



# Alignment of expectations among PhD supervisors

## Clarifying expectations within the supervisor team

### Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide a tool that can help PhD supervisors align expectations from the start of the PhD project for the benefit of the PhD student, the project and the supervisors involved. The Graduate School strongly recommends all PhD supervisors to meet and clarify how each of you contribute to the supervisor team; how you will work with the PhD student; and how you will handle challenges during the supervision process.

This can help you avoid misunderstandings that can potentially lead to disappointments and conflicts. Aligning expectations and making clear agreements can save energy and is a good investment in the project.

### Initial meeting within the first month

The Graduate School recommends that supervisors arrange an initial meeting within the first month of the PhD project period where you discuss the questions 1-4 (on page 2 in this document) and align expectations. Please allot 1.5-2 hours and note down important decisions.

### Follow-up meetings once a year

Further, the Graduate School recommends that the PhD supervisor team all meet at least once a year to discuss progress, roles and responsibilities. The second set of questions (on page 3 in this document) is a guide for the follow-up meetings. These meetings in the PhD supervisor team should preferably take place either before or after the regular assessment meetings with the PhD student.

*Adapted to the PhD programme at The Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences, University of Copenhagen by Mia Dabelsteen, The Graduate School of Health and Medical Sciences, on the basis of the DTU document "Alignment Tool" developed by Katrine Søbæk Jagd, Ditte Rytter Krofa & Mirjam Godskesen (2020). Their document is adapted from the original by Margaret Kiley (2018): "Possible issues to discuss with co-supervisors and candidate", workshop handout, Margaret.kiley@anu.edu.au.*

## Questions for the initial meeting in the PhD supervisor team

### 1. Contribution from each member of the PhD supervisor team

- 1.1. What professional/research skills do you each bring to the PhD supervisor team (knowledge of the process, the topic, the method)?
- 1.2. What personal skills do you each bring to the team (communication, support, network)?
- 1.3. How will you each define your role as a PhD supervisor for the PhD student?

### 2. Collaboration and feedback

- 2.1. How do you want to distribute the different responsibilities among the members of the PhD supervisor team?
- 2.2. Where do you see potentially differing interests and demands from the PhD supervisors towards the PhD student and the project, and how will you deal with this?
- 2.3. How will you discuss concerns about the PhD student?
- 2.4. How do you plan to inform each other of decisions taken?

### 3. Responsibilities including research integrity

*The principal PhD supervisor has the overall responsibility for the PhD student's programme, and it is part of the principal PhD supervisor's responsibility to:*

- train the PhD student in research integrity
- support the PhD student to reach milestones
- to some extent help organize the daily work

*However, sometimes these responsibilities are shared in the PhD supervisor team.*

- 3.1. Are any of these responsibilities delegated to other PhD supervisors in the team?
- 3.2. What happens if one PhD supervisor is away for more than a few weeks?
- 3.3. How do you each see your role in ensuring that the PhD student knows and honours SUND's code of conduct, ethical standards and business related interests, if any?
- 3.4. Who will be responsible for and/or supervise the PhD student in obtaining required ethical and legal permits for the project?
- 3.5. Do you see possible differences in policies related to research integrity in each of your organizations or the activities you carry out together with the PhD student? How will you deal with these differences?

### 4. Writing and publishing

- 4.1. How do each of you normally support your PhD students' writing?
- 4.2. How will you share the tasks and responsibility of supporting writing, including how to stay clear of (self-)plagiarism, and giving feedback?
- 4.3. Do you expect to co-author manuscripts with the PhD student? If yes, how will you make agreements regarding the order of authorship, if any?
- 4.4. How and in which cases should the PhD student credit contributions aside from co-authorship?

## **Questions for the follow-up meetings in the PhD supervisor team.**

### **Evaluate progress, responsibilities and interests**

#### **Please consider:**

- 1.1.** How satisfied are you with the PhD student's progress (research, writing, publication, other - see Regular Assessment sheet for details)?
- 1.2.** How satisfied are you with your own role in the project?
- 1.3.** Has anything changed regarding your roles and responsibilities in the project?
- 1.4.** Do you see any challenges or potential conflicts regarding e.g. patents, university procedures, business related interests or publishing? If yes, how can you help each other solve them to avoid delays or jeopardize the PhD project?