

UT GUIDE TO SUPERVISION OF DOCTORAL CANDIDATES

A TWO-WAY PROCESS

UNIVERSITY
OF TWENTE. | Twente
Graduate
School



UT GUIDE TO SUPERVISION OF DOCTORAL CANDIDATES

A TWO-WAY PROCESS

Welcome to the UT Guide for Supervision of doctoral candidates, designed to facilitate a successful and pleasant supervision experience for both the doctoral candidate and their supervisory team.

Supervising doctoral candidates is a joint effort. Effective communication, understanding each other's expectations, and giving and receiving feedback are essential aspects of a fruitful supervisory relationship between the doctoral candidate and the whole supervisory team (The supervisory team consists of promoters and co-promoters as described in the [UT Doctoral regulations](#), but also others involved in the supervision and mentoring of the doctoral candidate can benefit from this guide). The right attitude and behaviour from both (co)promoters and doctoral candidates are vital in this process.

The supervisory team plays a significant role in guiding an individual through a critical phase of their career. Supervision of doctoral candidates encompasses several elements in addition to research progress. These include personal, academic, and career development. A delicate balance is required between providing support and constructive critique, nurturing and challenging. It is within this dynamic interplay that growth and development thrive.

For doctoral candidates, it is important to recognise that the entire doctoral journey is a learning process. You gain research skills but also essential life skills such as education, time management, setting priorities, collaboration, public speaking, self-motivation, effective writing, and communication. This learning process involves experimentation, setbacks, achievements, and the willingness to embrace feedback for continuous improvement.

In an international environment like UT, intercultural communication plays a vital role in the supervision process. It is crucial for both (co)promoters and candidates to be aware of different cultural backgrounds, experiences, and communication styles, and how these factors may influence their interactions. Furthermore, acknowledging the benefits of diverse perspectives, talents, and competencies is integral to this process.

Since supervision is a collaborative effort, this guide offers tips and advice to both doctoral candidates and the supervisory team members, fostering a harmonious and productive partnership.

USE THE FOLLOWING GUIDE TO BENEFIT OF THE WHOLE SUPERVISORY TEAM AND IMPROVE THE DOCTORAL EXPERIENCE!



In this text the words "doctoral candidate" are used for all doctoral candidates, both EngD's and PhD's.

UT GUIDE TO SUPERVISION OF DOCTORAL CANDIDATES

1. BE PROFESSIONAL



DOCTORAL CANDIDATE

- During supervision, you will experience your (co)promoters' unique personality and leadership styles. If something bothers you, address it with your (co)promoters first.
- In a professional environment, ensure respectful and safe communication. If discussing concerns with your (co)promoters feels unsafe, reach out to your (co)promoters, peers, or seek help from independent [PhD/EngD counsellors](#), HR advisor or [other university professionals](#).

(CO)PROMOTOR

- Prepare yourself for supervision of doctoral candidates by following [courses offered by UT](#).
- Understand that each doctoral candidate is unique with their individual stories, competences, and needs.
- Supervision requires adaptability and an open mind. Ask the doctoral candidate what they need from supervision and adapt as needed.
- In cross-disciplinary co-supervision, invest time in creating a shared vision and plan to reduce uncertainty.
- Create a safe and friendly (team) environment, respecting professional boundaries.
- Seek advice from colleagues or HR advisors if you face difficulties in supervising doctoral candidates.

2. BE CULTURALLY SENSITIVE

DOCTORAL CANDIDATE

- Recognise that both your (co)promoters' and your own cultural backgrounds influence communication and mutual expectations.
- In an international setting like UT, regularly check with your (co)promoters to ensure aligned expectations and clear understanding of each other's communication styles.
- Show interest in your (co)promoters' cultural backgrounds and explore how it can positively impact your collaboration.

(CO)PROMOTOR

- Recognise that the cultural background of both you and the doctoral candidate influence communication and mutual expectations.
- In an international setting like UT, regularly check with your doctoral candidate to ensure aligned expectations and clear understanding of communication styles.
- Encourage your doctoral candidate to explore the benefits of different cultural backgrounds.

3. BE COMMITTED

DOCTORAL CANDIDATE

- Understand that the doctoral journey is lengthy and challenging.
- Maintaining motivation and focus can be tough at times.
- If you face difficulties or low motivation, talk to your peers, colleagues and (co)promotors.
- Celebrate your successes to stay motivated.
- If you feel down or depressed for an extended period, seek support from, for example, peers, (co)promotors, [PhD/EngD counsellors](#) or a general practitioner.

(CO)PROMOTOR

- Realise that the doctoral candidate's journey is lengthy and requires long-term commitment.
- Care about the project's progress and outcome and continuously involve yourself.
- Be a coach and a good listener when needed.
- Celebrate successes together with the team.
- Address extended low moods professionally.
- Refer the doctoral candidate to appropriate support, like [PhD/EngD counsellors](#), HR advisor or a general practitioner when necessary.

