

HYJO 2016 Doctoral Student Supervision Survey

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HYJO Board Member 2016

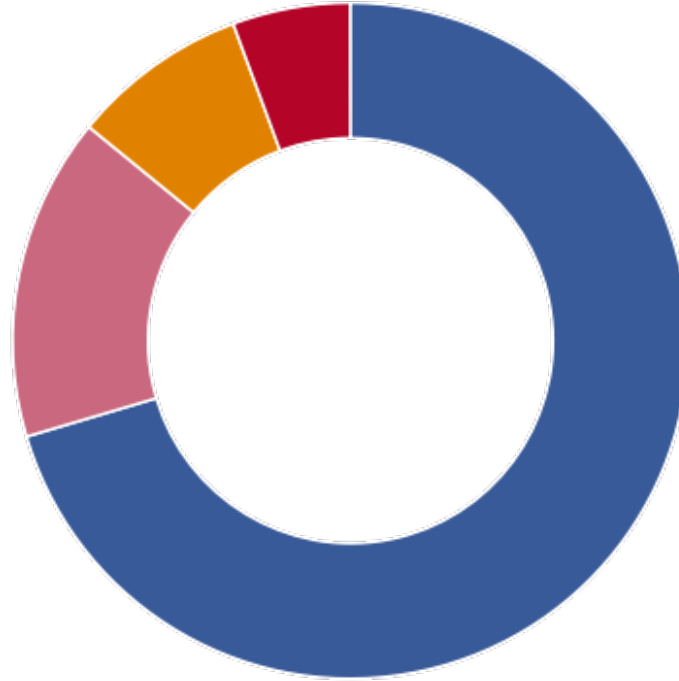
Details of the Survey

The *Doctoral Students Association at the University of Helsinki (HYJO)* board decided on September 16, 2016 to conduct a survey to obtain information about doctoral students satisfaction regarding supervisors performance at the University of Helsinki. An email informing doctoral students of the survey was sent out to all active HYJO members. The HYJO Facebook page hosted the survey and a link from HYJO's website was provided as well. However, since the survey was a product of Facebook it was unclear as to whether students not holding a Facebook account were able to complete the survey.

The Facebook survey was opened for polling on September 16th and closed on Friday, October 2nd. 71 doctoral students completed a majority of the survey questions. Some questions were required in order to submit the survey but a few questions regarding ethical background and gender were made optional. Questions were structured so that participants could type in answers and not everyone provided information. The number of answers written differed depending on amount and type of information being asked (i.e. questions to which a shorter answer could be provided, showed more participation).

On Monday October 3, 2016 doctoral student representatives from each of the four doctoral schools, along with board members, Julia von Boguslawski and Rachel Siquefield-Kangas met with the University of Helsinki administration to share and discuss the results of this survey. All participants information was kept anonymous. The information contained in this survey is to remain the intellectual property of HYJO. The motivation on behalf of HYJO in conducting this survey is to help communicate to the administration the information obtained as it pertains to the quality and satisfactory of the participating doctoral students in regards to their supervisor(s) and supervisory experiences. No information found in this document may be published or publically share without express permission from the HYJO board.

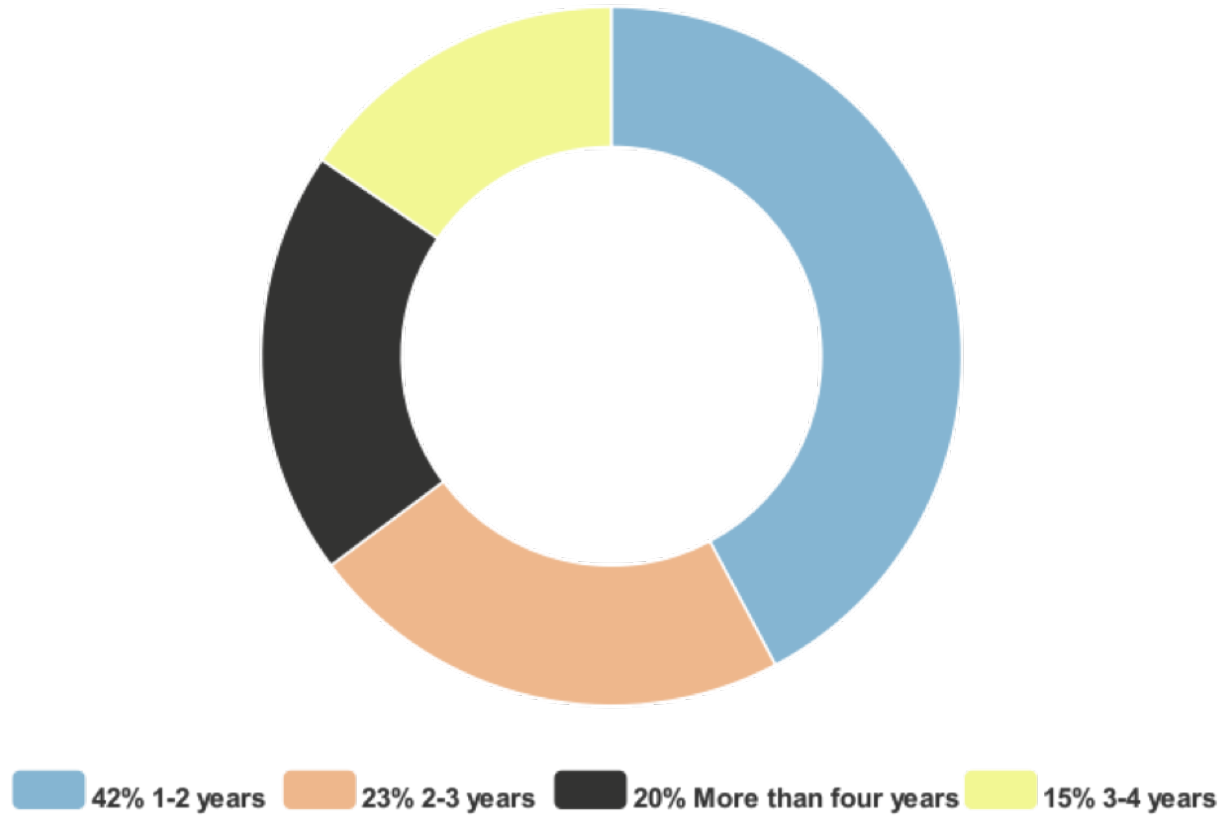
In which school are you completing your Ph.D. degree?



