NIG Jury Report Supervisor of the Year Award 2017

This year, we again take a brief moment to emphasize the importance of PhD-supervision. For some of you this may seem self-evident, however, for PhD-candidates the quality of supervision is something that can really make or break your PhD-experience. Obviously, you will still have to write the thesis yourself, but four years is a long time, full of ups and downs. Especially during "the downs", it is where good supervision can really show through.

It is easy to take good supervision for granted. However, not getting the supervision you need at the times you need it most, can be a painful experience. Recent research and news reports on PhD well-being have shown alarming figures, and I'm sure we all know plenty of anecdotes. The award we are presenting today allows us to point to some best practice examples that demonstrate for us that good supervision can really make a difference. It is also a way to let these supervisors know that their work is appreciated.

We have asked the PhD members of NIG to nominate supervisors for the *supervisor of the year award*. In these nominations we particularly asked the PhD-candidates to highlight what they value most about their supervisors and why. The nominators definitely took their task seriously, as we

received five motivated nominations full of heart-warming anecdotes and examples of good supervision. We will share some of these examples, as to highlight important aspects of good supervision, generally appreciated by the PhD's. For us the difficult task remained to pick a winner among these best practices of supervision. We will briefly go over the nominees – in random order - and then announce the winner.

Firstly, a supervising duo was nominated: Caelesta Braun & Bert Fraussen from Leiden University. Their nomination reads that these supervisors have found a good balance between good substantial supervision and create a safe and social environment. Besides providing thorough and valuable feedback, Caelesta and Bert are also in for a laugh and a beer whenever the PhD-students feels it is needed. They also help the PhD-Candidate in thinking about future career choices so that the life after-PhD is not forgotten.

Secondly, Beatrix Futak-Campbell was nominated, also from Leiden University. Her nomination reads that she has particularly helped her PhD to find a way around in academia. Especially for PhDs who are just starting out, this can be a confusing environment and good supervisors can help you navigate. Also, what we particularly appreciated in this nomination was that Beatrix really helped the student to balance research and teaching load.

Given that this is an issue with which many PhD-candidates struggle, this aspect of supervision is appreciated.

Thirdly, Femke van Esch from Utrecht University was nominated. She is applauded for "opening the black box of academic life" for the nominating PhD-candidate. The first academic conference you go to as a PhD-candidate can be a rather important and stressful event. By guiding the PhD-candidate through the first academic conference and showing her phd-candidate the ropes of what academic life was like, she really played an important role in the early stages of this nominators career.

Fourthly, Astrid Molenveld from Erasmus and Antwerpen University was nominated. For the PhD-candidates nominating her, this award-nomination was really a way to tell Astrid, who hasn't been a supervisor for that long, that she is doing a brilliant job! She really ensures that she makes time for her PhD-students, regardless of her busy schedule. Also, the PhD-council is especially curious about the delicious cookies she brings to work meetings.

Lastly, Menno Fenger from Erasmus University is nominated. According to the letter he really exceeds the role of mere supervisor. He really makes sure that his different PhD's connect, organizes outside activities, such as movie nights related to their PhD topics, and encourages them to also be engaged with practice. What particularly impressed us was the way in

which Menno tries to adjust his supervision style to the characteristics of his students. He even arranged a separate learning-style test. How about that, for tailor-made supervision.

All in all, it should be clear all of the above named nominees are shining examples of best practice. We have tried to emphasize different aspects of what makes them good supervisors and hopefully a general picture has emerged. As with every contest, however, there should obviously be a winner. What was the deciding point for us, was that one of the nominees was in fact nominated by four PhD's. If such a large group is unanimously positive about your supervision, exemplified by a nicely crafted letter which shows you master various aspects of good supervision, it seems that we're dealing with someone special. Therefore we decided the 2017 Winner of the Supervisor of the Year Award, is Menno Fenger from Erasmus University.