

THE SUPERVISORY RELATIONSHIP: A TOOL FOR DISCUSSION

This document is intended to provide points for discussion during the initial meeting between the thesis director and the doctoral candidate. It is not mandatory and does not constitute a formal agreement. It should be taken as applicable within the standards and limitations of the concerned discipline.

KEY POINTS TO DISCUSS IN THE EARLY STAGES OF THE PHD

	<i>Supervisor Responsibilities</i>	<i>Candidate Responsibilities</i>	<i>Examples of questions</i>
Proactivity	Encourages progressive research independence and skills development . Identifies and shares relevant career opportunities (conferences, workshops, collaborations, funding).	Takes responsibility for the progress of the research project and career planning. Actively seeks learning opportunities , stays current with literature, develops critical thinking and research independence .	<i>What are the expectations for the doctoral candidate's independence?</i> <i>What can they expect from the supervisor in terms of advice, guidance and overall supervision of the candidate's research, coursework and teaching activities?</i> <i>Which areas will the candidate require support in?</i> <i>Who else will provide research support and for which areas?</i>
Engagement	Provides intellectual and personal support . Fosters a constructive and collaborative research environment . Supports participation in teaching and scholarly activities.	Fully engages in research, teaching, and professional activities. Drives the research project and strives to understand the research area. Respects EPFL ethical and safety standards.	<i>What will be the main milestones in terms of the research project?</i> <i>What are the timelines and formal process for the research plan and along the project?</i> <i>What are the expectations around publications?</i>
Availability	Holds regular meetings , provides timely and constructive feedback , and remains available for urgent matters (arranging substitutes when absent). Adjusts supervision frequency based on the PhD candidate's progress.	Prepares thoroughly for meetings, maintains organized records (lab notebook). Communicates meeting needs early, and respects supervisor's time.	<i>How frequently will the student and supervisors meet?</i> <i>How will the meetings be managed and structured?</i> <i>What level of preparation and input is required from the doctoral candidate during the meetings?</i>
Communication	Sets clear expectations for meetings, feedback timelines, and preferred communication methods. Provides constructive, timely feedback on work, including the thesis.	Clearly communicates progress, challenges, and objectives. Submits requested documents timely; respects deadlines. Proactively seeks feedback, agrees on communication methods early, and follows up to avoid misunderstandings.	<i>Are there preferred ways of communicating?</i> <i>If a candidate has co-supervisors, are all co-supervisors included in all communications or only those on specific topics?</i>