Department of Biosciences  
University of Oslo

**Managing expectations between  
PhD candidates and their supervisor(s)[[1]](#footnote-1)**

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This document is a helpful tool to address the **different expectations** that the PhD candidates and supervisors bring to supervision meetings, in order to have a more collaborative and supportive supervision process based on mutual understanding. More specifically, this document can:

1. Help prepare the PhD candidate and supervisor for their first meetings;
2. Form the basis for the discussion in which the PhD candidate and supervisor agree on their roles and responsibilities and how to implement the supervision process

Both the PhD candidate and the supervisor can formulate their opinions and expectations on the different issues addressed below, and the documents will form the basis for the discussion on expectations in the introductory conversation. We do advise the candidate and supervisor to write down their mutual understanding of these and other potential issues after their discussion and agreement. It is also recommended that the PhD candidate and supervisor revisit this document at a later stage, because expectations and needs may change over the course of the PhD.

There are several websites where the supervisor and candidate can get more information:

* **PhD on Track**: <http://www.phdontrack.net>
* **PhD Supervision**: <http://www.mn.uio.no/english/research/phd/>
* **Ethical Guidelines for Supervisors at UiO:** <http://www.uio.no/english/about/regulations/ethical-guidelines/ethical-guidelines-supervisors/index.html>
* **Formal regulations at UiO**: <http://www.uio.no/english/about/regulations/research/doctoral-degree/>
  + **Supplementary regulations at the MN Faculty:** <https://www.mn.uio.no/english/research/phd/regulations/regulations.html>

**General**

*The PhD is mainly seen as an:*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Employment  Education  Both  Other | Comments: |

*The aim of a PhD is:*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| To write a thesis  To become a competent researcher  Both | Discussion: Other important goals of PhD education |

**Supervision**

*What should be the main form of supervision?*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Spontaneous talks  Booked appointments  Both | Comments: |

*How often should the supervision take place?*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Daily  Weekly  Two-weekly  Monthly  When necessary | Discussion: e.g. more frequent in the beginning/at challenging points of the PhD project? |

*Who should take the initiative for planning and setting up the supervision meetings?*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Supervisor  PhD candidate  Both | Comments: |

*What is the role of the co-supervisor(s)?*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Have regular supervision meetings  PhD candidate/main supervisor will contact co-supervisor when needed  Other | Discussion: Should each supervisor have a specific role (experiments, writing, etc.). Should they be part of the decision-makings of the PhD project? |

*How quickly is the supervisor expected to read the manuscript and respond?*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Same day  1 week  2 weeks  1 month  Other | Discussion: What is the desired form of feedback? |

*Who is responsible for the PhD candidate’s project timeline?*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Supervisor  PhD candidate  Both | Discussion: Making and following the timeline, and taking the responsibility to revise it when needed? |

*Research should be done:*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| According to the project timeline with deadlines  Freely  Other | Comments: |

*Who defines any possible deadlines?*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Supervisor  PhD candidate  Both | Comments: |

**Research**

*Who defines the original research?*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Supervisor  PhD candidate  Both | Discussion: Start talking about the formulation of research questions, what is expected of the candidate to do on their own, what should they get help with? |

*How will the research work be done?*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Alone  Together with others  Other | Comments: |

*Who is the driving force in the research project (attending meetings, making contacts, etc.)?*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Supervisor  PhD candidate  Both | Comments: |

*Who solves practical problems (equipment, analysis, logistics etc.)?*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Supervisor  PhD candidate  Both | Comments: |

**Thesis**

*Who decides the contents of the thesis?*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Supervisor  PhD candidate  Other | Comments: |

*Who decides the type of thesis (monograph or compilation of articles with the “kappe”)?*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| PhD candidate  Supervisor  In collaboration | Discussion: Discuss the differences, and the expectations and traditions within the field |

*The PhD student can decide the length of the thesis (number of papers and chapters)?*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Yes  No  In collaboration with the supervisor | Comments: |

**Publication/property rights/research ethics**

*Who has the right to the research results of the PhD candidate?*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| The department /University of Oslo  Supervisor  PhD candidate | Discussion: [Work results](https://www.uio.no/english/for-employees/employment/work-results/rights-to-work-results.html) |

*Who decides on the publication channels for the research results?*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Supervisor  PhD candidate  Both | Comments: |

*Who is responsible for identifying and addressing ethical issues related to the research? This must also be addressed in the project description.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Supervisor  PhD candidate  Both | Discussion: who should develop the [data management plan](https://www.uio.no/english/for-employees/support/research/research-data-management/index.html), apply for relevant permits/approvals, rights to publication of research results, FAIR principles, etc. |

**Financing**

*Who takes care of the project’s running costs (driftsmidler) (materials, etc.)?*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Supervisor  PhD candidate | Comments: What amount do they have at their disposal, how should they be used |

*Who applies for means to travel to conferences, workshops, etc.?*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Project leader (if external project)  Supervisor  PhD candidate | Comments: |

**Workplace**

*Computer, phone, specialised software, tools, etc.:*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| PhD candidate needs to organise this  Supervisor will organise this | Comments: |

**Working hours and vacation**

*Work hours*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Free working hours  PhD candidate should be at work during core hours  Other | Discussion: what does it mean to have a “[particularly independent post](https://www.uio.no/english/about/regulations/personnel/academic/regulations-working-hours.html#toc2)”, not governed by normal working hours regulations |

*PhD candidate should work more than the usual working time:*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Agree  Disagree | Comments: |

*Vacation:*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Strict vacation period (July)  Free vacation period  Other (please specify) | Discussion: Should the vacation period be in agreement between PhD candidate and supervisor |

**Courses**

*Who decides which courses the PhD candidate should take?*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Supervisor  PhD candidate  Both | Comments: |

*Courses should be chosen:*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| From a specific research field  From a broad research field | Comments: |

**Duty work (for those who have)**

*The duty work is a part of the training and relevant for the student’s further career:*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| To a large degree  To some degree  To a limited degree | Comments: |

**Extras**

*Discuss if the following is important and why:*

*Taking part in the group/department/institution’s common scientific work (seminars/meetings etc.) is:*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Important  Not important  Other | Comments: |

*Mingling with other PhD candidates and researchers at the department/my research group is:*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Important  Not important  Other | Comments: |

*Participating in academic activities with other PhD candidates in my research group/at the department is:*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Important  Not important  Other | Comments: |

*Taking part in the common social activities in the department/institution (coffee breaks, discussions, parties, etc.) is:*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Important  Not important | Comments: |

**Additional notes:**

1. This document is based on a document prepared by Department of Informatics, which again is based on the NTNU document ”Discussion Material for Newly Accepted PhD Candidates and their Supervisors, which is based, with only minor modifications, on the work of Johan Bijnens at Lund University, Sweden. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)