

Reflections on Supervision and Research Cooperation in Doctoral Education

The following questions are intended to help clarify mutual expectations that will likely shape the relationship between a supervisor and an early-career researcher pursuing a Ph.D. at BIGSSS. They are based on reflections and experiences shared among faculty and fellows and are designed to anticipate crucial aspects of this complex relationship, which involves duties and expectations on both sides. The questions should be used during an initial mutual reflection on both the general nature and the specific form of this cooperation at BIGSSS. They address either the fellows, the supervisors, or both of them. The document is primarily intended to clarify the cooperation with your first supervisor. But you can of course also use it to clarify the cooperation with the other two (or more) supervisors.

We strongly recommend meeting in person and taking notes during the meeting—including any disagreements or differing opinions on the points raised below—and revisiting them at regular intervals to document changes and progress. **A summary of the main outcomes signed by both parties should be attached to the PAC report of the first year.** Clear and open communication and, wherever necessary, specific agreements (e.g., regarding the reading of submitted chapters) are essential foundations for a successful and trusting supervision relationship. Especially—but not only—in light of cultural and status differences in perceived rights and roles within academia, it has proven to be a best practice to clarify as much as possible, sometimes in great detail, aspects that may seem self-evident in one understanding but not in another.

Goals, Quality of Research, and Roles

1. **[Fellow]** What are your goals and ambitions that have led you to pursue your Ph.D.? Where do you hope the Ph.D. will take you, both professionally and personally?
2. **[Fellow]** How do you envision a productive and satisfying Ph.D. process, especially with regard to supervision? What obstacles do you fear, what do you have the most respect for?
3. **[Supervisor]** What specific qualities do you, as a supervisor, look for in a Ph.D. thesis and in a Ph.D. candidate? Please prioritize the main elements that make up a good thesis and Ph.D. candidate.
4. **[Fellow and supervisor]** Experience at BIGSSS suggests that productive supervision and collaboration in a doctoral project should also consider the supervisor's interests and potential benefits. How would you define your own expectations in this regard? And how do you envision establishing a mutually beneficial partnership in a context where doctoral supervision competes with a lot of other obligations?
5. **[Fellow and supervisor]** Are there any personal challenges or facts the other person need to be aware of that will support the relationship?

6. **[Fellow and supervisor]** What are the substantive and formal milestones of your project (also in the context of BIGSSS)? Consider developing a joint schedule with milestones (e.g., in form of a GANTT chart) with *all* obligations and responsibilities (also with regard to a third-party-funded project or obligations in a "Haushaltsstelle")
7. **[Fellow and supervisor]** How will/should you combine different roles and obligations (e.g., as a research associate in a third-party-funded project, as a research associate in a "Haushaltsstelle," etc.) with regard to the PhD project, time budgeting, and task prioritization? Discuss the different obligations and how you intend to manage the resulting demands.
8. **[Supervisor]** How do you organize the supervision as a committee? Who is supposed to suggest potential second and third supervisors? Are there specific responsibilities or competencies of each supervisor? How do you organize cooperation and exchange between the three supervisors?

Review and Feedback

9. **[Fellow and supervisor]** Which documents do you expect for review (e.g., conference abstracts, presentations, papers, chapters)?
10. **[Fellow and supervisor]** What are feasible time frames for providing feedback and implementing it (e.g., revisions)?
11. **[Fellow and supervisor]** How do you organize the review process and the joint work on documents (which working platforms etc.)?
12. **[Supervisor]** What to do when you do not agree on specific aspects (such as the theoretical or methodological design, conference visits, research stays, etc.) in the PhD project? How will you solve these conflicts? How much tolerance is possible?
13. **[Fellow and supervisor]** How will you decide on co-authorships? Discuss implications of the Vancouver Recommendations.¹

Modes of Interaction and Organization of Meetings

14. **[Fellow and supervisor]** How often will you communicate and via which channels? Please be as specific as possible.
15. **[Fellow and supervisor]** How will you organize and structure meetings?
 - Will you schedule meetings ahead or make appointments as needed?
 - Should you submit something in writing before a supervision meeting?

¹ The Vancouver Recommendations define roles of authors, contributors and non-author contributors in scientific articles. For more information, please check <https://www.icmje.org/icmje-recommendations.pdf>.

- Who suggests the agenda for supervision meetings?
- Who takes minutes of the supervision meetings?

16. **[Supervisor]** Which topics can be addressed in the meetings (e.g., organizational matters, academic concerns, research-related issues, personal concerns)?

Academic practice and career planning

17. **[Fellow and supervisor]** Are there any expectations and/or concrete plans regarding stays abroad?
18. **[Fellow and supervisor]** Which transferable skills are important to both of you? In what ways can your supervisor help to acquire them?
19. **[Fellow]** Do you plan an academic or non-academic career? What are the resulting challenges and needs and in what ways can your supervisor assist you in this (with regard to an academic career in Germany or abroad)?
20. **[Supervisor]** Will you introduce the fellow to your academic network and/or help them build their own network?

Room for own questions and notes