PhD Professional Development Series: *Planning Tips*

We shared tips on planning on the long and short terms, and more specifically about planning for writing, travelling, and some tips to stick to your plans. We noticed that we all work and plan differently so find what works best for you!

Long-term planning

- **Plan the most important steps of your PhD for the coming months / years to get an overview**

For example: the interviews of the first study need to be done by the end of month XX.

- **Add some buffer time to the first version of your plan** to account for things that will take longer than expected, especially if their realisation depends on someone else than you.

- **Discuss the long-term plan with your supervisors** to make sure it is doable and that they agree, so they know when you will be doing which task.

- **You can assign certain supervision tasks to your supervisors** so that you know who to ask when the time comes, to avoid waiting for all of them to answer.

For example: A will help with the planning of the study and B will help with the statistical analysis.

- **When you get closer to your defence time, you can discuss a time plan backwards with your supervisors**

- **Set reasonable deadlines, or even 'deadlines before the deadline'**

Some people prefer having short deadlines because they work better 'under pressure', but make sure they are not too short so you don't get frustrated from never managing to follow the deadlines. You can set several smaller goals to get a satisfaction feeling of having completed something.
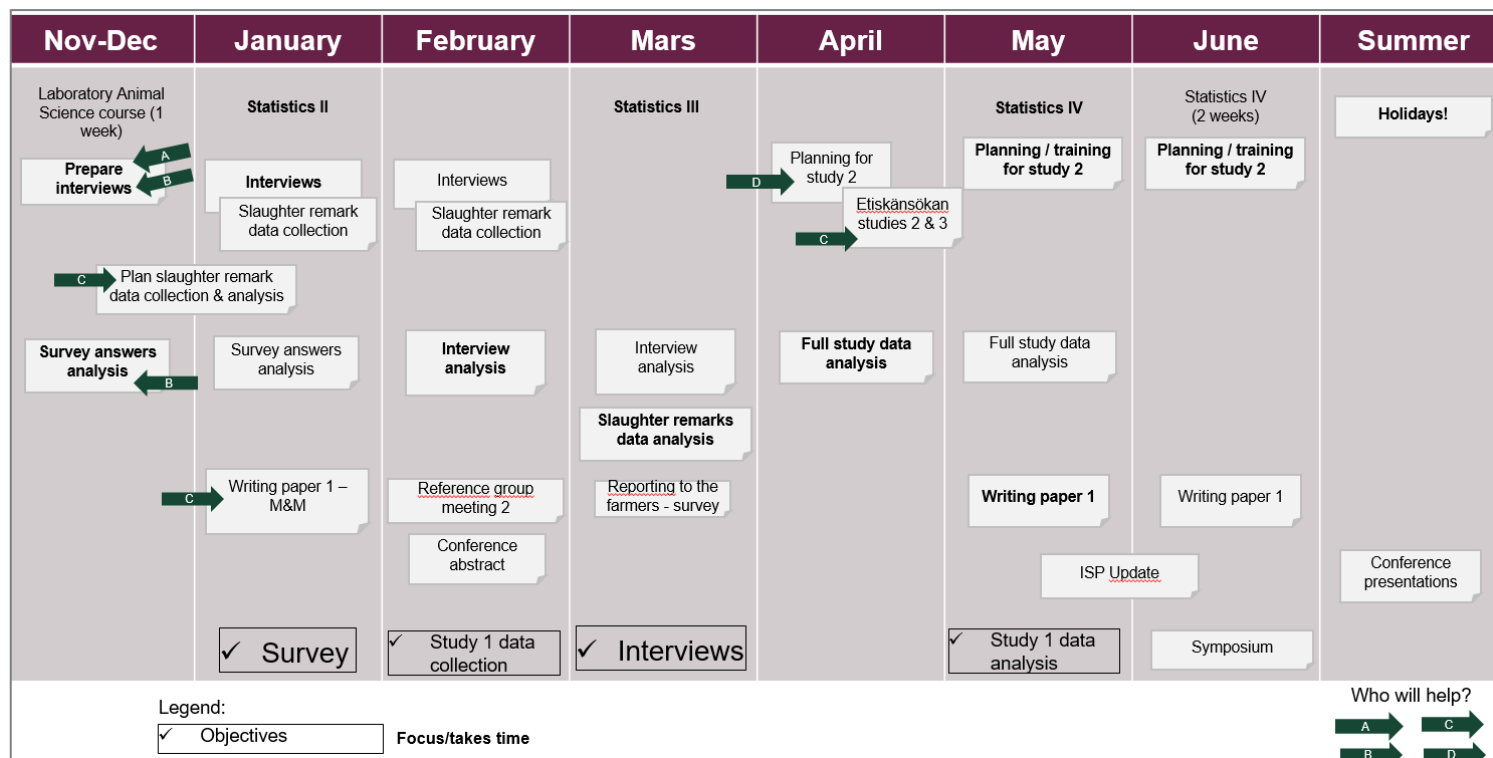
- **Take your and others' vacations into consideration into your plan**, for example in the summer when people could be away for a month while you need an answer from them.

