

Strategies for a successful PhD



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Orientation Cohort IV RSIF PhD Students

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2017

**Research Associate
NTFPs-OCPs/LEA**

2018

**PASET-RSIF
PhD Student**

2022

**PASET-RSIF
Alumni**

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Agenda

- The PhD journey
- Excellence in the conduct of PhD research
- Toward a successful sandwich program
- Keys to a successful student-supervisors relationship
- How to avoid the PhD impostor syndrome?



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RSIF Cohort 4
Congratulations to PhD
Scholarship Recipients



Visit <http://rsif-paset.org/>

 #RSIFPhDScholarships



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The PhD Journey

Stakeholders
Student, Donors, Advisors, Faculty, Journals, Users...

Resources

Time

External factors
Family, Jobs competitors

The Journey

- Initiate
- Plan
- Execute
- Close

Know your roles

- Planning and organizing
- Managing tasks
- Budgeting
- Controlling factors

Know the PhD format

- ✓ Course Work
- ✓ Research

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What does this PhD mean to you ?

- **Make a Contribution Towards Your Chosen Field**
- **Improving and Challenging Knowledge**
- **Agent of change in society**
- **Long-term Career Goals, etc.**

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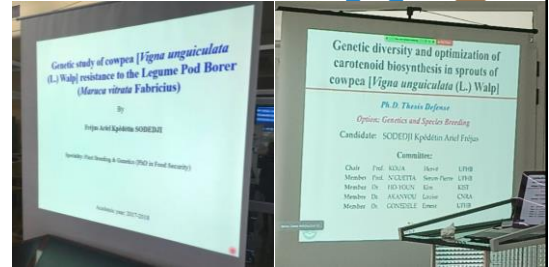
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Excellence in the conduct of PhD research (1/6)

❑ The choice of the PhD research topic

- ✓ A subject you are passionate about
- ✓ Literature Review → Research gaps
- ✓ Discuss with other scientists
potential advisors, experts...
- ✓ Innovation
- ✓ Add values to yourself (skills & knowledge)



Pod borer



Cowpea sprouts

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Excellence in the conduct of PhD research (2/6)

❑ Planning: PhD research proposal

- ✓ Make contact with potential supervisors
- ✓ Guidelines for proposal writing and defense
- ✓ Training in literature and data search

RSIF Capacity Building sessions

- ✓ Exhaustive Literature Review
- ✓ Concept note → Full proposal
peer-reviews, defense



Research Proposal Writing



PhD thesis Proposal defense

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Excellence in the conduct of PhD research (3/6)

❑ Execute the research

✓ Operationalization of the research plan

Materials (acquisition, development, ...); sites,

Experiment layouts, data collection, labors

✓ Always ask yourself

“why this research?”



**>6Months , only 20 Seeds
per accessions**

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Excellence in the conduct of PhD research (4/6)

❑ Execute the research...

✓ Analyses

- Plan ahead
- Use your network
- Participate in training
- Online resources

Laboratory protocols, data analysis..



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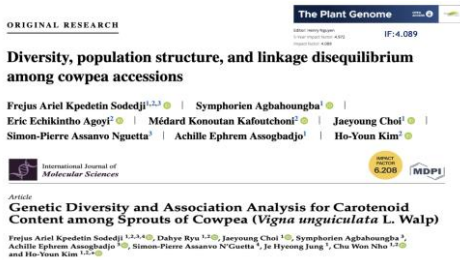
Excellence in the conduct of PhD research (6/6)

❑ Research writing and publishing

✓ Publications:

- Choose at the planning stage,
- Check AHUs/IPI requirements

✓ The “PhD commandos”



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Toward a successful sandwich program (1/2)

❑ Choice of the IPI

- ✓ Key component of the initiation phase
- ✓ List of potential IPIs and potential PIs
<https://www.rsif-paset.org/partners/page/2/#partner-institutions>
- ✓ Check with the RCU

❑ Planning the fellowship

- ✓ Know the IPI requirements (Languages, Interviews, etc.)
- ✓ Planning the collaboration/ research activities
- ✓ Planning the trip to the IPI



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Toward a successful sandwich program (2/2)

Execute the fellowship plan

✓ Organisation/research team **culture**

Meetings, data management, ethics, channels

✓ Build a **strong relationship** with your PI

✓ **Unlearn to learn**

✓ Be flexible and proactive

✓ Be both the **player** and **time keeper**

AHUs requirements, deadlines, PI-Supervisor



Culture



Fellows



Research



"Commando"



Social life

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Healthy Student-Supervisors Relationships

Mentor Vs Advisor

Building trust

- ✓ Respect, humility, empathy
- ✓ Research and writing styles, etc.

