

Appendix: Other findings of the PVC 2011

1 Introduction

In this attachment you will find all other findings of the PVC 2011 that were not part of the 'PVC report 2011'. The PVC thought it important to mention these comments from the PhD students. These comments and findings are ordered by the questionnaire that was followed during the meetings.

2 Findings

2.1 Research

Promotion: OBP, organization, time schedule, role advisers

In general PhD students are pleased with the supervision they receive. There are no major problems with the progress of the research of the individual PhD students.

Comments:

* the ILLC director is now indeed the pro forma promoter for several students, which is good.

A slight warning from the PVC is to be a bit cautious to appoint the pro forma promoter in cases where a more obvious candidate is available. The pro forma promoter should not be appointed just to avoid what is perceived as 'meddling' by a promoter.

* having a second (or co-)supervisor might be stimulated more. This could:

- avoid or help solve problems that occur between a student and his supervisor,
- help first time supervisors without experience
- help to check the feasibility of a project
- make it easier for the student to do research outside of the scope of the sole supervisor.

Publications and Talks

In general the PVC did not notice any problems concerning publications or talks. PhD students are very much aware of the need for both and most of them, except for most of the starters, already have publications and do give talks.

In individual cases giving talks is not easy. This often has to do with the personality of the student. Should the supervisor/promoter encourage these students even more and send them to presentation skill courses, or leave it as it is?

2.2 Education

Courses and other education received; role advisers

Most PhD students do take courses from the MSc logic in their first and second year. For some of these courses they do the assignments, at others they just sit in. Mostly they are advised by their supervisor which courses to take. Many students do attend ESSLLI or another Summer School for additional courses.

The Graduate School of Humanities requires all PhD students, starting September 1, 2011, to take 15 EC of scientific courses organized by a national research school.

It is not clear for the PhD students in the Faculty of Humanities which research school would best fit their area of research. The OZSL is not active at present and the National Research School in Philosophy has not yet started up.

For students that did the MSc Logic before they started their PhD at the ILLC it is not always clear which courses still to take. Maybe they can be advised to go elsewhere, even abroad, to take additional courses on subjects not covered within the MoL.

Courses etc. given; organization, role advisers

The PhD Council now assigns and distributes teaching duties over the PhD students. This seems to work fine. There were no complaints about this system, although the PhD students at the Faculty of Humanities, especially those on a 3 year contract, are not involved in this system.

Some PhD students find the combination of research and teaching hard as usually teaching takes up so much time, that the research is held up by it considerably.

Since PhD students on private funds are not required to pay any tuition fee anymore, they are expected to do their share of teaching and organizational tasks without being paid for this. However, as they generally do not have much funds they could do with the extra money. So this is a problem that should be looked in to.

There should maybe be a platform or body within the ILLC, where PhD students can seek support when problems with a teacher they assist occur.

Non-scientific courses

The Graduate School of Humanities now set up a scheme for non-scientific courses of which certain courses are obligatory and from others the PhD students can chose. It's too early to evaluate.

It seems that the Faculty of Science has an obligatory training called PhD on track, for first year PhD students. According to the Faculty's website 'the course consists of five meetings in the afternoon and covers a variety of subjects, covering both the research and the teaching part of the job.

Participants are expected to be present during all five meetings and to participate actively during the meetings.' For the rest it is not clear for the students what courses are offered, when these are offered and whether they can also take courses outside the Faculty or UvA.

There was and maybe there still is a tendency among PhD students and supervisors to be very skeptical and negative towards non-academic courses (mostly due to the poor quality of some of those courses in the past). This had the effect that some of the students never took any, or too few, or only found out about a good course too late. Sometimes they regret that. Some feel ILLC supervisors should send their students to those course more often, because those can be very useful, both for the research itself as to get a broader view of the world outside the ILLC.

What follows is a summary of the opinions of the students about some of the non-academic courses

* bad courses:

-Course on project management: reasonably ok, but more for students who come with their own project (Graduate School of Humanities)

-Teaching skills (Faculty of Science) used to be very bad. That has been dealt with at the time. Not much known about such a course at the Faculty of Science nowadays.

-Career Planning (Graduate School of Humanities) in the new scheme, is not so useful. Another students says it was useful.

* good courses:

-English advanced masterclass (?)

-Training in writing proposals for Rubicon and VENI (privately organized at the Faculty of Humanities, by Kees Hengelveld)

-Loopbaanadvies- en sollicitatietraining (LAC) is very useful, also for students who want to go outside of academia

-Starting up and Getting there (Faculty of Science)

-Presentation skills (ILLC)

* need for:

-Loopbaanadvies- en sollicitatietraining

-Training in writing proposals for Rubicon and VENI

-How to work in a team ?

- within the education at the ILLC, more attention for preparation for work outside of academia.

Some students find this was really missing and they wished the ILLC would have had more attention for it (even in the MSc Logic), others don't.

2.3 Other tasks (e.g. organizational, refereeing, international activities)

It is very common among PhD students at the ILLC to take on organizational tasks, like the PhD council, the Logic Tea or another regular colloquium, the ILLC Magazine or helping out with the organization of conferences and workshops.

