

Annual Progress Review by supervisors and candidate

This version is from November 4, 2021

During the project, the supervisors and the candidate regularly talk on the project as a whole, i.e., beyond a discussion of a piece of the research. In FSS an Annual Progress Review (APR) is held with all PhD candidates. For employee candidates, this may coincide with the at least annual review conversations, of which the results are stored in VUweb.¹ For candidates within a part-time project that is stretched over a longer period of time, the review is held regularly, such that a minimum of five reviews take place.

Content of the APR

The APR is a meeting of the candidate with the supervisor to discuss and to assess:

A. The extent to which the candidate has achieved the learning outcomes and the progress made by the PhD candidate.

The PhD candidate provides a brief written progress report, including reflection, to be discussed with the supervisors. The candidate sends the progress report to the supervisor(s) at least one week prior to the meeting. The report contains an evaluation of all aspects of the work of the past period, insight into the progress of the project, and a re-evaluation by the PhD candidate and supervisor(s) concerning the expectations of the PhD project. The progress report requires the PhD candidate to:

- Look back, factually: The report includes a list of publications, research presentations, re-research activities, and training activities (in accordance with those administered in Hora Finita, and supplemented by other activities of learning on the job such as participation in colloquia). Data collected from this factual report is input for the PhD portfolio, in particular section 3.
- Look back, evaluative: Did you meet the goals set for the past period? What went well, what went less well and what does this mean for the agreements you want to make for the coming period? How does the progress relate to the overall goal of the project? For example, is the project on schedule, have parts of the thesis been completed, did you publish enough, did you attend enough courses?
- Look ahead, within the project: which goals does you want to reach in the period to come, and how does you plan to do so? Is it desirable to adjust the earlier schedule in order to complete the dissertation within the duration of the project?
- Look ahead to the further future (career development): what are your plans for life and profession after the PhD; what preparations in research and training should be made for this?
- Reflect on what has been achieved and what this means to you. Did anything stand out or was anything especially important to you and why? Was there anything that made a big impression? What are you proud of? By taking the time to reflect on these questions you can start making plans for the future, for example regarding how you could put your talents to more good use or how you might boost your job satisfaction. What would you like to do

¹ <https://vu.nl/en/employee/annual-consultation/the-annual-consultation-for-employees> or <https://vu.nl/nl/medewerker/jaargesprek/het-jaargesprek-voor-medewerkers>. See also https://assets.vu.nl/d8b6f1f5-816c-005b-1dc1-e363dd7ce9a5/7e8a8539-2652-46a6-931a-0d05d3e71ed7/Reflectie%20jaargesprek_update%20SF_ENG.pdf. We are reproducing some portions in this document.

more often, less often, or differently? What do you need from your supervisor or your colleagues to achieve this? A good reflection will help you and your supervisor to be well prepared for the annual consultation and will allow you to make useful agreements together for the coming year.

B. The quantity and quality of the supervision.

It is very important to get and give feedback on both sides about the supervision and the working relationship. In this way, possible problems and disappointments do not remain until the end of the project where nothing can be done about them, and intermediate goals can be set to initiate improvements. The role of supervisors in achieving the goals should be explicitly discussed.

Organization of the APR

Being the driver of her or his own development, the PhD candidate is expected to take a proactive role in the meeting and its preparation. The supervisor is responsible for the planning and conduct of the meeting. Both the supervisor and the PhD may each bring someone else along, if desired, in consultation with each other. An example is that the second supervisor and the PhD departmental buddy are present. It is agreed whether the supervisor or the candidate writes the final report (including the assessment and the agreements made in the meeting, and with the factual report attached). After confirmation of this report by candidate and supervisor the confidential report is then sent to the head of department, the research manager of the department, and the Graduate School. The agreements made during the meeting are then addressed during the preparations for the next APR. The report is input for the 'Go / No Go' procedure and for the supervisor's annual interview with her or his supervisor. Unsatisfactory outcomes may have consequences.

Agenda of the APR

Consider also the following topics:

- Career and personal development
- Workload
- Social well-being and a safe social setting
- Ancillary activities (work-related)
- Working conditions
- Cooperation with supervisors and other colleagues