Communication

- ✓ Expectations, challenges
- ✓ Deadlines; reminders

Hard work and, be proactive



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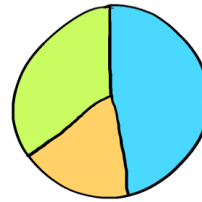
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PhD Imposter Syndrome

“an overwhelming sense of being a fraud, a phony, of not being good enough for her job, despite much evidence to the contrary” **Murray**

<https://doi.org/10.1038/nj7245-468a>

May arise from the comparison with others



- PEOPLE WHO GET IMPOSTER SYNDROME
- OTHER PEOPLE WHO GET IMPOSTER SYNDROME
- LITERALLY EVERYONE ELSE (THEY ALSO GET IMPOSTER SYNDROME)

EVERYONE FEELS LIKE AN IMPOSTER SOMETIMES, AND THAT'S OKAY

<https://astrobites.org/2018/03/02/overcoming-the-imposter-syndrome/>

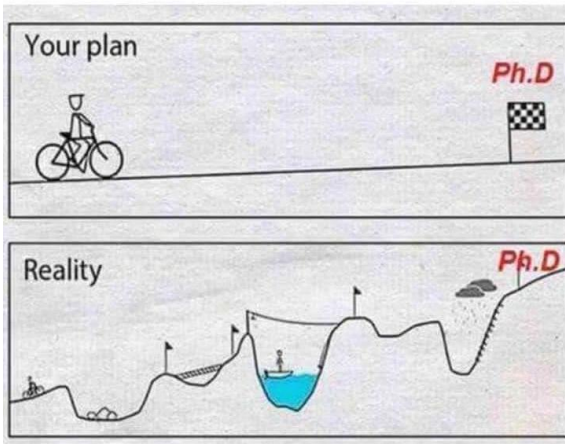
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Strategies to overcome "Imposter Syndrome"



- ☐ Understand the process
- ✓ PhD is a Journey
- ✓ "Change is inevitable"
- ✓ Ambiguity → Keep calm

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Strategies to overcome "Imposter Syndrome"

- Each PhD → Unique story
- Draw energy from your past
- Celebrate your successes
- Contribute and celebrate others' success



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Strategies to overcome "Imposter Syndrome"

- Learn to deal with:
 - ✓ Rejections
 - ✓ Comments
- Avoid procrastination
 - ✓ Plan your day in advance
 - ✓ Reduce the numbers of decision
 - ✓ Focus on something doable

The Plant Genome



Jan 2020-Jul 2021
3 Journals

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Diversity, population structure, and linkage disequilibrium among cowpea accessions

Frejus Ariel Kpedetin Sodedji, Symphorien Agbahoungba, Erik Médard Konoutan Kafoutchori, Jaeyoung Choi, Simon-Pierre

First published: 18 July 2021 | <https://doi.org/10.1002/tppg2>.

Assigned to Associate Editor Sherry Flint-Garcia.



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Strategies to overcome "Imposter Syndrome"