Making reviews for books, conference papers and journal papers is however still not very common.

Many PhD students still think that they are not qualified for this.

Most PhD students go or will go abroad for a while. They are often advised to do so and where to go by their supervisor. Some of the new students are already planning a research visit. This is also due because it is explicitly mentioned in the OBP for both Faculty of Science and Faculty of Humanities.

2.4 Contacts: general, Logic Tea, PhD Council, summer schools

In general the PhD students are happy with the social contacts they have within the ILLC, especially among themselves. The ones that are in Science Park are all in one (or two) rooms. The PhD council also plays a positive role here, by welcoming new PhD students and organizing activities. These activities in itself, like the 'Life after ILLC event' and the 'PhD-Master day' are all much appreciated. Contacts with other ILLC members is not as good. The Monday morning coffee is perceived for example as a Dutch event for staff only. Students who do not speak Dutch feel they are a burden to the other coffee drinkers and rather not join in.

Contact on a research basis, with others than the people in the own small research group, is not good at all, or even non-existent . (see PVC report 2011).

As said, the PhD Council is well appreciated. Most students know about its existence and what the council does, and many are involved in activities. One student had some doubts about the influence the PhD council really has. Another student said that the members of the PhD council should be familiar with the system (at least one year in the Netherlands).

As far as the Logic Tea and summer schools are concerned, this is mostly like previous years. Most students are aware of their existence. Some go, some don't, depending on the topic. Almost all PhD students visit a summer school at some point.

Most students have connections in their field outside the ILLC. But this could still be stimulated more by supervisors.

It was once agreed upon that all ILLC PhD students should have their own personal websites. Not all PhD students have one yet. Students suggest that this should be pushed more, because to know what other PhD students do, makes it easier to connect scientifically.

2.5 Information (about the ILLC, ILLC News, Current Affairs)

Most PhD students are, in general, happy with the information they receive in the form of the ILLC News, the conference mailings and current affairs mails. Also the current affairs meeting (only one at the time of the PVC meetings) and the ILLC Colloquium were explicitly mentioned by several students as positive as a source of information on what is going on at the ILLC.

The way the ILLC News is set up makes it very easy to skim it and find the pieces that are of interest to them. Also the Support & Info pages, for PhD students, are appreciated. Especially in the later stages of the curriculum, when graduation is coming up, the page can be used as a recipe.

And if nothing else helps, the ILLC office is also very helpful in answering questions.

Some comments though:

- there could be some more information on internship options in companies;
- there could be a separate list, beside the ILLC News list, on grant options and competitions and the section on grants and competition on the ILLC News webpage could be more extensive; plus postdoc positions for PhD's from the ILLC
- there is too much attention for Ipskamp, as a printer for the dissertation, on the S&I pages of the ILLC, while Ipskamp is relatively expensive and not specifically better.

2.6 Position as PhD student (legal, practical, working environments), admission procedure to PhD

Due to recommendation from the PVC of 2010, there is a new warning system in place. PhD students are warned when an official procedure is done (exemption and admission requests). Students say they do appreciate this and both exemptions and admissions are taken care off in an earlier stage.

There are less complaints about the working environment than in the previous PVC meetings. This is partly due to the measures against noise (an extra wall, carpet in the corridor, other setting of the room, phone and meeting room for PhD's) and maybe also partly to the fact that most PhD students

that are working at Science Park now, haven't been used to the Plantage Muidergracht. They don't know any different.

Of course there are still complaints, like: too much noise, too much noise in the corridor caused by trafficking MoL students, no lively discussions, too much openness of the workspace from the corridor, no privacy for physical exercises (to avoid things like mouse arms etc), and the open offices and the whole set up of the building prevent students from spontaneous collaboration and informal creative contacts. Besides that, the building is a bit too cold.

Several remarks and suggestions have been made, questions asked:

- the importance of the conference room for PhD students is stressed;
- place benches outside the building and make the conference rooms more attractive to make the environment more inspiring and interaction more attractive
- place more dividers and hand out headphones.
- should all PhD students have a laptop as default workstation?
- the lunch at Sorbon/Eurest is bad and too expensive.

While the computer situation for the LaCo group (need for big computers with large computational capacity) has much improved, also due to complaints from students in this group during previous PVC meetings, the self-support for Linux has made this more difficult again.

As all Linux users are placed outside the UvA systems, the big machines of the LaCo group are now no longer in sync with the system. This causes extra steps to be made, with loss of time and sensitivity to mistakes as a consequence.

Another problem with the Linux self-support is that it is not possible to get updated software and/or adequate manuals to install them, which causes people to have to work with outdated and slow software.

Especially at the Faculty of Humanities, where the ILLC Office has little control over, PhD students are not automatically registered as guests when their appointment has ended and they have not graduated yet. Students only notice when their UvAnetID is suddenly stopped and they can no longer log into the system.

The safety net that exists (ILLC, ARBO dienst) when people fall ill for whatever reason, is very good and should remain as it is, because it makes the difference between failure and success.

One (Dutch) student doesn't think it is fair that only foreign students get assisted in finding housing. For Dutch students it is complicated to find something too.