70% Doctoral school in humanities . 15% Doctoral school in natural sciences
8% Doctoral school in environment. 6% Doctoral school in health sciences

N=71

How long have you been a Ph.D. student?



N=71

How many supervisor(s) do you have? Are you satisfied with this number?

N= 65

1 Supervisor=15

satisfied=4 / unhappy=7 / unanswered=4

2 Supervisors= 37

satisfied= 25 / unhappy= 4 / unanswered= 8

3 Supervisors= 11

satisfied= 9 /unhappy= 2

4 Supervisors= 2

satisfied= 1 /unhappy= 1

When do you hope to receive your degree?

N=70

Year-# of students graduating

- 2016- 4
- 2017-21
- 2018- 17
- 2019- 20
- 2020-7
- 2021-1

One= no year indicated

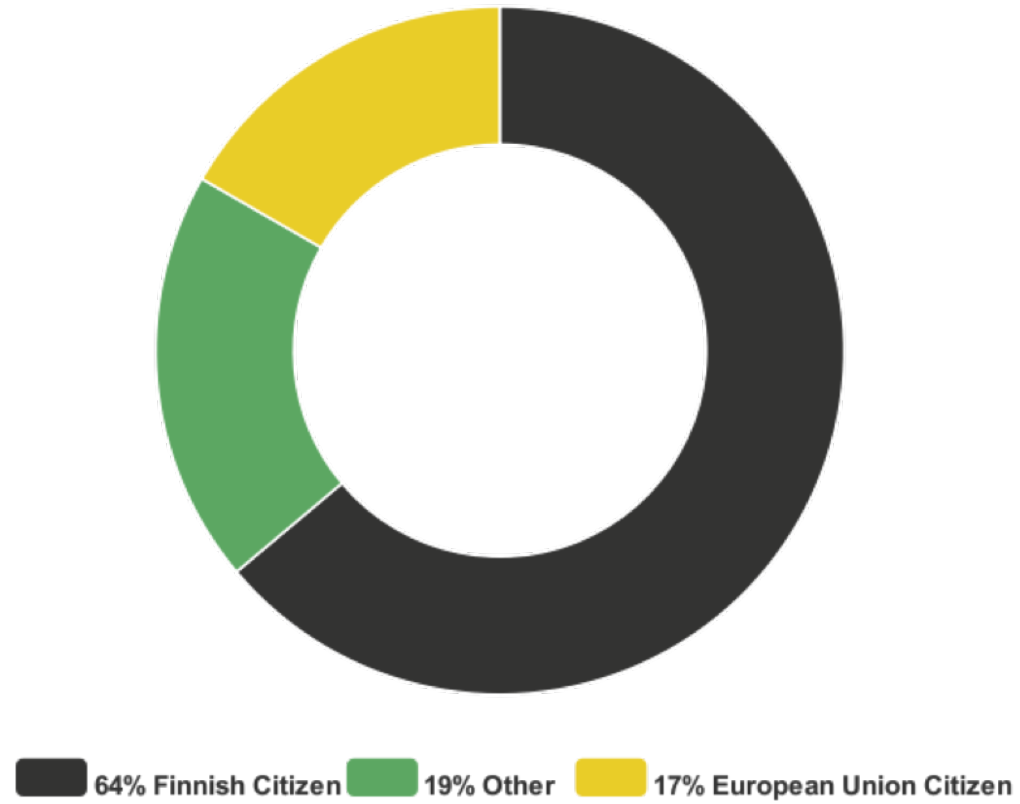
What is your gender?



