

Dialogue tool for PhD students and their PhD supervisors



Why?

Aligning expectations early in the process and making clear agreements on core aspects of the project can create good energy and motivation throughout the PhD study. If it is not done, ambiguity of expectation can lead to unnecessary misunderstandings and disappointments on both sides. This tool will help you navigate all aspects of the PhD study process, make implicit expectations explicit and to organize the work and collaboration for the benefit of both parties.

Who?

The tool is developed to encourage dialogue between the PhD student and the principal supervisor and ensure that you cover aspects relevant for completing the PhD plan and each of the half-year reports, respectively. If one of the co-supervisors is planned to carry out a substantial part of the day-to-day supervision *it is vital* that this person also takes part in the dialogue. A separate tool for aligning expectations among the principal supervisor and co-supervisors is accessible and DTU encourages the supervisors to make use of the [supervisor tool](#)

How?

The dialogue tool is related to the PhD plan and each of the half-year reports, respectively. Each part includes matters relevant to discuss before completing the study plan or each of the half-year reports. Set up a meeting and allot 1-2 hours to talk through all of the questions. The supervisor(s) should be conscious of the importance of listening to the PhD students' input before stating the 'common practices'. Where relevant, note down decisions in bullet point form. It may also be relevant to consider some issues covered in this tool at the [first-year interview](#) or at your [Employee development dialogue \(MUS\)](#).

Dialogue tool for the PhD plan

These questions are intended as a basis of discussion in connection with completing the PhD plan. You can use the questions to align expectations on your collaboration and activities during the PhD project.

1. Meetings

- 1.1. Who initiates meetings?
- 1.2. Who participates in which meetings (also internal and external co-supervisors)?
- 1.3. How often do you meet?

2. Communication

- 2.1. How does the PhD student give updates on work in progress and to whom?
- 2.2. How are decisions communicated and who needs to be informed?
- 2.3. How will the supervisor(s) be available to help the PhD student with personal issues that arise during the course of study?

3. Planning work and prioritizing activities

- 3.1. Who is responsible for planning the PhD student's daily work?
- 3.2. Which activities are relevant for the PhD student? (conferences, courses, dissemination activities etc.)

4. Making resources available

- 4.1. Which resources are needed? (proof reading, office, lab, external research stay, etc.)
- 4.2. Who deals with budget and time keeping?

5. Skills

- 5.1. Which skills needed in the project do the PhD student already possess and which need to be developed?
- 5.2. Who and which activities will support the PhD student in developing the necessary skills? (supervisor, co-supervisor, academic writing competencies, courses, etc.)

6. Teaching

- 6.1. How will teaching assignments be arranged and how will the supervisor be involved?

7. Collaboration and feedback

- 7.1. If the PhD project is part of a larger research project, how does the PhD student navigate among the different (and possibly conflicting) demands of collaborators?
- 7.2. How does the supervisor(s) expect to get feedback on her/his supervision?
- 7.3. How does the PhD student expect to get feedback on progress?

8. External stay

- 8.1. Which criteria are important when considering the external stay?
- 8.2. How do the PhD student and the supervisor plan the external stay?

9. Career and motivation

- 9.1. Why is the PhD student doing a PhD?
- 9.2. What are the PhD student's goals and ambitions with the PhD project?

Resources & good advice

- [Read about the PhD plan and DTU's requirements for teaching and dissemination](#)
- [Read about requirements and advice related to the external research stay](#)

Dialogue tool for the first half-year report

These questions are intended as a basis of discussion in connection with completing the first half-year report. You can use the questions to discuss your collaboration and activities during the PhD project.

1. Roles

To what extent is it the responsibility of the PhD student to

- 1.1. ... prepare a study design?
- 1.2. ... manage the process?
- 1.3. ... solve scientific problems?
- 1.4. What scientific, methodological and generic skills do the different supervisors possess?
- 1.5. Who will be responsible for supervising the different parts of the PhD process?

2. Research integrity

- 2.1. What research output or other information from the research group (manuscripts, presentations, etc.) can be shared and with whom?
- 2.2. How does the PhD student manage his/her research data?

3. Work-life-balance

- 3.1. How does the PhD student experience work-life-balance?