4. BE AVAILABLE

DOCTORAL CANDIDATE

- Recognise that the success of your doctoral project is a joint responsibility.
- Stay in touch with your (co)promotors, ensure regular supervision meetings, and annual progress interviews happen as agreed in your training and supervision plan.
- Note the frequency and duration of the supervision in your training and supervision plan, as well as who takes the initiative to plan the supervision meetings and annual progress interviews.
- Make sure you get the time you need from your (co)promotors while respecting their time constraints. On average, a doctoral candidate should receive between 2 and 4 hours of supervision per week. This supervision can come from everyone in the supervisory team and encompasses not only the meeting duration but also the (co)promotors' reading and preparation time.

(CO)PROMOTOR

- Ensure regular supervision meetings and annual progress interviews as agreed in the training and supervision plan.
- Note in the doctoral candidate's training and supervision plan the agreed mode, frequency and duration of the supervision and who takes the initiative to plan the supervision meetings and annual progress interviews.
- Recognise that individual doctoral candidates may have different needs or restrictions in terms of meeting hours and frequency.
- Be honest and realistic about the time you can dedicate to your doctoral candidate. On average, a doctoral candidate should receive between 2 and 4 hours of supervision per week. This supervision can come from everyone in the supervisory team and encompasses not only the meeting duration but also the (co)promotors' reading and preparation time.

5. BE CONSISTENT AND CLEAR

DOCTORAL CANDIDATE

- Be open, realistic and honest about your research progress and your expectations.
- Feedback is crucial for advancement. Be open and tactful about what you expect from your (co)promotors.
- Prepare for meetings and share discussion points in advance.
- Note the discussion outcomes and next steps and share them with your (co)promotors.

(CO)PROMOTOR

- Be open, realistic, and honest about research progress and your expectations.
- Acknowledge that research involves navigating unknown territory and that your views on the next steps may change. Remember what you say and suggest.
- Encourage the doctoral candidate to prepare for meetings, take notes, and share them with the supervisory team.
- Understand that your reactions to feedback impact your discussions with the doctoral candidate.

6. BE TIME AWARE

DOCTORAL CANDIDATE

- Make a realistic plan, including the identification of short-term and long-term goals and the 30 EC doctoral education elements.
- Recognise that research is hard and that the original plan often changes.
- Keep track of the time you spend on issues and regularly discuss the next steps with your (co)promoters.
- Discuss both long-term and short-term goals and be realistic about your dissertation's expected scope and content.

(CO)PROMOTOR

- Help the doctoral candidate with realistic planning and the identification of short-term and long-term goals. Include the 30 EC doctoral education elements.
- Be prepared for plan adjustments and set short-term goals.
- Ensure the doctoral candidate understands the requirements for graduation in terms of data collection and thesis content.

7. BE WILLING TO RECEIVE FEEDBACK

DOCTORAL CANDIDATE

- Remember that feedback is meant to help you progress. If your (co)promoters aren't providing feedback, request it and use it to your advantage.
- If you find feedback unhelpful, reflect on it and discuss it professionally with your (co)promoters. Share your preferences for feedback.

(CO)PROMOTOR

- Expect feedback from the doctoral candidate and be open to it. Use it to improve the supervision process.
- Encourage the doctoral candidate to provide feedback a couple of times a year and during the annual progress meeting. Take their input seriously.

8. BE WILLING TO GIVE FEEDBACK

DOCTORAL CANDIDATE

- Understand that your feedback benefits the supervision process.
- Offer open, respectful, and constructive feedback.
- Be aware of cultural, ethnic and gender diversity.

(CO)PROMOTOR

- Understand that feedback benefits the doctoral candidate's progress and professional development.
- Provide professional, objective, constructive and balanced feedback, being considerate of the emotional impact it may have on the doctoral candidate.
- Offer positive feedback along with constructive criticism.
- Be aware of cultural, ethnic and gender diversity.



9. BE AWARE OF STRESSORS

DOCTORAL CANDIDATE

- Maintain a healthy work-life balance and build your resistance to stress by taking good care of your physical and mental health.
- Share experiences with colleagues to make life as a Doctoral candidate more manageable.
- Keep communication with your (co)promotors open and inform them if personal issues affect your work.
- Seek help from a PhD/EngD counsellor or your general practitioner if you feel overwhelmed by stress. You could also benefit from courses on personal effectiveness offered by UT.

(CO)PROMOTOR

- Be a role model for stress management and work-life balance.
- Be attentive to signs of stress in your doctoral candidate and discuss this topic during meetings.
- Refer the doctoral candidate to appropriate support when needed, like PhD/EngD counsellors, courses on personal effectiveness, general practitioners or HR.

10. BE FUTURE AND CAREER- ORIENTED

DOCTORAL CANDIDATE

- Recognise that your future career has already begun. Take steps to shape your career path. You could benefit from career oriented courses offered by the UT.
- Consider both academic and non-academic career options and invest in building your network.
- Participate in career events and training and seek advice from your (co)promotors.

(CO)PROMOTOR

- Stimulate the doctoral candidate to consider their career after graduation, addressing academic and non-academic options.
- Introduce your doctoral candidate to relevant connections in your professional network.
- Help them explore the job market and consider extra disciplinary training if they are interested in a non-academic career.
- Refer the doctoral candidate to career-oriented courses that UT offers.

