

## **Guidance on completing the Training Agreement for your PhD application**

It is important that this agreement is completed through a dialogue between the thesis supervisor and the PhD student, as, beyond the information provided, it offers an opportunity for discussions that are crucial to the smooth progress of the thesis. In some cases, it can even determine the success of the thesis.

Here are some tips for certain sections that may have raised questions.

### **Section 2 – Supervision-related details**

#### **2.1. The research project timeline**

At a minimum, the timeline for a full-time PhD could look something like this:

Year 1: theoretical reading and start of data collection

Year 2: continuation of reading and data collection; initial analyses

Year 3: completion of analyses and writing of the thesis

This timetable is indicative and not binding, but should provide an opportunity for discussion on how to proceed effectively, particularly in the early months.

It is, of course, possible to provide more detailed information, particularly if fieldwork requires travel.

Completing this form provides an opportunity to discuss potential sources of funding, how to free up time during the year if the PhD is being undertaken part-time, and so on.

#### **2.2. Arrangements for supervision, monitoring of training and progress of research**

To achieve this, it is crucial to discuss very clearly how each party (PhD student, supervisor, co-supervisor) works, in order to avoid any misunderstandings later on. Thesis supervision, and more broadly the doctoral years, is akin to a mentorship, built on trust.

The Doctoral College, for which the ED acts as the approving body, strongly recommends face-to-face meetings (via video call if necessary, where distance is unavoidable), as email is not conducive to full understanding and does not truly facilitate meaningful exchange. It also recommends, on average and depending on needs during the thesis, a monthly update; this is important to ensure that contact is maintained, that simple objectives can be set, and that any potential difficulties or questions can be resolved quickly. It may be useful to specify the arrangements and average frequency of exchanges in the agreement, to establish at least a basic procedure from the outset.

It is important during these discussions that PhD students do not be afraid to speak up: pointing out a difficulty in applying what they have read, or a problem in drafting a section, is not a sign of weakness, but rather of an ability to seek help when needed. Similarly, it is important that comments from supervisors, reviewers of submitted articles or members of the CSI are viewed as constructive feedback; accepting constructive criticism and seeing it as a springboard to improvement (rather than as a weakness in the face of a desire for perfection) is one of the skills acquired or consolidated during the PhD.

With regard to training, candidates are required to complete 120 hours of training, ideally divided into three modules of approximately 40 hours each: scientific, cross-disciplinary and career

development. This should be the minimum to be specified; if discussions reveal specific requirements (software, training sessions, etc.), it may be useful to set these out in detail and discuss how they will be managed.

Finally, regarding the arrangements for integration into the research unit or team, as a minimum, active participation in research area seminars and events for early-career researchers is expected. Beyond this, any specific roles identified during discussions may be added; this helps to build a sense of continuity and stability. PhD students are both engaged in a process of learning and developing their skills, and are specialists in their field who also contribute to the laboratory's dynamic.

For PhD students undertaking their thesis remotely, or who work full-time, it may be particularly useful to consider how to ensure they do not feel isolated, but are genuinely integrated into the laboratory and the PhD cohort. Experience shows that this is a key factor in preventing dropouts.<sup>3</sup>

### **Educational features**

#### **3.2. Your individual training pathway in relation to this personal project**

This section provides an opportunity to mention participation in conferences or seminars, or the submission of an article. Again, this information is indicative, but it offers a chance to discuss the best times during the PhD journey to undertake this process, potential resources, and attending events as a member of the audience beforehand to help manage the stress of a first-time experience.

If your career path is oriented towards the non-academic world, professional experience (possibly through a gap year), or particularly active participation in the Doctoral College's career development training (meetings with professionals, skills development initiatives, etc.) may prove particularly useful. Reviewing the training options together can provide useful insights.