Resources & good advice

- [DTU's Code of Conduct](#)
- [Learn about requirements and advice related to the external research stay](#)
- [One hour e-learning course on data management for PhD students](#)
- [DTU Library](#) (Information on Research data and data management)
- [Counselling for work-related issues](#) (service for PhD students employed at DTU)

Dialogue tool for the second half-year report

These questions are intended as a basis of discussion in connection with completing the second half-year report. You can use these questions to discuss your collaboration and activities during the PhD project.

1. Meetings and planning work

- 1.1. How does your meeting routine work for all of you?
- 1.2. Do you have a good routine for planning the daily work of the PhD student?

2. Roles

- 2.1. How is the PhD student managing the study design, process and solving of scientific problems and what is the role of the supervisor?
- 2.2. How is the supervisor managing supervision?
- 2.3. Does the PhD student get sufficient feedback on progress?
- 2.4. If the PhD project is part of a larger research project, how does the PhD student navigate among the different (and possibly conflicting) demands of collaborators?
- 2.5. How is the communication between different collaborators of the PhD project?

3. Writing and feedback

- 3.1. When and what does the PhD student start writing? (give examples)
- 3.2. What kind of help is needed to improve academic writing competences, e.g. courses?
- 3.3. How will the supervisor, co-supervisor or others contribute to actual writing of articles/thesis? (why and how)
- 3.4. How will the supervisor handle giving feedback on manuscripts? (deadlines, giving feedback on the same text several times? etc.)
- 3.5. Which type of feedback on manuscripts will the supervisor give? (structure, grammar, content, arguments)
- 3.6. What kind of cover letter does the supervisor prefer when receiving a text for feedback? (see example below)

4. Integration in research environments

- 4.1. Which networks is the PhD student part of and which would be interesting to participate in?
- 4.2. How are expectations for presenting scientific material in research groups, feedback on the work of others, etc. coordinated and which role does the PhD student have in this coordination?

5. Research integrity

- 5.1. How should the PhD student deal with copyright issues on articles that he/she wants to include in the PhD thesis?
- 5.2. How and in which cases should the PhD student credit contributions aside from co-authorship?
- 5.3. How is the PhD student managing her/his research data?

6. Teaching

- 6.1. How are teaching assignments arranged and what is the appropriate balance between teaching workload and other activities?

Resources and good advice

- Cover letter example: When text is sent for feedback these questions can be addressed in the e-mail:
 - a) What kind of 'text' have you sent and how close to 'finished' is it?
 - b) What do you like about the text?
 - c) What challenges are you facing when writing the text?
 - d) On what would you like feedback?
- [DTU's co-author statement](#) (Document under 'Forms')

Dialogue tool for the third half-year report

These questions are intended as a basis of discussion in connection with completing the third half-year report. You can use the questions to discuss your collaboration and activities during the PhD project.

1. Meetings and planning work

- 1.1. How does your meeting routine work for all of you?
- 1.2. Do you have a good routine for planning the daily work of the PhD student?

2. Roles

- 2.1. How is the PhD student managing the study design, process and solving of scientific problems and what is the role of the supervisor?
- 2.2. How is the supervisor managing supervision?
- 2.3. Does the PhD student get sufficient feedback on progress?
- 2.4. If the PhD project is part of a larger research project, how does the PhD student navigate among the different (and possibly conflicting) demands of collaborators?

3. Prioritizing activities and skills

- 3.1. How are different activities (conferences, courses, dissemination etc.) contributing to the progress of the PhD project?
- 3.2. To what extent is the PhD student developing necessary skills?

4. Teaching

- 4.1. How are teaching assignments arranged and is the balance between teaching workload and other activities appropriate?

4. Work-life-balance

- 4.1. How does the PhD student experience work-life-balance?

Dialogue tool for the fourth half-year report

These questions are intended as a basis of discussion in connection with completing the fourth half-year report. You can use the questions to discuss your collaboration, activities during the PhD project and research integrity.

1. Meetings and planning work

- 1.1. How does your meeting routine work for all of you?
- 1.2. Do you have a good routine for planning the daily work of the PhD student?

2. Roles

- 2.1. How is the PhD student managing the study design, process and solving of scientific problems and what is the role of the supervisor?
- 2.2. How is the supervisor managing supervision?
- 2.3. Does the PhD student get sufficient feedback on progress?
- 2.4. If the PhD project is part of a larger research project, how does the PhD student navigate among the different (and possibly conflicting) demands of collaborators?

