

NIG Supervisor of the Year contest 2013 – Jury’s report

As probably everyone in academia knows, the quality of supervision is one of the key factors that makes a PhD project successful. And all of us probably know cases in which the supervision went horribly wrong. Nevertheless, people are still getting their PhD’s and besides cases in which supervision did not go according to plan we should not forget that there are also positive examples to be found. As a PhD council we feel that at least once a year these positive examples deserve attention and that is why we held a Supervisor of the Year contest.

At the beginning of October we asked all PhD members of the NIG to nominate their supervisors if they felt that they would deserve the supervisor of the year award. To nominate a supervisor, PhD members had to write a letter of nomination in which they made clear why their supervisor should win. Criteria to which we asked them to pay attention included, among others, the extent to which the supervisor balances giving direction and giving freedom, the extent to which the supervisor helps the PhD student in acquiring academic skills like publishing, whether the supervisor allocates enough time to his/her PhD students, and the extent to which the supervisor keeps an eye on the process of writing a PhD thesis instead of only a narrow focus on the end product. After all nominations were collected, we as a PhD council critically reviewed the letters, evaluating them on the criteria we listed in the call for nominations, and we declared one supervisor the winner of this year’s award.

In support of this year’s winner we received two nominations: Ariana Need of Twente University and Sandra Groeneveld of Erasmus University. In favor of both these supervisors we received beautiful letters. Nevertheless, as we could only choose one winner we decided that Ariana Need wins this year’s award.

In support of Ariana’s nomination we received multiple letters in which many different aspects of her style of supervision were mentioned. Among others Ariana was praised for her talent to tailor the supervision to the PhD students’ needs. Depending on the preferred working style more or fewer meetings are planned, and more or less direction is given. In a similar vein, her PhD students complement her for not only focusing on the end result, but for also keeping in mind their personal well-being and the problems that might arise in the process of writing a thesis. The final example we wish to highlight is that Ariana has an eye for the PhD students’ career after the PhD project. In the letters it is mentioned that the focus is not only on writing as much papers as possible but also on developing as an independent researcher, for example by stimulating to work with researchers from other universities. All the examples we received combined make it that – in our view – Ariana is a worthy winner of the Supervisor of the Year award 2013.