- **Go back to the plan, and adjust it when necessary**

Some might find it helpful to print the plan to be regularly reminded of it. It might feel stressful if things get postponed, but you can always adjust the plan with your supervisors.

- **Some long-term planning examples you can adapt to your own project:**

Paper 1									
	2024			2025					
	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June
General plan	Data collection	Analysis	Analysis	Analysis	Analysis/writing	Writing	Writing	Writing	Submission
First author	Choose time period Look at methods to construct network graphs	Construct network graphs	Sensitivity analysis for missing data and interpolation	Sensitivity analysis for missing data and interpolation	Interpretation of results	Methods and results	Introduction and Discussion	Revise and write final draft	Upload manuscript
Supervisor 1	Choose time period		Check code	Check analysis	Interpretation of results	Comment all sections	Comment all sections	Comment all sections	
Supervisor 2	Choose time period Look at methods to construct network graphs				Interpretation of results	Comment all sections	Comment all sections	Comment all sections	Cover letter

Nov-Dec	January	February	Mars	April	May	June	Summer
Laboratory Animal Science course (1 week)	Statistics II		Statistics III		Statistics IV	Statistics IV (2 weeks)	Holidays!
Prepare interviews ◄A ◄B	Interviews	Interviews		Planning for study 2 ◄D	Planning / training for study 2	Planning / training for study 2	
	Slaughter remark data collection	Slaughter remark data collection		Etiskänsökan studies 2 & 3 ►C			
Plan slaughter remark data collection & analysis ◄C							
Survey answers analysis ◄B	Survey answers analysis	Interview analysis	Interview analysis	Full study data analysis	Full study data analysis		
			Slaughter remarks data analysis				
Writing paper 1 – M&M ►C	Writing paper 1 – M&M	Reference group meeting 2	Reporting to the farmers - survey		Writing paper 1	Writing paper 1	
		Conference abstract					
					ISP Update		Conference presentations
	✓ Survey	✓ Study 1 data collection	✓ Interviews		✓ Study 1 data analysis	Symposium	

Legend:
✓ Objectives — Focus/takes time

Who will help? ►A ►C ►B ►D

Short-term planning

- **You can start the week by thinking of your week plan** and even put the slots in your calendar to make sure you give enough time for each task. You can also use a paper agenda to write your list, but make sure you don't double book yourself between the Outlook and paper calendars.

- If you usually do to-do lists, **remember that the list doesn't have to be nice** so you don't spend too much time on it.

- If the length of your list scares you, **start with the easy and/or fast tasks** and avoid starting everything at the same time.

- **Account for some buffer time when you make your plan**. A suggestion is to keep Fridays empty to catch up on the non-finished tasks during the week, and/or planning for your next week.

- **During a course that you are attending or teaching, it can be hard to find what to do in the little time you have in between**. Some suggestions are to keep these times to plan for the coming days, or to keep some small tasks on purpose, such as searching for specific articles for your current manuscript for example.

- On the opposite, it can also be hard to plan for 'open weeks' (without any meetings), for example when all you have to do is write your thesis. **You can set smaller deadlines with your supervisors and use the Finish-on-time method** (see below).

- **You could use tips from the Finish-on-time method to plan your tasks**, for example with the 45-mins slots followed by a break. The break from the task can also be used to answer emails, so that you can keep your mailbox closed during the 45 minutes.

Planning your writing

- **Set some deadlines for each section for you and your co-authors**: for when you have to send them the drafts and when they should get back to you.

- **Set these dates in advance but leave the possibility for you co-authors to have more time to review your draft if they need it.**
For example: "Please send me back the reviewed version by the xx. If you already know that it won't be possible, please let me know so we can adjust the schedule."

- **Discuss and write in your ISP how long your supervisors should take to reply with a specific amount of time**.

- **Account for the revision time when planning to write an abstract or a manuscript by setting an extra deadline for yourself, earlier**.

Planning when travelling

- **Plan for specific tasks when you are travelling.**
For example, it is easier to read and write in the transports than having meetings or doing analysis.

Tips to stick to your plans

- **Avoid having your emails open so you can stay focused.**

- **Save the good findings from the literature in a separate document.** You can copy-paste good sentences from a paper so you can go back to it later if you haven't found the perfect way to use the information in your manuscript yet. This document can have headlines to remain structured, and each paper can be summarised with its title, a few key-words or sentences and the link.

- **When you are stuck on finding 'the perfect sentence', put the idea in a few words in red or with bullets points for example**, so you can go back to it later and not spend too much time on it. And it's okay to not find the perfect sentences, your manuscript will be reviewed by your co-authors and maybe they will find the right formulation!