3. Teaching

- 3.1. How are teaching assignments arranged and is the balance between teaching workload and other activities appropriate?

4. Writing and feedback

- 4.1. What is the status on writing articles/thesis?
- 4.2. How does giving feedback work for the supervisor (type of feedback, cover letter etc.)?
- 4.3. How does receiving feedback work for the PhD student?

5. Research integrity

- 5.1. How should the PhD student deal with copyright issues on articles that he/she wants to include in the PhD thesis?
- 5.2. How, and in which cases should the PhD student credit contributions aside from co-authorship?
- 5.3. Are there any doubts as to what research output or other information from the research group (manuscripts, presentations, etc.) can be shared and with whom?

Resources & good advice

- [DTU's co-author statement](#) (Document under 'Forms')
- [DTU's guidelines on how to avoid plagiarism and self-plagiarism in PhD theses](#)

Dialogue tool for the fifth half-year report

These questions are intended as a basis of discussion in connection with completing the fifth half-year report. You can use the questions to discuss your collaboration, activities during the PhD project and the PhD student's thoughts on his/her career.

1. Meetings and planning work

- 1.1. How does your meeting routine work for all of you?
- 1.2. Do you have a good routine for planning the daily work of the PhD student?

2. Roles

- 2.1. How is the PhD student managing the study design, process and solving of scientific problems and what is the role of the supervisor?
- 2.2. How is the supervisor managing supervision?
- 2.3. Does the PhD student get sufficient feedback on progress?
- 2.4. If the PhD project is part of a larger research project, how does the PhD student navigate among the different (and possibly conflicting) demands of collaborators?

3. Prioritizing activities

- 3.1. How are different activities (conferences, courses, dissemination etc.) contributing to the progress of the PhD project?

4. Career

- 4.1. How is the PhD student's motivation for his/her project at the moment?
- 4.2. How confident is the PhD student that the project will be a success? Is the PhD student keeping up?
- 4.3. How does the PhD student experience interest for the project in the department? Is there something the PhD student could do in order to enhance interest?
- 4.4. To what extent is the PhD student participating in relevant networks?
- 4.5. How does the PhD student experience work-life-balance?
- 4.6. Which dreams and wishes does the PhD student have in regard to career after the PhD project?

Dialogue tool for the sixth half-year report

These questions are intended as a basis of discussion in connection with completing the sixth half-year report. You can use the questions to discuss your collaboration, writing and research integrity as well as the PhD student's thoughts on his/her career.

1. Meetings and planning work

- 1.1. How does your meeting routine work for all of you?
- 1.2. Do you have a good routine for planning the daily work of the PhD student?

2. Roles and feedback

- 2.1. How is the PhD student managing the study design, process and solving of scientific problems and what is the role of the supervisor?
- 2.2. How is the supervisor managing supervision?
- 2.3. Does the PhD student get sufficient feedback on progress?
- 2.4. If the PhD project is part of a larger research project, how does the PhD student navigate among the different (and possibly conflicting) demands of collaborators?

3. Writing and feedback

- 3.1. What is the status on writing articles/thesis?
- 3.2. How does giving feedback work for supervisor (type of feedback, cover letter etc.)?
- 3.3. How does receiving feedback work for the PhD student?

4. Research integrity

- 4.1. How should the PhD student deal with copyright issues on articles that he/she wants to include in the PhD thesis?
- 4.2. How, and in which cases should the PhD student credit contributions aside from co-authorship?
- 4.3. What research output or other information from the research group (manuscripts, presentations, etc.) can be shared and with whom?

5. Career

- 5.1. How is the PhD student's motivation for his/her project at the moment?
- 5.2. How confident is the PhD student that the project will be a success?
- 5.3. To what extent is the PhD student participating in relevant networks?
- 5.4. How does the PhD student experience work-life-balance?
- 5.5. Which dreams and wishes does the PhD student have in regard to career after the PhD project?

Resources & good advice

- [DTU's guidelines on how to avoid plagiarism and self-plagiarism in PhD theses](#)
- [DTU's co-author statement](#) (Document under 'Forms')
- [DTU Library](#) (Information on Research data and data management)
- [One hour e-learning course on data management for PhD students](#)