71% Female 29% Male

N=69

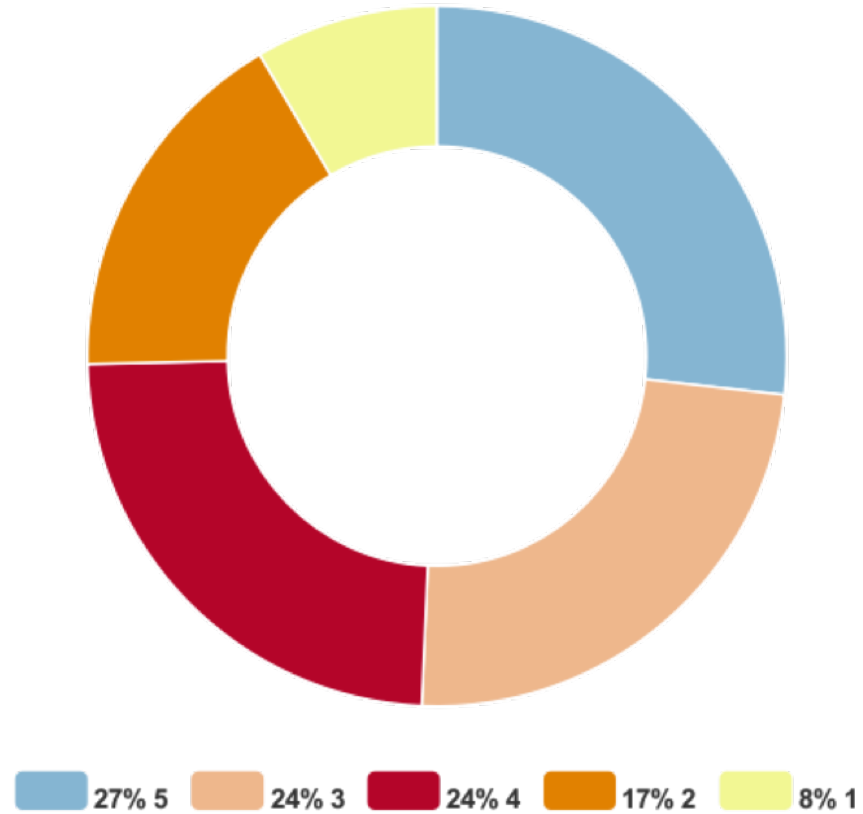
What is your present citizenship status as a student?



N=72

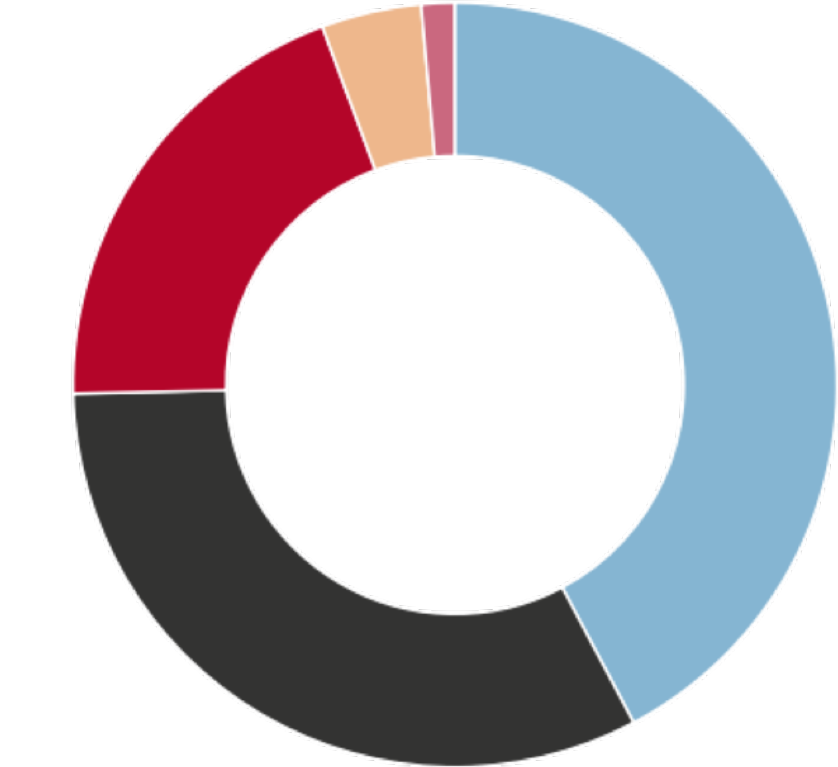
How helpful is your supervisor in providing you with details regarding your degree requirements?

Please rank your experience using the scale.



