

10 PhD tips from your graduate school

1 - It is not school

There is no predetermined path that you can take. You will need to define your own goals & priorities for your individual training programme and your PhD thesis in consultation with your supervisors, while taking into account the requirements of the PhD programme. Since it is your own PhD path, it is often not very useful to compare yourself to other PhD candidates.

2 - Inform yourself

Inform yourself about your rights & duties as a PhD candidate, and make sure that you know where you can find the information if you should need the exact details later on (e.g. PhD regulations, employment regulations, holiday rights, training budget, Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, authorship guidelines, (confidential) support services).

3 - Discuss mutual expectations

Make sure to regularly discuss the mutual expectations for the goals for your training, the content for your PhD thesis and your 4-year project planning with your supervisors. Write down the important agreements, so you can refer to them later on. This also includes for instance ideas on authorship ranking for a (shared) project/publication. The yearly performance (R&O/P&D) meetings would for instance be a good time to discuss and write down these mutual expectations.

4 - Train yourself

It is ok if you do not immediately feel that you are able to do all the things that an independent scientist should be able to do, after all, a PhD project is a training programme. So regularly reflect on your performance and your goals, and determine in which areas you need further training or opportunities for getting more experience.

5 - Manage your supervisors

Give your supervisors feedback on what you would need to perform at your best and how you would like to be supervised. To be able to do this you need to invest time and energy in good, effective & honest communication with your supervisors, which also means creating sufficient (in)formal contact moments together. The yearly performance (R&O/P&D) meeting is a good time to give your supervisor(s) feedback.

6 - Meet up with your mentor

The scientist that you chose as your mentor can add a fresh, outside perspective to your PhD process and will help you to reflect on your personal development, your well-being, and the progress of your project. So make sure to plan regular meetings, but at least once a year. Example questions for a discussion with your mentor can be found under [EPS documents](#).

7 - Make it happen

Take responsibility and make sure that important things happen/are discussed. Do not expect that things will arrange themselves automatically or in your best interest.

8 - Ask for help

Ask for help if you need it, because you do not need to solve every puzzle or problem on your own. Consult your supervisors, your colleagues, experts on the subject, your mentor, counsellors etc.

9 - Start writing early on

Make sure to start writing up your work early on, so you can get comfortable with the process of writing, determine where you might need some extra training, and can start to formulate story lines and think about the outline of your chapters/thesis. Do not leave it all to the last (4th!) year.

10 - The next step?

During your PhD time also use your training programme and your network to think about and prepare yourself for the next step in your career.

Bonus - Your own PhD tip! 😊

Write down your own PhD tip for your (future) self and share it with your fellow PhD candidates: