



PhD Committee Meetings – What to expect?... and some hints!

Preamble

This document is designed for PhD candidates in the Graduate School of Geography and Earth System Science. PhD Committee Meetings should take place at least annually and are the place where PhDs report on their progress and any concerns they might have. The committee should give clear feedback with respect to how things are going.

This document is intended to answer questions many PhD candidates ask, but it cannot cover every situation, and it is not binding! As always, the PhD Committee's decisions together with the PhD Regulations are binding. If you have questions or problems, first talk to your supervisor and the head of your PhD Committee. Your next port of call are the coordinator and director of the Graduate School, followed by the Ombudsperson of the Faculty of Science.

Frequently asked questions

How often should the PhD Committee meet?

The PhD committee must meet at least once a year. However, there is nothing to stop the PhD candidate or the committee suggesting additional meetings. This is often helpful towards the end of the thesis. A meeting is always due one year after the previous meeting.

What should be discussed at the meeting?

The purpose of the meeting is to discuss your progress with respect to your scientific work and the formal requirements of your PhD. We recommend using the **Template for PhD Committee Meeting Minutes** to plan the meeting. **Ensure you leave enough time to cover all the points** and use the document to prepare the agenda for the meeting.

Who organises these meetings?

This should be discussed between the PhD candidate, the main supervisor and the Chair of the PhD Committee (the latter two may be the same person). Important questions should include: who sends the invitations, what should be on the agenda and who will write the minutes? Most often it will be the PhD candidate who takes on these tasks.

When should the first meeting be?

The Student Admin system has the first meeting as milestone at the end of the first year of the PhD. The meeting can be organized earlier if that would be helpful.

How long should the meeting be?

You should plan for at least an hour. However, often committees struggle to get through everything in an hour, and people will have other things in their diaries. Planning for 90 minutes leaves more time to ask questions and provide/get feedback.

Who should attend these meetings?

Ideally all the committee members should attend – that means all of the people listed in Student Admin as committee members. Sometimes one member can't come – then we recommend updating them before or after the meeting.

What should I do with the minutes of the meeting?

These should be approved by all the committee members, and then uploaded to Student Admin. Minutes that don't have a summarising statement from the committee about progress will be sent back.



What if the committee does not give a clear statement that the PhD is proceeding without problems?

Refer your committee to this document and remind them that the Graduate School won't accept minutes without this statement.

Can I talk to my committee members outside of the meetings?

Of course – your committee is there to give you feedback and advice. It's often helpful to discuss specific questions with different people – a good committee brings different backgrounds and skills to the table. It's usually helpful to be transparent about communication with other committee members with your main supervisor.

Things aren't going well – should I tell my committee?

Absolutely – your committee is there to help and give advice. All the members of your committee also did this, and they probably also had hurdles to overcome. If you are worried about something, stuck, or need help, your committee is your first point of contact.

If for any reason you would prefer not to talk to them, then get in touch with the Graduate School coordinator or director.

Definitions and roles

Chair of the PhD Committee: The chair of the PhD Committee is formally responsible for the PhD and must have "Promotionsrecht" in the MNF. This is the case for all holders of the title Professor in our faculty, and those who have explicitly applied for this status.

Main supervisor: The main supervisor is listed on the PhD as "Leiterin or Leiter". They take the main role in day-to-day supervision, and if they have Promotionsrecht are also formally the Chair of the Committee.

PhD Committee: The PhD Committee (who have regularly met with and approved the PhD's progress) are responsible for responding to, and deciding upon, any concerns voiced in the review of the thesis. They are also responsible for making any recommendation with respect to distinctions.

Document history

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