1=poor 5=Excellent N=71

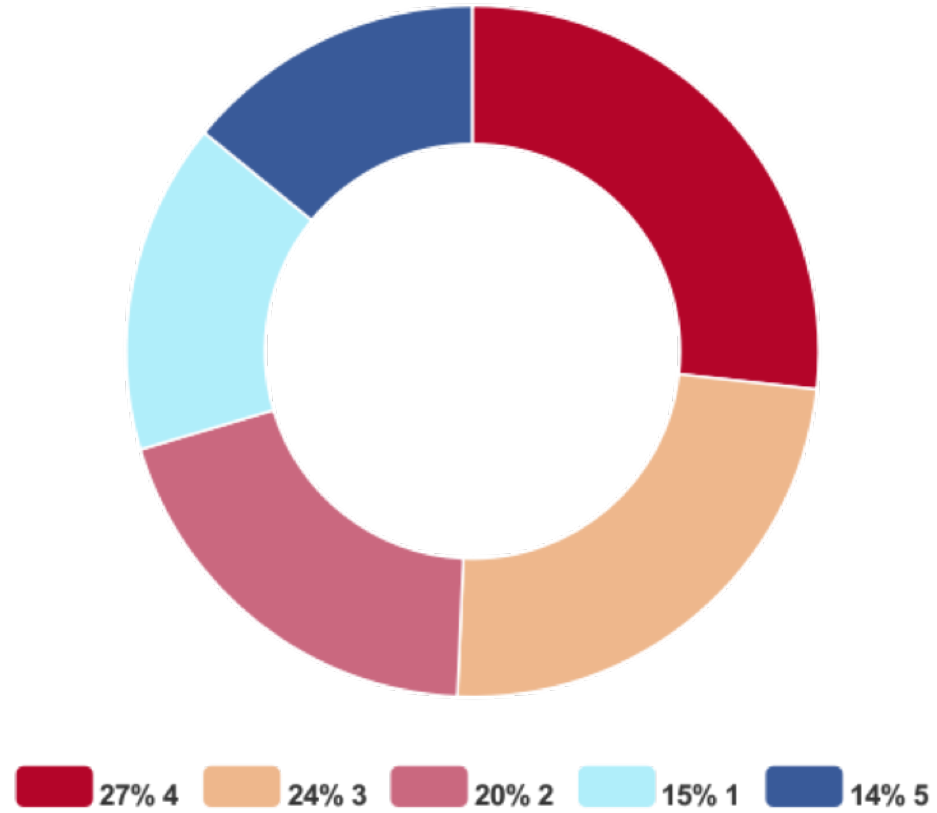
How is the professional relationship of supervisor(s)?



42% 5 32% 4 20% 3 4% 2 1% 1

N=71
1=poor 5=Excellent

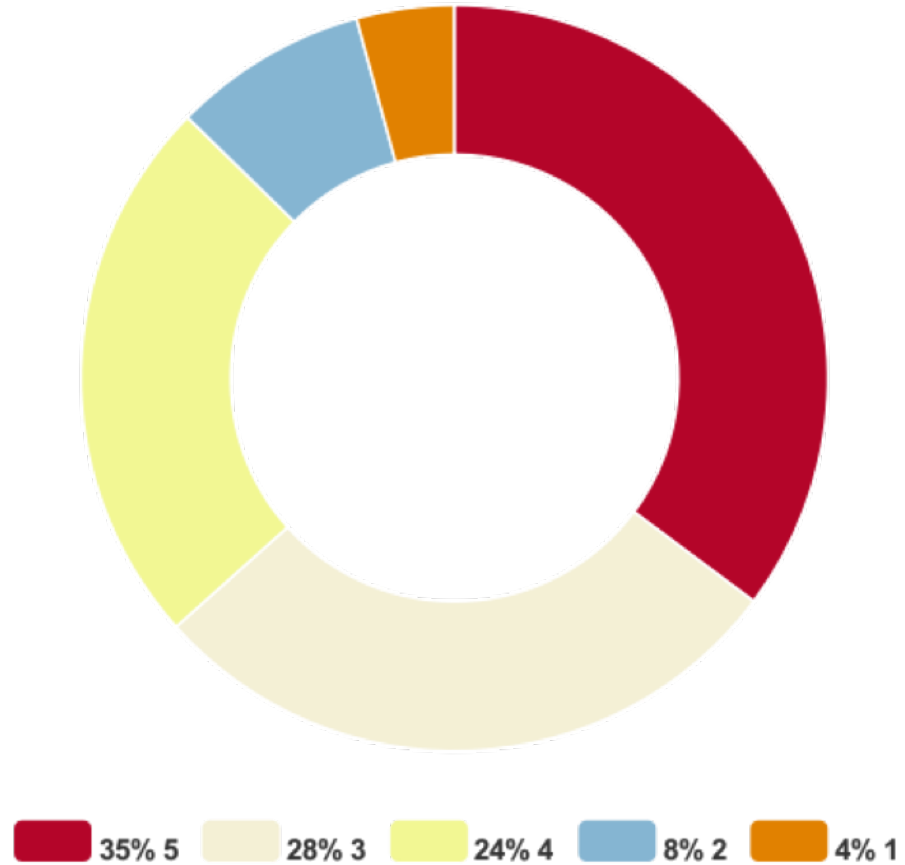
Supervisor(s) efforts in advising you on your career after you have completed your Ph.D?



