision. Keep an open mind and adapt to the PhD candidate.</p> <p>Co-supervision can be difficult. Invest time to come to a joint view on the process so that the PhD candidate is not left in a quandary.</p> <p>For a professional environment to function well it needs to be a safe environment. Be aware of the hierarchical character that marks the relationship supervisor-PhD candidate. Build bridges to overcome the distance. Respect the social boundaries that mark a professional relationship.</p>	<p><b>Be aware that all supervisors are unique human beings, with their strengths and weaknesses.</b></p> <p>In the supervision process you will encounter your supervisors' personality and leadership style. If something bothers you, address it.</p> <p>The four-eye principle is there to help you and to support the supervision process. If you observe friction in the supervision, this must be addressed, if necessary, with the help of a neutral conversation partner.</p> <p>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, people like your departmental mentor or the Graduate School PhD-advisor are there to give advice and support.</p>
<b>Be committed</b>	<p><b>Be aware that doing a PhD is a lengthy process that requires long-term commitment from both sides.</b></p> <p>PhD candidates need to feel that you care about the project's progress and outcome. Your input on the</p>	<p><b>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.</b></p> <p>If things are tough and motivation is less, bring this in in conversations with your supervisors and</p>

<sup>1</sup> References to Graduate School-specific aspects have been adapted.

	<p>project and its development is essential for the PhD candidate to grow and carry on.</p> <p>Take responsibility for the project. Be up to date, provide your PhD candidate with valuable scientific input and fair feedback on how (s)he is functioning, and involve your network in the process. Be a coach when the spirit is low.</p>	<p>colleagues. These are stages that all PhD candidates go through.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>As a PhD candidate you are member of a larger academic community that is there to support you and invites you to contribute to it.</p>
<b>Be available</b>	<p><b>Be aware that your regular availability is key to the success of the project.</b></p> <p>It is part of your responsibility as a supervisor to take initiative in planning regular supervision meetings.</p> <p>You are expected to be sufficiently available to the 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.</p>	<p><b>Be aware that the success of your project is a joint responsibility.</b></p> <p>It is your PhD-project and you have a responsibility towards the success of the regular meetings with your supervisor. Be well prepared when meeting with your supervisor and ensure that your supervisor can be prepared, too.</p> <p>Make sure that you get the time you need from your supervisors while being aware of their time constraints.</p>
<b>Be a team-player</b>	<p><b>Be aware that your supervision includes team building.</b></p> <p>Supervision is by definition a joint enterprise: together with your PhD candidate, possible other researchers, and the co-supervisor(s) you are a team. Make sure you define your roles and act jointly towards the 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.</p>	<p><b>Be aware that you are, with your research project, part of a team that can have various shapes and sizes.</b></p> <p>Doing research is teamwork. Apart from you and your supervisors, there will often be other researchers involved. Define your contribution to the team that you are part of.</p>

	Be aware that you combine different roles and responsibilities as a supervisor and a project leader.	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 department or other (national or international) collaborations.
<b>Be part of the Graduate School</b>	<p><b>Be aware that the PhD projects you supervise are part of the Graduate School</b></p> <p>The relationship between a supervisor and a PhD candidate can suffer from (perceived) interdependence. At the same time, the Graduate School forms the larger academic context in which you as an academic supervisor and your PhD candidate as an academic researcher work and relate to.</p> <p>Be aware of and commit to the rules and regulations of the Graduate School as well as its expectations in respect to professionalism. Be aware of the responsibility the Graduate School has towards the quality assurance of all PhD trajectories. Encourage the PhD candidates to benefit from the training program offered by the Graduate School and provide room for this.</p>	<p><b>Be aware that your PhD trajectory is part of the Graduate School</b></p> <p>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 Graduate School.</p> <p>Be aware of the possibilities the Graduate School offers in terms of professional development and support. The Graduate School also offers support in case of difficulties with regard to the supervision.</p>
<b>Be consistent and clear</b>	<p><b>Be aware that the (perception of) research progress should be addressed. Be open and realistic about your expectations.</b></p> <p>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 communicate about your possibly changed views. Remember what you say and advise.</p>	<p><b>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.</b></p> <p>Meetings are there to discuss progress as well as struggles and obstacles. Include your questions and uncertainties in the documents that prepare the meeting. Make notes of the discussion and what next steps to take.</p>
<b>Be time aware</b>	<p><b>Be aware that realistic planning is essential for a PhD candidate.</b></p> <p>The plan as initially foreseen will undoubtedly change during the</p>	<p><b>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.</b></p> <p>Keep track of the time you spend on a particular issue. Discuss planning</p>

	<p>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 the PhD candidate.</p> <p>Make certain that the PhD candidate knows what, in terms of thesis content, is sufficient to graduate.</p>	<p>issues with your supervisor at a regular basis. Discuss short term goals with your supervisor and celebrate your successes together.</p> <p>Be informed about the expected level and scope of the dissertation and be realistic about its contents. You write a master proof, not a life's work.</p>
<p><b>Be willing to receive feedback</b></p>	<p><b>Be aware that feedback is a two-way exchange.</b></p> <p>You should expect feedback from the 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 several times a year, but, in any case, during the yearly progress interview with the PhD candidate.</p> <p>Remember that your reaction to the feedback will have an impact on the openness of your discussions with the PhD candidate.</p>	<p><b>Be aware that receiving feedback is very helpful for your progress.</b></p> <p>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 in an early stage; this prevents you and your supervisor from going in separate directions.</p> <p>If you experience the feedback as unhelpful, reflect on it for a while (possibly with others) and discuss it with your supervisor in a professional and inoffensive way.</p>
<p><b>Be willing to give feedback</b></p>	<p><b>Be aware that a PhD candidate needs regular feedback that must be professional, objective, constructive, and balanced.</b></p> <p>Feedback may have a large (emotional) impact on the 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.</p>	<p><b>Be aware that your project will benefit from your feedback on the supervision.</b></p> <p>Supervision is meant to guide and accompany you through your PhD trajectory. You can contribute to the supervision by giving open feedback to your supervisors, always with respect and consideration.</p>
<p><b>Be aware of stressors</b></p>	<p><b>Be aware that as a supervisor you are a role model for the PhD candidate, also in terms of stress management and work-life balance.</b></p>	<p><b>Be aware that your life involves more than your work.</b></p>

	<p>Be aware that your work attitudes are easily seen as a professional standard. Stimulate the PhD candidates to take breaks and set an example by your own practice.</p> <p>Be aware that the PhD candidate's personal life story can affect their work and have an open ear for signals that might indicate (too much) stress.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Maintain the communication with your supervisor and remember that your supervisor has followed the same path before you and can also help you to put things in perspective.</p>
<p><b>Be future-oriented</b></p>	<p><b>Be aware that your PhD candidates need stimulation to think about their career after graduation.</b></p> <p>Many PhD candidates focus on an academic career only, where jobs are rare and competition is stern. 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.</p> <p>Make your professional network available to your PhD candidates.</p> <p>Make your PhD candidates aware of ways to explore the job market outside academia.</p>	<p><b>Be aware that you need to think about your career after graduation.</b></p> <p>Consider your future career, in- or outside academia. Spend some dedicated time on this issue. Pursuing an academic career can be stressful and is highly competitive. There are very few jobs in academia. Your supervisor knows you well and can advise you, also if this entails orientation on the job market outside academia.</p> <p>Work on your network. Let the outside world know who you are.</p> <p>Invest time in (university wide) career events.</p>