Jury report Supervisor or the Year award 2016
NIG PhD council

Again, this year, we would like to draw your attention to something which is an essential part of academia: the supervision of PhD-candidates. Although everyone will agree that supervision is important, what "good" supervision entails is not a straightforward matter. Obviously, it is the PhD-candidate who will have to do the actual work. However, supervisors play an important facilitative role, which - if not fulfilled adequately - may have devastating consequences for both the PhD-candidate and his or her research. Although horror stories gain the most attention, this should not obscure the fact that there is also a lot of good supervising going on in academia. The award we are presenting today allows us to point to some of these examples and let them know that their work is appreciated. With this award we want to illuminate and give prominence to good supervising. It is an opportunity to shortly reflect on and inform other supervisors of what PhD Candidates generally find important aspect of "good" supervision.

We have asked the PhD members of NIG to nominate supervisors for the *supervisor of the year award*. In response we've received five motivated nominations and one general, anonymous letter of appreciation from a total of seven different PhD candidates. We asked them to highlight which aspects of their supervision they valued the most and why. We, as the PhD council, critically reviewed the letters, ranked them, and based on our combined rankings we've selected the winner. Before we continue to name the winner, however, we would like to pay attention to all the nominees and their qualities for which they received this nomination. After all, these are all cases of best practice that can hardly be distinguished from one another in terms of quality.

The nominations will be discussed in alphabetical order. The first two nominees for this year's award are Sandra Groeneveld (Leiden University) and Steven van der Walle (Erasmus/Leuven University). One of the reasons they were nominated is because they function well as a supervising-team, despite being at different Universities. In particular, the nomination noted the effective coordination of their communication towards the PhD, while both contributing from their own field of expertise. Sandra Groeneveld is specifically valued for her dedication, her encouragement for candidates to apply new methods, and her detailed feedback. Steven van de Walle is praised for being approachable, giving candidates the freedom to develop one's own research ideas, and preparing candidates for a post-PhD career through strategic advice and academic contacts.

The next nominee is Peter Scholten. He is an associate professor at Erasmus University Rotterdam, and is nominated by three candidates. According to the statements Peter's enthusiasm is contagious. The PhDs value the way he is personally invested in the project. Moreover, he is not only interested in academic achievements, but also in their personal wellbeing. He manages to create a group out of the different PhDs he supervises, through peer-review sessions, but also through collective dinners and shared visits to concerts. In addition, he is valued for safeguarding his supervising role within a busy schedule, again, contributing to the PhDs' network, and last but not least, helping the PhDs to develop into all-round, modern academics.

The fourth nominee is Hans Schmeets, Professor from Maastricht University and Statistics Netherlands. His PhD appreciates how – despite his busy schedule - he still gives the PhD the time needed to supervise. He never gives the candidate the feeling that he is too busy. Moreover, he manages to create a safe work-environment in which there is room to make mistakes, treats

PhDs as equals, and gives them the freedom to develop their own ideas. Professor Schmeets, too, helps prepare for a post-PhD by helping them build and academic network.

Finally, the last nominee is Michiel de Vries, professor at Radboud University. The PhD candidate who nominated him enjoyed the way in which he supervises both content and process. He has played a particularly important role in making foreign PhD candidates feel at home in the Netherlands. The PhD states he is a real mentor, taking the PhD candidate to international conferences and introducing the candidate to senior staff in the field.

What is clear from the descriptions is that various qualities are highly valued among all PhDs. Most PhDs appraise their supervisors for supervising more than just the academic work. Attention to personal wellbeing, and work-life balance is very much appreciated. Moreover, most supervisors think along with the student with regard to their pursuit of a career after the dissertation is defended. Supervision is then not only about producing a proper dissertation, it is also about academic, professional and personal development. Selecting a winner from such invested supervisors and good practices, is difficult. What was most decisive for the jury, was the consideration that the winner seems to go the extra mile. This was perceived this way not by one, but by three PhDs.

As such, the winner of this year's supervisor of the year award is: Peter Scholten, from Erasmus University.