N=71

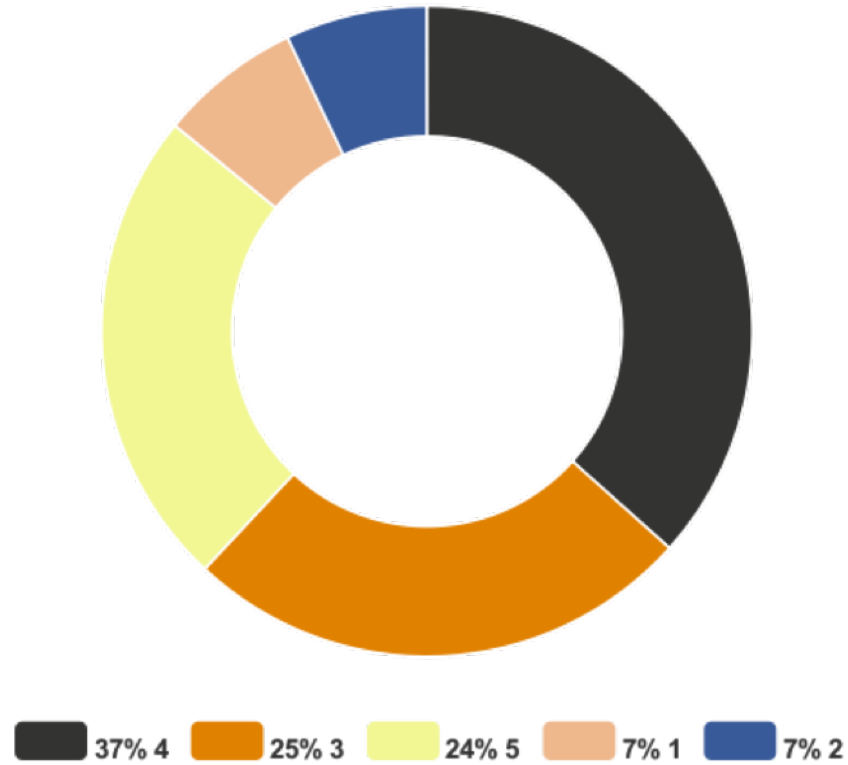
1=poor 5=Excellent

What is the quality of feedback given on your academic writing?



N=71
1=poor 5=Excellent

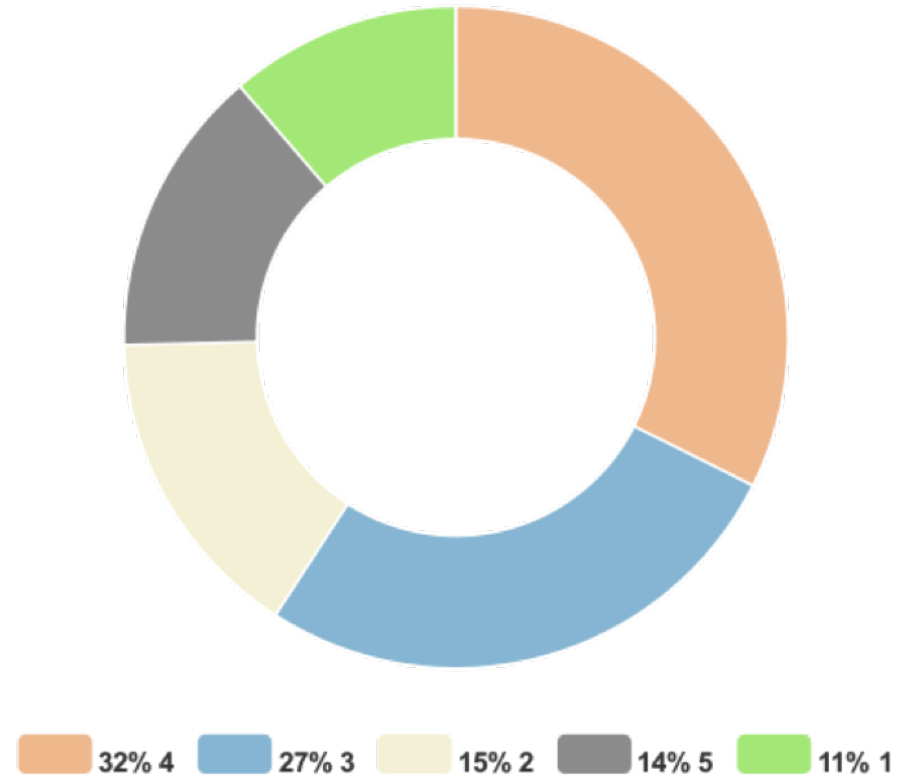
How helpful is your supervisor(s) in assisting you in locating and applying for research funding?



