

## **How to perform a Mykopat half time follow up**

The main purpose of the half time follow up is to monitor the status of the PhD project and to help to guide the next half of the studies into as fruitful direction as possible. This might involve continuing as before, if everything seems fine, or alternatively to add projects or else to condense and concentrate the number of projects, if suitable. The discussion might end in a decision to change the composition of the supervisor group in order to adjust to the actual supervision needs and to give credit to the right persons. If there is a severe discrepancy between what was planned and what can be envisaged being performed this is the time to end certain projects.

### ***Well in advance of the two year anniversary of the start of the PhD studies***

Make sure to book the seminar room, invite your whole supervisor group, together with your supervisor invite an experienced researcher external to the project, preferably from outside the department, also invite a fellow PhD student, and the director of postgraduate studies to your seminar and follow up discussions. **Send a file with the updated study plan to the persons that will attend the discussion afterwards. The external researcher and the Head of Department should also obtain any other relevant material, like MS draughts.**

### ***External scientific input***

The invited external researcher is asked to provide an evaluation of the PhD project. This means to help spot weak areas and to suggest improvements e.g. if the project should benefit from new methods or new people getting involved. The external researcher is not expected to act as an opponent for the student, but any technical comment on the seminar and the work content is of course appreciated. The opinion of the external person is also valuable in the case there is a need to choose between future possible experiments to comply with time limits.

### ***At the seminar***

Present your work including a brief background, the overall aims, a brief overview of what projects are carried out including hypotheses, and give a full presentation of at least one project with results and interpretations. Include one slide on formal status of projects, courses, visits to other lab etc. In all the length should be in the order of 40 minutes. A discussion will take place directly after the seminar with questions from the external invited researcher and your colleagues.

### ***Half time follow up discussion***

After the end of the seminar collect the invited group. Choose a chairperson and a secretary to keep minutes of the discussions according to the NL protocol. Remember to book a room also for this part.

### **Go through the checklist**

Start with a short **feedback on the seminar**.

**Go through the updated study plan**

What are the **main aims and hypotheses** of the thesis?

Check whether the **time plan** has been followed and note any discrepancies.

For monitoring the progression of **each project** (= planned papers) check if the following points are OK/have been achieved:

Are questions, hypothesis purpose clearly defined?

Are practical experiments planned and designed?

Have you started collecting data?

Have you analyzed the data?

Have you made a synopsis of what should go into the paper?

Have you decided the list of authors and where to send it?

Is there a first draft available of the paper?

Have you submitted the paper?

Is the paper accepted for publication?

Publishing results is central to science. At least one project should have come all the way to submission at the half time follow up. The process helps to focus on the key elements of the scientific process and will also show clearly where to put more effort for the student to master the procedure.

After checking all the projects, discuss whether the ambitions are at the right level, and if the number of projects are good/satisfactory/the best possible.

Do you need to expand or condense the work by adding or deleting projects?

Is there a red thread that can be seen, keeping the future thesis together?

Is there a lack of theory in any part of the work?

Do you require other methods to achieve the anticipated goals?

### **Proceed to check the courses taken**

How many course points are finished? About 15-20 points is a rule of thumb allowing for some initial education and also advanced courses for the second half of the study time.

What more should go in to your particular curriculum? Try to strike a balance between general and specific courses.

### **Contacts outside SLU/the department**

Have you participated in any international meetings? You should preferably have attended at least one meeting.

Have you had any meetings with stakeholders?

Have you made any research visit at another lab? At least one visit should be done during the study time.

Have you participated in international conferences?

### **Other issues**

Are you a member of any forskarskola or other research networks?

How is the financing organized, any need for additional funding?

Have you discussed potential opponents?

Have your supervisors thought about the composition of the evaluation committee?

### **Supervision**

Does the supervisor group have a good constitution? Is there any competence lacking for an optimal development? Do all persons giving a substantial supervision get credit for their work?

Are there scheduled meetings with the whole group on a regular basis? How often? Is this frequently enough?

For practical advice do you have persons to consult? (Day to day practical supervision)

Whose role is it to summon meetings?

Have you gone through the checklist for good co-operation (The non-legal version of "Letter of Intent") with any of your supervisors?

What is the distribution among student/supervisors of responsibility for the PhD student's learning process?

### **Individual queries**

This is now the time for the supervisors to leave the room allowing the student to discuss more freely the relationship with the supervisors. This can include the answering the questions: Does the communication work well? What is good and what is less satisfactory /could be improved with the supervision?

After this the student gets out and the supervisors individually can discuss the progress of the student and function of the supervisor group. Focus can be on communication and whether the student is making reasonable progress.

### **Summing up**

Sum up what has been discussed during the follow up. Acknowledge good progress. Identify weak points and what needs more work.

### **The criteria for evaluation of the progress:**

1. Is there a submitted paper? Yes = OK (+ if published)
2. Have about half of the course points been taken? Yes = OK
3. Other projects started? Yes = OK
4. Plan for guest visit at other lab? Yes= OK (+ if already performed)
5. Realistic time plan made for the next two years? Yes = OK
6. Supervisor group and supervision adequate? Yes = OK
7. Financing at place? Yes = OK

If any of these criteria is not OK, make a plan to fix it. If there are many criteria that are not OK, think seriously about alternative exits from the project.

### ***The minutes from the follow up***

The approved minutes plus the revised study plan should be kept by the departmental Director of PhD studies (Marianne Clarholm 2010)