

Dear [XX]

Welcome to my research group at the Department of Oncology and Danish Center for Particle Therapy, Aarhus University Hospital – I look forward to working with you. In this letter, I will give you a brief introduction to working as a PhD student in my group, including my expectations to you and what you can expect from me.

Your project description *[has already been defined to a large degree in the grant proposal for the project, which is funded by YY]*.

Introduction to my group and myself

My research group is interdisciplinary with varying participation from physicists, medical doctors, computer scientists, mathematicians and engineers, and consists of students at bachelor and master level, PhD students and postdocs, as well as clinical staff. We work with a variety of projects, all centered around the computational aspects of treatment planning for radiotherapy. It is expected that everybody interacts with each other and collaborate on projects by sharing competencies and helping each other out. I therefore expect you to work not only on your own project, but also to contribute to other projects in the group. Helping others and receiving help is important in driving all our research forward. However, for the clinical staff involved in our projects, clinical work comes first, and it is important that we are respectful of that.

I expect people in my group to work independently and to be questioning and critical in the pursuit of new knowledge. I encourage you to be creative, and to pursue your ideas. I will in turn be critical and questioning towards your ideas, and help you put them to the test.

My contributions to the group are primarily of supervisory nature, and in coordinating efforts and projects in the department and outside, but I may to a more limited extent contribute directly in analysis of your data.

I am at times very busy, with several national and international commitments, meetings and activities both in and out of the house. I will strive to let you know when particularly busy periods are ahead, but generally you can expect me to be engaged in many different activities at all times. It will often be easiest to reach me by email (using my AU-account), and to schedule meetings by use of my electronic calendar (again preferably my AU mail account). I generally keep my AU-calendar up to date.

I work from home approximately one day per week (usually on Wednesdays) and may have restricted hours at work on some days, due to the long distance between my home and the hospital. When I work from home, I am available on my mobile phone for urgent matters, or (preferably) by email.

Overall framework and department environment

There are several elements in the PhD education, all of which need to be fulfilled for you to succeed. This includes of course your research project, on which the major part of your time will be spent. Also, you will be taking classes both locally at the university and internationally such as ESTRO courses. The extent of this corresponds to one full semester of workload distributed over the three years of your project. You will also

be expected to contribute to teaching at the university, for instance as an exercise instructor for courses at bachelor and master levels. This will amount to approximately 150 hours distributed over the three years.

At the university and at our department, we have continuous activities in which you are expected to participate – you will receive emails with invitations for all:

- Tuesday lunch meetings - includes general information and thematic topics.
- Journal Club – Thursday lunch every second week, in-depth paper discussion (mandatory).
- Research in Oncology And Radiotherapy Seminars (ROARs) – Thursday lunch every second week (alternating with journal club), presentation/discussion of ongoing projects at the department.
- Weekly research group meetings within my group – we discuss projects in the group, as well as general themes.

You will be expected to contribute actively to discussions in the various meetings, and to present regularly, approximately a few times every semester.

Most people are present at the department during normal work hours. It will be okay for you to have days of working from home, when your project permits it, and as long as it does not hinder reasonable and visible participation in department or group activities. Vacation in Denmark is 6 weeks per year, and it is generally much up to you how to schedule your vacation. However, I do request that you check in with me (and your dependent co-workers) for planning of periods of vacation/absence. Also, remember to inform [\[VV\]](#) (secretary) of all vacation/days off/sickness.

While we generally enjoy a very flexible working schedule, there will be periods of high workload as well as slow periods. You may find both to be frustrating, but such is the nature of research. It is not always predictable, and it is a highly competitive world driven by passionate and engaged people.

You will find that we have a very active and dedicated research group and department. At the department we have regular enjoyable social activities, both planned and of a spontaneous nature, and I encourage you to participate in these. I believe it is important for a well-functioning group to also have fun and laugh together. It will also help you personally to build relations at the department. Finally, the PhD association ([PhD Association](#)) offers a variety of events and resources from which you may benefit.

Communication

For the first period of your time here, we will schedule weekly individual supervisory meetings. Once you are more settled in your work and in your project, we may decide to scale down to biweekly meetings. In addition, you can always request a meeting if you have the need for extra discussion. As preparation for meetings, I ask that you prepare a meeting agenda, and also that you keep a log of our meetings, preferably as a shared online document. If you have material that you would like me to read and respond to, please email it in good time depending on the amount of material. After each meeting, you should expect to have a clear plan for your work for the coming period.

In addition to individual meetings, we have weekly group meetings, in which we discuss ongoing projects in the group as well as general themes. It is equally important that you attend both individual and group meetings.

We have a Research Group forum in Teams, where we chat, post news, questions, and share resources - please use this actively. In addition, we have a research group email/calendar account, which is used for distributing meeting agendas and other relevant information relevant for everybody.

Next to talking in person, my preferred mode of communication is email. You should expect me to reply timely to your mails (although not necessarily immediately), and if you do not receive an answer, feel free to prompt me again. I will not be offended by you reminding me that you are expecting an answer – in my busy schedule, I will occasionally forget.

I enjoy an informal atmosphere, keep an open-door policy, and am generally happy to engage in ad-hoc discussions when I am in my office.

Presentation of your work

In science, it is of great importance to be able to communicate clearly. I therefore put great emphasis on development of both written and oral communication skills. I also believe that putting your questions and thoughts into words is a helpful way of clarifying issues, also for yourself. I will therefore ask you to present your work to me and the research group in text and in slides regularly, and we will work to develop your skills in this respect.

An important part of this will be to continuously work on phrasing clear research questions, hypotheses, expected results and study designs. This will help to better understand the project, and the research approach, while developing basic methodological research skills.

I will ask you to keep logbooks, in which you document your progress, and keep a log of our supervisor meetings. The logbook is an important tool in relation to ensuring reproducibility of research experiments – also don't underestimate the value of the logbook as a service to your own memory. We will use the logbook as a source of input in our regular meetings.

Finally, but not least important – the production of scientific papers to disseminate your results is crucial. Different people have very different approaches to writing method – we will work to find your preferred method. We will co-author papers and will work together on writing manuscripts. Along the way, you should also submit your results to international scientific conferences for poster or oral presentation.

Problems? - Let me know!

If you experience difficulties in your work *[or maybe in your life as an international visitor to Denmark]*, please let me know. I much prefer to know of potential problems sooner rather than later, so that I can assist you in finding a solution before it gains too much in complexity.

Most of all – enjoy! You have a unique opportunity to pursue your passion in work, and I hope that it will provide much fun for you, even though it will at times be difficult and challenging.

Sincerely,

[ZZ]