N=71

1=poor 5=Excellent

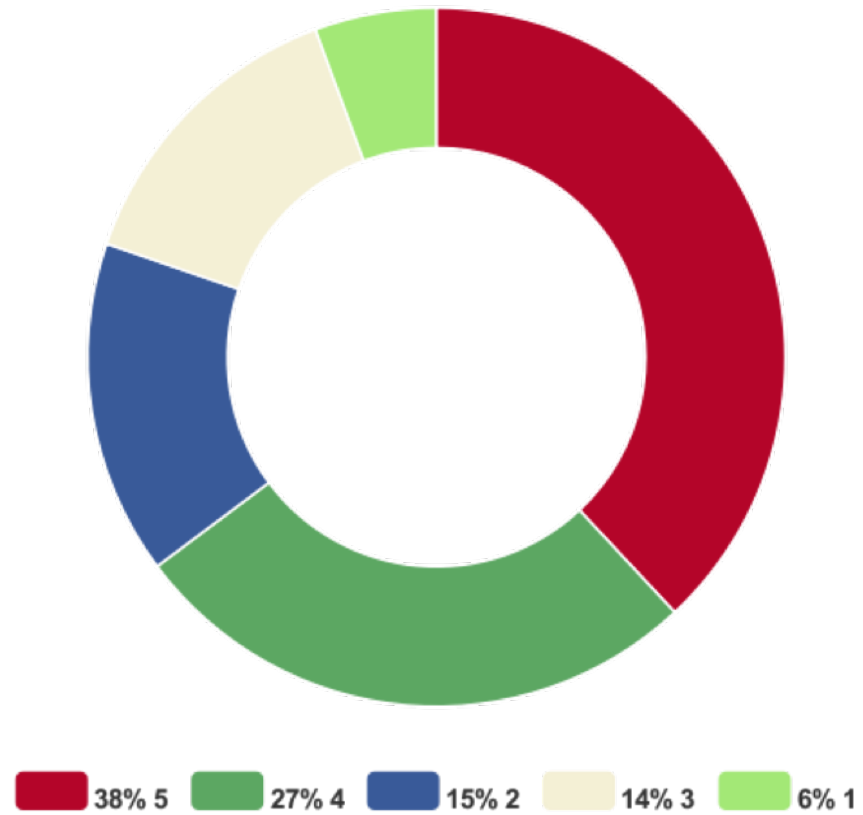
How helpful are your supervisor(s) in preparing you for presenting at conferences?



N=71

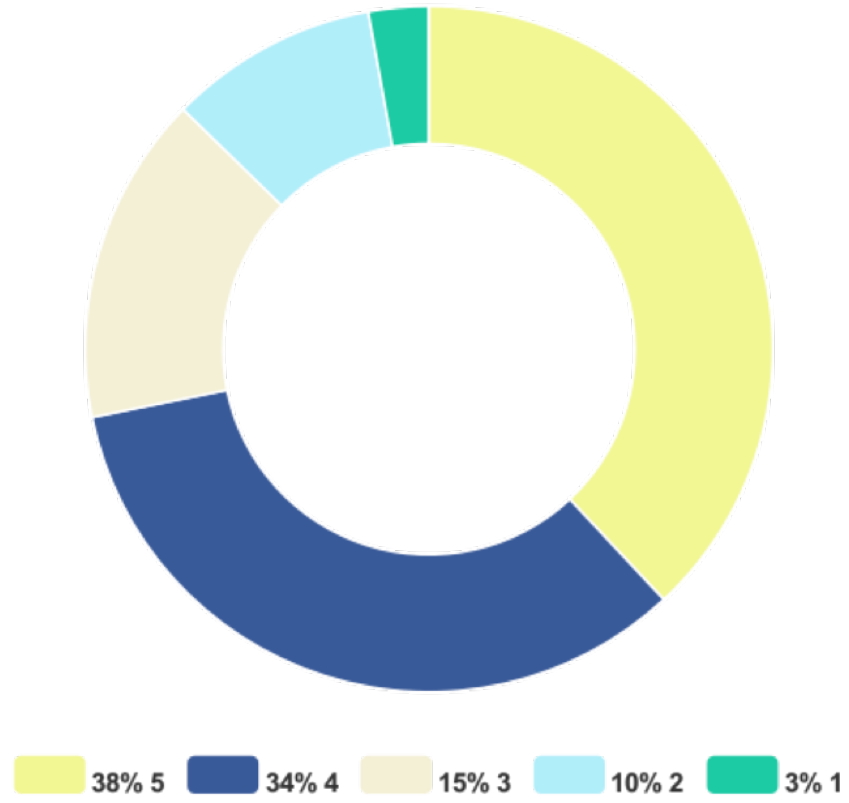
1=poor 5=Excellent

Rate your supervisor's guidance in regards to your dissertation topic.



