

Golden Rules for PhD Candidates

1. You are the captain of the ship.

You're stakeholder #1 in your project, which means that you are responsible for your PhD progress and completion. Take initiative on planning, organisation and time management throughout your PhD. Communicate your wishes, needs and challenges to your supervisory team. Remember you're smart! Yes, You Can!

2. Develop a clear, scientifically sound and feasible research plan.

Use the [Personal Research Plan \(PRP\)](#) within the first three months of the research trajectory. Discuss it regularly — at least once a year — with your supervisory team and, if needed, revise/update it.

3. Make a clear plan to support your professional and personal growth.

Use the [Training and Supervision Plan \(TSP\)](#) within the first three months of the research trajectory and regularly update it. Identify training opportunities to support the acquisition of competences needed to develop into an independent researcher/scientist for future work, in and out of academia. Discuss your professional/personal development with your supervisory team at least once per year — and more often if your needs are not being met.

4. Discuss and evaluate mutual expectations regarding the supervision.

Clarify expectations and discuss your supervision needs with the supervisory team early in the project. Make sure to develop clear mutual agreements on supervision, responsibilities and communication. Use routine (weekly/monthly) work meetings, as well as the annual interview appraisal. Remember that constructive, bidirectional feedback is key. Also, realise you are in a position to give feedback in turn.

5. Manage your time well.

You have a limited, fixed time to finish your PhD project, so make sure to manage your time well. Develop time management skills and discuss timelines with your supervisory team to ensure you to obtain your PhD without delay.

6. Discuss your personal support needs.

Throughout your trajectory, regularly discuss the support you need within your team and outside of it. Make use of all available support that is being offered. It is also important to acknowledge that support needs can shift throughout the project.

7. Follow the scientific integrity code of conduct.

Maastricht University and Maastricht UMC+ have established a [Research Code](#) based on the codes of conduct of the Universities of The Netherlands (UNL). Familiarise yourself with the policies and expected behaviours. All your professional activities, whether they refer to education, research, patient care, or management, should comply with these codes. Know that you can expect the same from your supervisor.

8. Organise your own peer support network.

Talk to your fellow students. It is easier to overcome difficulties together. Try to be attentive and recognise when someone is struggling and don't hesitate to offer your help. Take advantage of the available peer support.

9. Plan your future post-PhD.

Throughout your PhD trajectory, discuss your interests, ambitions, and future career options with your supervisory team. Ask your supervisor for relevant contacts who may help you in your post-PhD career. Make active use of opportunities that help you to create a professional network. Don't be afraid to talk to people and take initiative.

10. Recognise, monitor and address work pressure.

Learn how to recognise early signs of work pressure and emotional strains and know to monitor them. Should work pressure escalate, contact the appropriate persons and/or services to address the situation. Don't forget to put time into your personal life and things you enjoy.

Golden Rules for PhD Supervisors

- 1. Discuss and evaluate mutual expectations regarding research and supervision.**
Clarify expectations and discuss the supervision needs with your PhD candidate. Make sure to develop clear agreements and accepted deadlines. To this end, use routine work meetings, as well as the annual interview.
- 2. Develop a clear, scientifically sound and feasible research plan with your PhD candidate.**
Use the [Personal Research Plan \(PRP\)](#) within the first three months of the research trajectory. Discuss it regularly — at least once a year — with your PhD candidate and, if needed, revise/update it.
- 3. Make a clear plan with your PhD candidate to support personal growth and development.**
Use the [Training and Supervision Plan \(TSP\)](#) within the first three months of the research trajectory and regularly update it. Identify training opportunities to support the acquisition of competences needed to develop into an independent researcher/scientist for future work, in and out of academia.
- 4. Be aware that support needs may change.**
Throughout the PhD trajectory, direct (give clear instructions and protocols), lead (guide towards achieving concrete goals), coach (give the necessary inputs to further develop), support and delegate (leave full independence in performing specific tasks).
- 5. Provide constructive feedback on process and results.**
Invest the time needed to motivate and develop the researcher, not just the research project. Provide regular feedback based on the development level and the project's tasks and goals. Your feedback should be compassionate, concrete, constructive, and critical.
- 6. Be open to receive feedback from your PhD candidate.**
Be approachable and regularly ask your PhD candidate for feedback in a respectful and encouraging way. Learn from your PhD candidate.
- 7. Recognise, monitor and address work pressure.**
Learn how to recognise early signs of work pressure and emotional strains. Regularly address well-being issues and reach out during challenging periods.
- 8. Open up your network, discuss career perspectives and opportunities.**
Throughout the PhD trajectory, discuss interests, ambitions, and future career options. Offer training and research opportunities from your network and resources to help the PhD candidate create a professional network.
- 9. Work on your supervisory skills and regularly evaluate your own way of supervision.**
Reflect on your own strengths, motivation and growth. Continuously develop your supervision and management skills through available training opportunities at FHML, Maastricht University, and externally.
- 10. Assure scientific soundness and follow the scientific integrity code of conduct.**
Maastricht University and Maastricht UMC+ have established a [Research Code](#) based on the codes of conduct of the Universities of The Netherlands (UNL). All your professional activities, including supervision, should comply with these codes. Expect the same from your PhD candidate.

