

What do I expect from my PhD?

Does my supervisor has similar vision to mine?

The relationship between a student and her/his supervisor can be complicated, but in most cases problems arise due to unmet expectations from both counterparts.

*This document is meant to help you to have a clear idea of how you envision your PhD. Here are some questions you may want to ask yourself while reflecting on this subject.

*These questions should also be used to talk with your supervisor before starting the PhD and to check if your expectations are in frame with those of your supervisor.

- 1) Keep in mind the organization of the lab you are considering going to. Do you envision yourself in a big or a small lab? Do you expect a lot of supervision or you would prefer to be more independent?
- 2) How much hand holding do you want from your supervisor?
- 3) Would you like to work in a team, to have a lot of collaborations or to work alone?
- 4) Will you be willing to extend your PhD to another year if necessary?
- 5) How important the number and quality of publications is for you? Are you willing to be in the high-stress competitive environment that publishes more and/ or in highest impact factor journals or would you rather be in a more relaxed group (doesn't mean low quality)?
- 6) Do you want to work on something already established or do you prefer to pursue a riskier and less known scientific subject?
- 7) Do you want to learn new subjects/techniques or work mostly on what you are already good at?
- 8) Do you like the idea of "going back to school" by participating in courses, classes or workshops in order to acquire specific or transverse skills, or do you prefer to learn by yourself, doing a course online or just looking things up?
- 9) Do you want to have teaching opportunities (such as supervising a Master's student)?
- 10) How do you envision your future after your PhD? Think about the scientific areas you are interested in working in (communication, marketing, consulting, start up, human resources, scientific writing ...).

The following points should be discussed and clarified with your PI as soon as possible

- A) Discuss the general timeline of your PhD
- B) Identify the bottlenecks and critical points of your project and discuss/find together solutions to overcome those bottlenecks
- C) Define a plan B in case the main project does not work
- D) What is the expected style, mode (and frequency) of communication? How is feedback transmitted?
- E) Is there a regularized process through which to monitor whether the set milestones (publications, experiments, conferences etc) are met?

- F) How are holidays considered and managed?
- G) What is the expectation concerning the working hours in the lab, and how flexible are they?
- H) In case of collaborations: which part of the project will be done by whom; which part of the project will be done by you but in another institute/country. Similar for cases of collaborations with industry. How will authorship be decided?
- I) Intellectual property should be discussed in case of collaborations with the industry.
- J) Who is responsible to write the first draft of publications?
- K) What are the contribution requirements to be qualified as an author in a publication?
- L) What is the expected outcome of my PhD in terms of quality and quantity of publications or other deliverables?