General advice from PhD candidates on Communication between supervisors and PhD candidates:

- Online meetings tend to be more to the point. Be conscious of this and try to address this by devoting time to non-academic topics and more personal issues. Also, separate meetings could be organised to discuss personal challenges.
- With daily supervisor: weekly or two weekly meeting on a set day and time (face-to-face if possible, perhaps going on a walk to build a more personal relationship).
- With whole supervision team: monthly meeting on a set day and time (online or face-to-face if possible).
- Pay extra attention to taking care of each other: empathy check in how we communicate.
  Raise awareness among supervisors about the need for extra attention in covid-times, especially for PhDs who come from abroad and have to simultaneously adjust to an new environment and culture. Connect new PhD candidates with peers and more experienced PhD candidates and staff

Agree on which medium to use for more frequent, informal interaction and 'knock on door' questions, for example WhatsApp, MS Teams, Gmail chat function.

Discussion-points: can we use platforms where one can send direct messages (e.g. skype, teams)?
If this is possible, discuss establishing boundaries (f.i. max **x** message per week).

Social cohesion and feeling welcome:

Creating social cohesion is important for PhD candidates and students, especially for those who are new to the university. PhD and MSc students can benefit from getting to know people to build a network and seek collaborations. Lack of (face-to-face) communication may lead to feelings of isolation, anxiety, confusion and demotivation and may also cause unproductivity and delays; and procrastinate the project progress (e.g. no sufficient and timely feedbacks from supervisors and thus have no idea how to proceed next). Too many virtual meetings and working from home for a long time may make us feel tired to jump into daily conversations.

General advice: discuss within the chair group which of the following suggestions can be set up and organised. Actively discuss in such a meeting who is/are responsible within the group for improving and/ keeping the social adhesion of the chair group (at times of COVID). Assess at least every two months how the group is doing together.

Tips:

- To improve social cohesion, coffee breaks can be organized. Additionally, Monday-morning-meetings may be valuable to come together (virtually) with the whole group or part of the group and do a round in which everyone briefly discusses their progress and plans for the week. This can spark individual follow-up meetings.
- In-person meetings are important because you can more easily create meaningful connections than online only. This can be achieved by making use of the space that exists within the government and university regulations. For instance, small group meetings are still possible, so lunch walks could be organized.
- set up Slack channels, MS Teams channels, or other media tools for informal communication
- Create a - Knocking the digital door: Knowing that you can freely knock on the door – The 'Call me' (niet-bel-me-niet) register. For instance an Excel sheet, where you can put your name in a time slot to let others know you can be called during these hours. Supervisors can indicate whether this is true for short scientific and research related questions and updates and/or also for personal challenges.
- Have new chair group members send around a "this is me" email;
- With potentially also indicating how they can be reached informally (Slack, Messanger apps, etc.)
- Set up PhD rings; and/or buddy systems with peers

- Set up <u>discussion groups</u>
- <u>Organise regular writing sessions</u> (about two hours long) using an online platform, being connected for some hours and taking a coffee break together. Doing the same thing at the same time and creating the idea of being in the same workplace fosters a sense of belonging and stimulates social cohesion.

Lab space limitations:

Some chair groups have schedules for labs in which you can see when spots are available and sign up. It would be great if more chair groups implement this. Sometimes a project needs more than 1 person to work on the lab work simultaneously; please keep this in mind when scheduling all the lab work. Also, close contact with lab coordinators can be achieved by them organizing "open hours" where you can discuss and plan your lab work (e.g. half an hour a few times a week). Finally, guidelines/instructions/tutorials can be developed to explain techniques to reduce the workload and stimulate continuation of knowledge.

Time Management and working at home

- Set up PhD rings; and/or buddy systems with peers so with these groups member can set weekly goals with groups of colleagues and <u>create accountability</u>
- Have regular meetings with supervisors: preferably once or twice a week. Discuss if these can be used to submit

At the department or local graduate school level:

- Support all the initiatives above
- Organise informal online meetings. A great idea is to meet online on a monthly basis with as much people of your department as possible. We then split up in break-out groups of max. 4 persons. Each person will then use a random question generator to get a starting point for the conversation. For example, a question could be "If you could wake up one day with a new skill or ability, what would that be?" or "When you are 90-years old, would you prefer to be mentally healthy or physically healthy?". Of course, there should be the possibility to decline a certain question and pick a new one if you are not comfortable about it. The questions are gathered from the internet (there are many available; we found them easily).