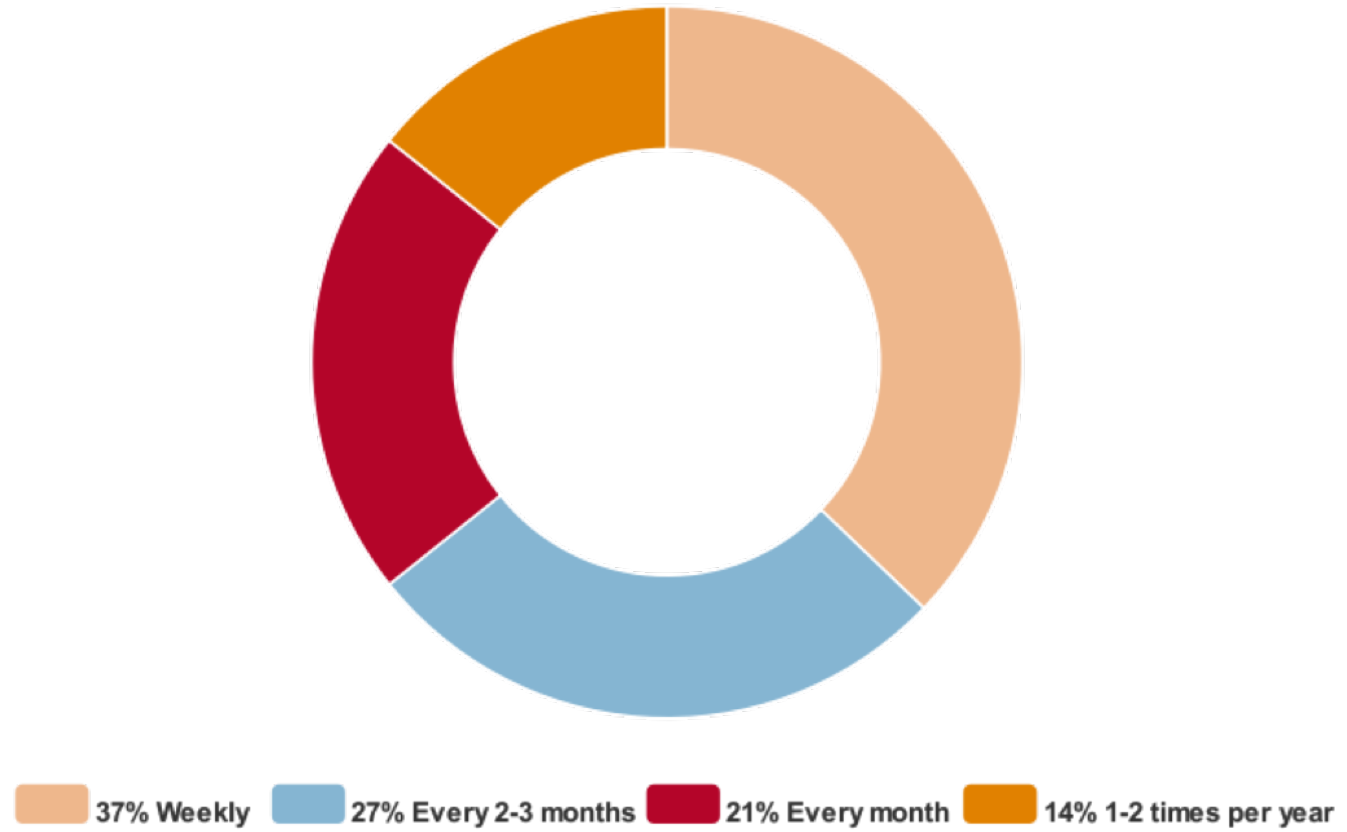
N=71
1=poor 5=Excellent

Availability of your supervisor(s) for meetings?



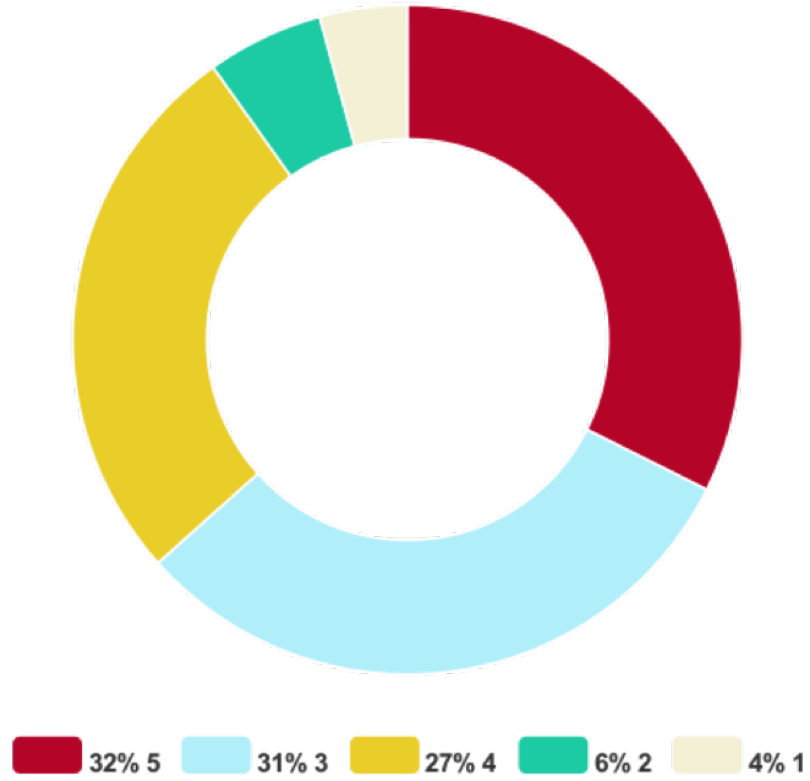
N=71
1=poor 5=Excellent

How often do you meet in person with your supervisor(s)?



