

The NIG PhD Council represents all NIG PhD members. Every year, the council hands out an award to an outstanding supervisor. We do this to highlight practices of great supervision. As everyone in this room has probably experienced and as previous instances of this award have demonstrated, good supervision is important and not necessarily a given. With this award, we highlight this on a yearly basis. The award serves to set examples, but also to show what great supervision looks like according to our members.

Like every year, we asked our members to send in nominations from which we then choose a winner.. This year, we received six letters showcasing excellent supervision. Because this award is all about highlighting excellent examples, I will briefly go over every nominee in no particular order.

The first nominee is Willem Trommel, from VU Amsterdam. The letter nominating him mentions a consistently coaching style, from the very first draft on. Willem is able to pick out diamonds in the rough. He is realistic, but always supportive. The council was especially charmed by motivational quotes such as 'It's not nice, but it is part of the process', 'it's a process, soon everything will fall into place' and 'don't be insecure, you know what you are talking about'!

The second nominee are actually nominees. Gijs Jan Bransma and Sebastiaan Princen from Utrecht University were nominated as a team. Team supervision can be a challenge for both supervisors and PhD's. It often involves having to manage diverging schedules and ideas about what a research project should look like. Gijs Jan and Sebastiaan are particularly good at being a team. We were impressed by their efforts to coordinate their feedback before they have a meeting with their candidate, even when this concerned a 200 pages plus manuscript. They also supervised a career rather than just the PhD project itself, reading letters of motivation and discussing future plans.

The next nominee is Nicolette van Gestel from the TIAS institute. The letter nominating Nicolette described how she made an active effort to introduce the candidate to her own international network and safeguard the candidate from university politics. Additionally, she was there for a candidate going through difficult times. She would send the candidate the occasional encouraging note, and helped them to break down the PhD project into small, feasible steps. She manages to motivate by being realistic, and putting emphasis on what has been achieved instead of the things that still have to be done.

The fourth nominee is Bas Denters from Twente University. Bas was nominated by no less than seven candidates from very different backgrounds, with very different preferences when it comes to supervision. Some candidates need a safe space, whilst other thrive when being challenged with constructive criticism. According to the letter, Bas managed to tailor his supervision to the specific preferences of each candidate. Bas made a great effort to find out what each candidate needed. Sometimes, this involved sitting down to listen to presentations. Sometimes, involved was reminding people to take a rest every now and then. Bas is applauded for his great dedication to furthering the careers of young researchers, also through his work for the NIG.

The next nominee is Paul 't Hart from Utrecht University. Paul's letter is also signed by seven different PhD's. They unanimously applaud his enthusiasm. Even though he always has a full schedule, he is quick to respond when it is necessary. The letter mentions his excellent social

skills, which make his candidates feel at home and help them gain access to relevant people. He also has attention for the softer side of supervision by prioritising mental health. He gives his candidates strategic advice on navigating the university and dealing with external partners, and is praised for the 'relentless scrutiny' with which he comments on papers and takes the ammunition from critical reviewers.

The last nominee is Bert George, currently working at Ghent University. The letter nominating Bert says that he is especially involved in the content of his candidate's work. Next to being an expert in terms of data, he also is an excellent writer and manages to transfer these skills well. He helps the candidate to set realistic goals and always manages to stay positive when giving feedback. It may not seem so after hearing all these supervisor of the year nominations, but that is something which is still not a given. The candidate indicated to find it much easier to stay positive when a supervisor tells you you are doing well on a regular basis.

Now, it is time to announce the winner of this year's supervisor of the year award. After carefully considering all the options, we were the most convinced by a letter that showed a supervisor who managed to tailor his supervision to the specific needs of so many different students. We believe the essence of good supervision is to focus on the candidate, and ask what *they* need to finish a successful PhD project. Apart from being an example of a case of excellent supervision for his or her PhD candidates, this person has also been of great value for all PhD Candidates attending the NIG conferences and training programmes in the last years. Therefore, this award also serves as a way of thanking this person for all the effort he put in advising PhD candidates and continuously improving the training offered to PhD candidates by NIG. Some of you may have already guessed the name of the winner by now, so I will not wait any longer with the announcement: The PhD council decided to give this year's award to Bas Denters.