❑ Track your progress

✓ AHUs progress report template

RSIF PhD Student/Supervisor Quarterly Report Form

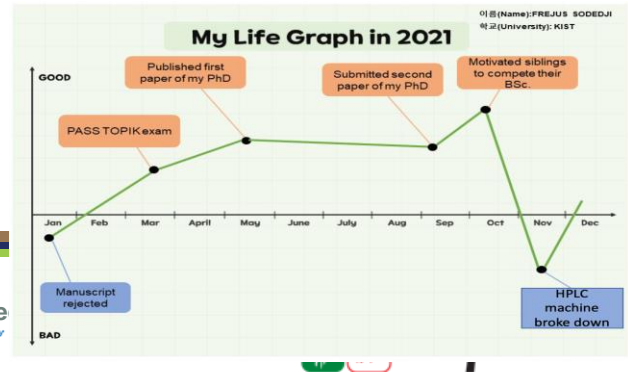
How to complete this form

1. **Self-assessment:** The student completes Sections 1, 2 and 3, and signs and dates the report, and inserts the student's assessment.
2. **Supervisors' assessment:** The student then sends the completed report to the Primary Supervisor at the Africa, their assessment (Section 4) on ALL quarterly reports, whether the student is at an AHU or at an International primary supervisor at the IPI MUST ALSO complete their assessment in Section 4.
3. **Submission:** The student then submits the completed, signed report to the following online platform by the https://app.rsif-paset.org/rcu/forms/Scholar_Quarterly_Report.php

❑ Doctoral committee Meetings



❑ Self-evaluation of the progress



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4) Enjoyment of the Subject
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Engineering & Technology

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Managing mental health

Some PhD students have found ways to cope with their mental-health struggles during graduate school. Here are some of their suggestions.

Take time away from work. When Belgium implemented a lockdown owing to the pandemic, Fara Rigolle, a PhD student studying psychology at the University of Ghent, started going on daily runs. At first, she worried that exercising was taking time away from her research and slowing progress in her PhD. "But in the long term, it really helps to have these moments away from my work," Rigolle says.

Compare yourself with yourself. PhD students often struggle with imposter syndrome, which can include feelings that they are lagging behind their peers or progressing too slowly in their programmes. Although Rigolle still deals with imposter syndrome as a PhD student, she tries to compare herself only with where she was a year ago. "I can look back on myself and see that I made progress," says Rigolle.

Talk to people who understand you. In 2018, Mariana Murillo Roos moved from Costa Rica to Germany to pursue a PhD in plant biology. She felt fortunate in having German friends who could help her to navigate the cultural norms and education system in Germany, but acknowledges that cultural barriers can be challenging for researchers who pursue PhDs in countries away from home. "Talking to someone is really important, but it depends a lot on who you talk to," she says. Finding a person who understood her background helped Murillo Roos to stay motivated through the difficult times during her PhD.

Seek out support networks. "Don't hide your struggles and don't be ashamed of them. Be a problem solver and take action for your mental health," says Ewa Pluciennicka, a cognitive psychologist and founder of PhD Success, an online platform that provides counselling and peer support for PhD students worldwide. Pluciennicka encourages graduate students to seek out peer-support networks, where they can share their experiences and advice.

<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-021-01751-z>



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icipe

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Maintain a healthy and quality life style

The collage features six distinct images, each with a blue header and a central graphic:

- Trust & Delegate:** A green circle with a white key icon, overlaid on a photo of a group of people in a meeting.
- Eat Healthy:** A photo of a table with various dishes, with a white circle containing a green key icon and the text "Health Check-up" below it.
- Family!:** A yellow circle with a white key icon, overlaid on a photo of a man and a woman.
- Sport:** A photo of a gym with treadmills and weights.
- Learn new hobbies:** A photo of a person in a red life vest kayaking on a lake.
- Focus on the goals:** A photo of a man in a green graduation gown holding a diploma.

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Direct Financial support to icipe from:-

The grid contains logos from numerous international and national organizations, including:

- BMZ** (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development)
- iie** (International Institute for Education)
- giz** (German Technical Cooperation)
- Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH**
- Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office**
- Sida** (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency)
- ASI** (African Skills Initiative)
- AWARD** (Africa World Academy of Research and Development)
- Austraining International**
- BERTHA** (Bertha Foundation)
- FNSNF** (Finnish National Science Foundation)
- BBSRC** (Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council)
- DAAD** (German Academic Exchange Service)
- DFG** (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft)
- Embrapa** (Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation)
- moz://a** (Mozilla Foundation)
- Innovate UK**
- NIH** (National Institutes of Health)
- National Geographic Society**
- USAID** (United States Agency for International Development)
- USDA** (United States Department of Agriculture)
- VolksWagenStiftung** (Volkswagen Foundation)
- WORLD BANK** (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development)
- WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION**
- WSD** (World Skills Development)

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Thank you !



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