



SDD Guide

Ph.d.-students

Introduction

A good staff development dialogue (SDD) must be well-prepared. Before the dialogue, we recommend that you read 'The PhD SDD Guide'. The dialogue guide that you find in this document is intended as a guide only, and the questions should act as a source of inspiration. The aim is to create a fluent dialogue with both the manager and the PhD student asking the questions which come to them naturally. However, we recommend that the dialogue, as a minimum, addresses the three main themes:

1. What has happened since the last SDD? – A good starting point for talking about the future
2. Well-being and job satisfaction
3. Future tasks and competence development

We recommend to begin the dialogue by establishing a mutual understanding as regards expectations and desired outcome. A number of suggestions for related questions are provided under each main theme in the dialogue guide. At the end of the dialogue, the agreements are summarised and entered into the agreement form.

Remember, an SDD is a mutual development dialogue which focuses on the future. An SDD is not a replacement for an ongoing dialogue and feedback between manager and PhD student.

Introducing the SDD: Expectations

The dialogue starts with the manager and the PhD student presenting and agreeing on which themes to prioritise. This could be done in the following way:

- a. The manager outlines the dialogue framework, i.e. its duration, content and any priorities or special focus areas as well as the expected outcome of the dialogue
- b. The PhD student adds his/her expectations with respect to outcome and any special topics he/she would like to discuss
- c. Together, the manager and the PhD student prioritise the topics and time allocated to the individual themes

Main theme 1: What has happened since the last SDD? A good starting point for talking about the future

Main theme 1 is a dialogue about tasks, results and challenges in the past year. Here, it may be relevant for the PhD student and the manager to give each other feedback on tasks and collaboration. See 'The PhD SDD Guide' for guidance on how to give constructive feedback. The dialogue can be based on these questions:

- a. Agreements from last year's SDD - which initiatives have been taken and what has the effect been?
- b. Which parts of your job as a PhD student here at the department/unit give you the greatest job satisfaction and why?
- c. Which professional/academic and collaborative tasks and challenges have you had in the past year?
- d. Have the tasks been performed in a satisfactory way? Have you felt that any competences were lacking?
- e. The manager's feedback to the PhD student on the performance of tasks and development points
Recommendation: Focus on what you want more/less of.
- f. The PhD student's feedback to the manager on the manager's leadership and development points
Recommendation: Focus on what you want more/less of.

In conclusion, the manager and the PhD student discuss whether the dialogue gave rise to any professional/academic or personal development goals or other agreements which must be entered into the agreement form.

Main theme 2: Well-being and job satisfaction

Well-being is a central theme in any SDD and is important to be able to perform tasks in a satisfactory way, develop and achieve one's goals. The dialogue can be based on these questions:

Well-being and job satisfaction

- a. What motivates and inspires you in your studies?
- b. Do you enjoy being a PhD student?
- c. What makes the unit/department/AU an attractive workplace for you as an employee?
- d. What can be improved?
- e. Do you feel able to maintain a reasonable work/life balance?

Well-being and collaboration

- f. How is your research group functioning?
- g. In which areas is your collaboration with other employees working well?
- h. How is your relationship with other PhD students (academic, social)?
- i. What is the general atmosphere at the department/unit?
- j. How do you contribute to maintaining good working relations?
- k. What would you like more/less of from me as your manager to improve your sense of well-being?
- l. How is your collaboration with your principal supervisor?
- m. Does the supervision meet your requirements (frequency, form)?
- n. Do you feel that your views, suggestions and any problems are being heard and taken seriously?
- o. Do you have any suggestions for how to strengthen your collaboration with your supervisors?

In conclusion, the manager and the PhD student discuss whether the dialogue gave rise to any professional/academic or personal development goals or other agreements which must be entered into the agreement form.

Main theme 3: Future tasks and competence development

Focus is on academic development within research and teaching as well as on future career. Here is a selection of questions which could be relevant to ask. The manager and the PhD student are encouraged to choose the most important questions.

Research

- a. How would you assess your general academic development?
- b. Is the pace appropriate considering your ambitions?
- c. What is important for you to achieve within the next five years?
- d. Are you in contact with researchers other than your supervisor about academic issues?
- e. Do you have the network that you need?
- f. Which tasks do you like best?
- g. Which tasks do you like least?

Teaching

- h. How do you feel about teaching?
- i. Do you feel prepared for the task?
- j. Do you feel that you have the support that you need?
- k. What is your experience of your interaction with the students

The future

- l. Which career and development opportunities are of interest to you (internally and externally)?
- m. What motivates you in your job and career choices?
- n. What are your goals for your project for the coming year?
- o. What are your plans and wishes with regard to maintaining and developing academically over the next year (courses, conferences, project work etc.)?

In conclusion, the manager and the PhD student discuss whether the dialogue gave rise to any professional/academic or personal development goals or other agreements which must be entered into the agreement form.

Conclusion and agreement

At the end of the dialogue, the manager and the PhD student agree on what to write in the agreement form, and when to follow-up on agreement's. The manager and the PhD student can complete the agreement form together at the end of the dialogue. Alternatively, the PhD student can complete the form and keep it after it has been approved by the manager.