N=71

How would you rank your overall supervisory experience?



N=71
1=poor 5=Excellent

How do you think your supervisory experience at UH might be improved? *Some Emerging Themes*

Guidance:

“The supervisor should: -be responsible; -learn and understand the guidelines for supervising; -not be the supervisor of a student whose topic is not interesting for herself/himself; -act equal to all the PhD student she/he supervises; -help the student find funding sources and direct them through the funding process; -organise meetings (i.e once every 3-4 months) with the student to oversee the research process; etc. etc. etc. etc. etc.”

“More Direct guidance not only advice”

“Supervisors should have less students to supervise, less work in general in order to be able to supervise. There should be more instances for peer exchange and discussion. There should be clearer guidelines on what to expect from supervisors.”

“I have had 4 official supervisors and one unofficial. The unofficial has done most of the work, some of the official ones have also been helpful. However one of the official supervisors has been a terrible choice, he has never helped me, only belittled me and my work. Unfortunately, I have no ideas how to improve this experience or make sure no-one else has to experience similar behaviour. ”

“Teach group leaders and professors the essentials of team management, time management, some basic communication skills, how to make students feel that they and their opinion are taken seriously. My supervisors have serious deficits in all of these!”

Rules/Agreements:

“The requirements for publications and dissertations should be standardized into the same level of difficulty/effort. The freedom of choice given to supervisors may sometimes be too large, since they may want to pursue bigger goals than it is possible for the student to accomplish.”

“With some kind of general standard principals that are minimum quality requirements for all.”

“A written agreement about supervision should be done in the beginning, or at least discuss the matters through. We have not had any yearly discussions nor updating the research plan (at least very "official" way, things just evolve). Overall the whole concept of doctoral studies seems vague in the university of Helsinki; NO suggested curriculum exists, and only course ALWAYS available is Academic writing from Kielikeskus. Not even basic statistics course cannot be organized on regular basis. Learning to do PhD studies/work/research has been very unpredictable. A strong research group might help in this, but I wouldn't know about it. ”

For one thing, there should be a limit on how many supervisees a supervisor can have (simply because of time constraints). Further, providing a training for supervisors would be great. Also, providing guidelines for supervisees, as I think many of us are not clear with what we should and what we should not expect from our supervisor(s). Finally, having a written agreement between a supervisor and a supervisee, stating rights and duties of both parties, as well as a short term plan, would help (actually, we already have that at the Faculty of Social Sciences). I had a great luck with my supervisor (and hope my supervisor thinks the same of me :D), but I heard of so many horror stories - on both sides - which clearly shows that many people are not aware how the supervision process should look like.

How do you think your supervisory experience at UH might be improved? *Some Emerging Themes*

Initiative-

“I would like my supervisors to follow up on my work more, maybe even decide on deadlines together with me and check up on the work. Now everything depends on me contacting them, one of them not showing any interest at all and being very hard to schedule a meeting with. Having regular meetings, however seldom (although preferably more often than once a year!), would help me to structure my work and plan ahead. Giving feedback was difficult, since I am actually very satisfied with one of my supervisors, but not at all with the other one, who is in fact the primary supervisor. The latter showed a personal interest towards me in an unprofessional way at the beginning of my time as a Ph.D candidate, which made me take distance from him. Since I had a very good second supervisor, I relied on her instead. But now that I am getting closer to the final phase, it would be nice to get supervision from both persons. However, my primary supervisor has never shown much of a professional interest in my work. Although I guess it is outside of the scope of this survey, I personally think that having more variety among the teaching and supervising staff (more variety concerning especially gender) at the university would improve supervision giving Ph.D candidates a broader choice. “

“Before hiring PhD students, supervisors should be honest in estimating how busy they are already and how much time they can use for the supervision. They should be clear towards PhD students about how often they would like to meet, and plan a regular schedule of meetings in advance. Supervisors should be more helpful in introducing the students to other researchers and possible collaborators.”

Information-

“The only issue I have had is that sometimes the degree requirements are unclear, even to the supervisors--especially now with the Behavioral Sciences shift to the Medical faculty. If supervisors could be given some resources and material by the university that clearly outlines the logistics of getting the PhD, that would be really helpful! “

“More information and more easily accessible information on guidelines for good supervision (provided by the uni), orientation package of some sorts for new doctoral students and a list of persons to first contact other than your supervisors (e.g. how to get a copy card etc.)”

“More practical knowledge about degree requirements.”

General issues & concerns regarding the survey

- Issues- survey does not assess multiple supervisors. The answers provided reflect the supervisory experience as a whole, not based on individual supervisor's performance.
- Cannot make correlations between gender or ethnicity to supervisor satisfaction.
- The survey provides a very superficial glance at the overall supervisory experience.
- Not all doctoral could access the survey.
- Available to Facebook users only (?).