

The Final year of the PhD Workshop

Trainers Guide

Please read this document first to understand how to use the workshop materials.

About this content

All materials for this workshop were developed by a PRIDE-Network (Professionals in Doctoral Education Network) Working Group. The initiative began after the 2023 PRIDE-Network Masterclass on the theme "*Pathway to Completion*," which focused on supporting PhD candidates in the final stages of their doctorates.

Throughout 2024, the group met regularly and tested the materials at their respective universities during the autumn semester. The materials presented here are the result of their collaborative work.

The Working Group was led by Pauline Fritsch (University of Lausanne, Switzerland), with Sini Karppinen (University of Helsinki, Finland), Antonia Vogel (University of Vienna, Austria), Oliver Xingwen Li (Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Ås, Norway), Veronika Krieghoff (Max Planck Institute for Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences, Leipzig, Germany), and Ursula Haava (Talling University, Estonia). It was facilitated by PRIDE board member Mathias Schroijen (Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium). The group expresses their special thanks to Mili Losmanová (University of Chemistry and Technology, Prague, Czech Republic) for participating in the pilot phase and providing valuable feedback.

The five files the Working Group developed are under the Creative Commons licence [Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

Please find more information about our Working Group on [PRIDE-Network's web page](#). If you have any questions, or would like to give us feedback or suggestions on how to further improve the materials, please contact us at info.pride-network@univie.ac.at

Introduction

The workshop is designed to support PhD candidates in the final stage of their doctorate. Usually, in the general European context, this means PhD candidates entering their final year of doctoral education.

The workshop has six themes:

1. Introduction and warm-up
2. Stay motivated
3. Thesis outline and timeline
4. Use of AI in PhD education
5. Career after the PhD
6. Wrap-up and follow-up

The workshop aims to be interactive and builds on participants' interaction with one another. This helps to create experience sharing and peer support.

The Working Group members tested this workshop with groups of 10 to 25 participants. The participants can be from the same research field or different ones. If they are from different fields, this must be considered in the presentation and small group activities (for example, when discussing thesis requirements or gained skills).

The ideal duration of the workshop is 3 to 4 hours, including breaks.

The workshop can be given by multiple presenters, each contributing to the theme of their own expertise or by a single presenter. It can be interesting to invite a recently graduated PhD to share their experience and provide insights into timelines, how long they had to wait between some admin steps, how the defence process was itself, etc.

Here are some suggestions you can use for the title of the seminar:

- Getting ready for the final year of your PhD
- PhD completion workshop – Mastering the finish line
- The pathway to completing your PhD
- Planning the final year of your PhD
- How to Finish Your PhD: Workshop

How to use the material?

The Working Group has developed four files for the workshop:

- A set of slides - PowerPoint file;
- A skill set assessment sheet – Word/PDF file;
- A timeline template – Excel file;
- A completion checklist – Word file.

You are strongly recommended to carefully review all the text of all these files to adapt it to your University; you are free to modify as much as you want.

The slides present a framework for the workshop. Ensure you fill in links/other materials from your home university and/or country (everything between brackets). Moreover, you should adapt to what already exists in your University. For example, if you already have many workshops on career development, you may remove or have only a short part on this topic. Also, feel free to change icons and add your own choice of pictures and/or other visuals . In the notes below each slide, you will find further instructions and/or comments to help you get prepared.

Similarly, carefully review the timeline template and completion checklist to adapt the wording to your University's language.

The workshop offers many group activities. You can keep them or remove some of them.

You may feel uncomfortable with some parts of the workshop, for example, the Skill Set assessment can be confrontational for some participants. Similarly, you may feel uncomfortable citing specific AI tools. Feel free to modify any part of the workshop as much as you want to be fully confident using it. Eventually, having invited speakers (for example, someone from career services, a recent graduate, AI specialist) could help in such cases.

Workshop parts and recommended timing

Here we give an overview of the six parts of the workshop and a recommendation for timing each. As already mentioned, feel free to modify them as you see fit. For example, the part on the *thesis outline and timeline* can be a short one or take a majority of the workshop.

1. Introduction and warm-up

In this first section, the presenter explains the purpose of the seminar, and the participants introduce themselves. The idea is to give the participants the feeling that they have already gained a lot of different skills. The skill set assessment sheet (which could be a pre-assignment) is discussed, either in small groups or in the plenum. The first part of the skill set sheet (e.g. the expert knowledge in the field of research) is meant to be adapted to each graduate school's individual field-specific skills.

Ideal time: 30 minutes

2. Stay motivated

This section aims to facilitate a discussion about the fears and potential obstacles that PhD candidates see and to encourage them to think about how to overcome them. This sharing and reflective exercise should reassure and empower them.

Ideal time: 30 to 45 minutes

3. Thesis outline and timeline

This section aims to make sure that the participants know what is expected of them when writing their thesis and preparing for the final steps. Depending on their needs, you can give them time to review where they are in their writing and to start working on a one-year timeline using the Excel template provided. This section can focus on clarifying administrative questions regarding thesis format and submission steps. It may need more or less time depending on whether you have people from different research fields with different thesis-format cultures or whether they are all from the same field.

Ideal time: 45 minutes to 1h30

4. Use of AI

This section discusses the use of AI in doctoral education. The idea here is not to discuss any particular AI tools in detail but rather show some examples of possibilities and challenges of AI in the context of PhD education. Participants should be reminded to follow the guidelines of their university/country.

Ideal time: 15 to 30 minutes

5. Career after the PhD

This section aims to make the participants aware of the different career opportunities their degree will give them. Participants are encouraged to start thinking about career planning as soon as possible, ideally before graduation and to adopt a positive mindset. The participants are given a list of resources to help them in career planning.

Ideal time: 30 to 45 minutes

6. Wrap-up and follow-up work

In this final section, after a short summary/wrap-up of what was discussed through the workshop, participants are encouraged to follow up on their work. The completion checklist with important administrative points to complete is presented. After the workshop, if you want, you can offer to facilitate a buddy system/peer support network for the participants or encourage participants to do it by themselves.

Ideal time: 30 minutes

The PRIDE-Network Working Group on the final year of the PhD thanks you for your interest in this workshop materials and hopes that you will enjoy using them!

With our best wishes,

[The Working Group on the final year of the PhD.](#)