

The purpose of the PhD plan, half-year evaluations, and the PhD planner¹

General info

The PhD plan provides an outline of the complete PhD study, including a plan for the PhD student's research project but also a description of plans for course work, mobility, dissemination etc. The PhD plan is a mutual agreement between the PhD student and the Main supervisor on a work schedule for the entire PhD study. The plan ensures that successful completion will meet the formal requirements of the PhD regulations and the initial PhD plan must be approved within three months of enrolment² according to the PhD order.

The PhD plan can be altered during the PhD study for various reasons and is subject to mandatory half-year evaluations, where any alterations in the PhD plan will be made. The registration and approval of both the initial PhD plan and the half-year evaluations take place in the online PhD planner system. Both are initiated by the PhD student and must subsequently be approved by Main supervisor, Head of programme and Head of PhD school.

Regular revisions of the PhD plan are mandatory according to the PhD order and [GSST's Rules and regulations](#), and this is documented in the online Planner system. Also, course information from the PhD planner system is directly used in the students PhD diplomas.

In the rare case that problems arise concerning a PhD student, the commented PhD plans give useful information and documentation.

The PhD plan

The initial PhD plan is to be approved within three months of enrolment. The initial PhD plan is prepared by the PhD student in collaboration with the Main supervisor and must be as comprehensive and detailed as possible. Also, the preparation of the initial plan should form a common ground for a structured dialogue between the PhD student and the Main supervisor. At the first meeting between a new PhD student and the Main Supervisor this is especially important, and it is recommended, that the PhD student and the Main supervisor agree on how often

¹ The intention of this guide is to explain the importance of the PhD plan, the half-year evaluations and the use of the PhD planner system in this connection. It is not a quick guide in how to use the planner system. If you need technical guidance, you are always welcome to [contact GSST](#).

² To ensure this, the PhD student will receive an e-mail alert one and a half months after the PhD study starting date, with a deadline for submission to the Main supervisor two weeks later.

you meet and how you secure a good working relationship with each other. This is obviously even more important if you do not work together on a daily basis.

The PhD plan consists of the following subjects:

- **The PhD project – description, plan and time schedule**
- **Publication strategy and progress**
- **PhD courses plan and status**
- **Dissemination activities e.g. teaching, supervising Bachelors/Master projects**
- A plan for visiting other **Research environments** (mobility). This is **typically plans for stay abroad**
- **Other activities (if relevant)**
- **Supervision agreement**
- **Financing plan (uploaded by GSST at the beginning of the PhD study)**
- Copyright/intellectual property right agreement (IPR) (if relevant)

Half-year evaluations

One of the main purposes of half-year evaluations of the PhD plan is to ensure alignment of expectations between the PhD student and the supervisor(s).

The half-year evaluations of the PhD plan should be the basis for a structured dialogue between the PhD student and the supervisor(s), where status of the relevant subjects in the plan is discussed. The updated plan is sent to the Main supervisor, Head of programme and Head of PhD school, who are asked to comment on and approve the revised plan.

An updated PhD plan helps to keep track of changes and progress of the PhD study and ensure that all relevant persons have the same information.

Furthermore, regular assessments of the PhD plan are mandatory according to the PhD order.

Positive half year evaluation

In case of a positive half year evaluation, the PhD student's studies continue, possibly based on a revised PhD plan.

Negative half year evaluation

In case of a negative outcome, the PhD student will be given a period of three months to correct it. The chance to get back on track and be given a three months' trial period can be granted only once during the entire PhD study. Note also that the total time of study will not be extended.

What happens if the half year evaluation is not completed?

If the PhD student does not submit the half year evaluation in spite of alerts and repeated reminders, this will be considered equivalent to a negative evaluation (see above).

What happens if the PhD student takes leave?

If the PhD student takes leave, for instance maternity/paternity leave, the due date for the next half year evaluation will be changed accordingly in the PhD planner system (see below). This is done by the PhD school.

What happens in the PhD planner?

The PhD planner is an online PhD-administrative system implemented at Aarhus University. The vision is to develop a new, joint PhD-system with consistent processes that support systematic quality assurance for all Graduate Schools at Aarhus University.

PhD Planner is divided into two modules: a recruitment module for applicants and a talent management module for enrolled PhD students. PhD Planner is a role-based system with electronic support of working procedures, in which different actors as applicants, PhD students, administrative officers, supervisors, heads of programmes and heads of the Graduate Schools have an individual function regarding activities such as application process and half-year evaluation.

One of the main aims of the PhD Planner is to support the formal tasks related to the individual PhD study according to the PhD order. It is the intention that the PhD Planner reduces paper work as much as possible, reuses information, keeping track of current and upcoming tasks and not least facilitating the processing of cases.

In connection with the half-year evaluations, any changes and progress in the PhD project should be described. The PhD student is asked to describe status and results (incl. any changes/new developments) in relation to the last plan, state reasons for any major deviations, and describe plans for the next 6-12 months in the PhD planner.

The task of the Main Supervisor is to evaluate the above and comment on the students plan including indicating whether the plan is expected to lead to timely conclusion or indicate concerns that it may not lead to timely conclusion.

By Ministerial Order the student is then given the opportunity to comment on this, where after the half year evaluation will be sent to the Head of Programme and then to the Head of PhD school.

The plan elements listed above are in the PhD planner system and must be filled in by the PhD student (except the financing plan that is uploaded by GSST). And as mentioned above most of these subjects should be discussed between the student and the main supervisor as part of every half year evaluation. At the initial stage the supervision agreement and alignment of expectations is important, but it is likely that this subject is less relevant at later stages.

Also the PhD plan in the online PhD planner system helps

- To keep track of plans, changes and progress of the PhD study and ensure that the PhD student and the Main supervisor (as well as Head of programme and Head of PhD school) have the same information

- To ensure alignment of expectations between the PhD student and the supervisor(s)
- To ensure that the PhD project is on the right track
- To keep track of all planned and completed PhD courses in the same system
- To ensure that all relevant documentation concerning the PhD study (for instance enrolment letter, employment contract and course certificates) is saved electronically in the same system
- To provide data to the PhD Diploma

Alert e-mails and reminders

The PhD student will receive alert emails (and reminders if the half year evaluation is not sent to the Main Supervisor) sent automatically from the PhD Planner system. Ignoring these reminders and not making the required half year evaluations will as mentioned above eventually correspond to a negative evaluation as described in the [GSST Rules and regulations, section 6.2.7](#). A final warning will be sent to the student before this measure is taken.

Supervisors and Head of programmes will also receive alerts and reminder mails concerning half year evaluations.

You are always welcome to [contact GSST](#) in case of technical problems regarding the PhD planner.