

10 Issues that stress PhD students at iNANO. Gathered by the PhD representatives on behalf of the Nanoscience PhD committee.

Not all students are the same but each of these points was independently raised by at least 4-5 students.

Understeering/over steering

No influence on choice of courses/training/workshop for the student. (It is done by the supervisor, with very limited freedom to the student).

Too much control of the project by the supervisor who defines every single step.

The PhD project feels too open and branched and is made more branched by the supervisor instead of looking for a more focused realistic line of action.

Supervisor and student disagree over when a project is not working. The supervisor insists that the student carries out experiments the student believes will fail.

Access to Supervisor

Supervisor always prioritises external deadlines over an agreed deadline with the student (e.g. drafts/report from students that wait weeks on the supervisor desks)

Supervisor is too busy for ad-hoc meetings. Meetings must be pre-booked far ahead. No-one is available to help with 'here and now' problems or to give real time feedback.

Poor communication flow from the supervisor (relevant info about deadline/limits for papers, invitation to conferences, documents regarding special condition of employment or special details of the projects)

The student gets caught between official rules and a supervisor who doesn't agree with them. (PhD plan delays, extension requests for deadlines -both university and external deadline)

Competition/Recognition

Supervisor critically compares the student's progress with other students either in the group or in other groups ('You should work more to keep the pace of X; Y had this many results/articles you only have fewer')

Supervisor talks differently within the group and out in public when assigning blame (Blame for problems and difficulties is assigned to the student in public, but discussed as shared between supervisor, student and external factors within the group).