

A2DA approach *Tutorship of PhD students by ABIES PhDs*

CHARTER FOR TUTORSHIP OF PHD STUDENTS BY ABIES PHDs

Foreword

The main aim of the PhD student individual support by ABIES PhDs or A2DA approach is to offer PhD students a place for discussion and mutual assistance with an ABIES PhD, where the questions, doubts and difficulties related to their PhD can be addressed. Undertaking a PhD is indeed a time offering a wealth of scientific and personal learning, where numerous questions can arise. The A2DA approach thus aims to provide PhD students with constructive hindsight and professional feedback from an ABIES PhD. This, in turn, could help PhD students find their own answers and/or solutions to the questions and difficulties they encounter during their PhD.

This approach is freely inspired by similar individual support approaches set up in engineering schools, and by the ABIES “Compagnonnage” approach for PhD thesis supervisors. The A2DA approach is not a substitute for ABIES existing processes but, on the contrary, aims to complement them, by offering PhD students an informal discussion area with ABIES PhDs, who have been through the same process. The A2DA approach focuses on the individual support or tutorship of a PhD student – or young PhD, up to one year after the PhD defense, by a young doctor. As such, this individual support approach, further described below, is based on mutual respect for individual personalities and values.

1) What is an individual support/ tutorship?

An individual support approach involves a tutor (an ABIES doctor), and a tutee (an accompanied PhD student). It is a non-hierarchical relationship based on listening, exchanges and sharing experiences. Individual support is beyond the individual scientific skills and beyond their respective laboratory limits. This approach only starts with the explicit request of the PhD student. The relationship between the tutor and the tutee relies on trust and confidentiality.

The content of individual support is centred on professional or even personal situations, when they are related to the PhD experience and aims to offer some support in this frame.

The tutor and the tutee interact with mutual consideration and respect for their respective skills, experiences and values.

The tutee analyses the situation.

The tutor contributes to the process of emergence of solutions and the tutee has the entire responsibility of his/her decisions and actions.

In case of a problem or a question regarding the individual support approach, the tutor and/or the tutee can refer to one of the A2DA referents, while keeping the other part informed and taking into consideration the obligation of confidentiality.

In case of questions or problems regarding the situation of the tutee, the ABIES Doctoral School can be contacted.

2) Organisation of the A2DA approach and formation of tutor/tutee pairs

In the frame of the A2DA approach, the tutor is an ABIES PhD and the tutee is an accompanied PhD student, or young ABIES PhD until one year after the PhD defense.

As far as possible, the tutor does not work and has not been working in the same laboratory where the PhD student is doing his PhD, in order to prevent possible conflicts.

The duration of the individual support is defined according to the identified needs or requests by the two parts: the tutor and the tutee. This duration can be defined at the beginning of the tutorship and evolve depending on the tutee's needs. It can be from the beginning of the PhD until up to one year after the tutee's defense.

Similarly, modalities of changes such as the rhythm, the duration of each meeting, the way of communication between the tutor and the tutee, are defined by mutual agreement within the pair.

Pairs are formed following answers to PhD and PhD student forms. Pairs are made in two different ways, in particular depending on the number of pairs to be made:

- tutors pick the PhD student(s) they will accompany, based on anonymous answers from the PhD students forms,
- one of the A2DA referents suggests a possible match based on the answers to the forms for PhD and PhD students.

A first exchange/ meeting with both parts of the pair confirms the pair constitution and the definition of the modalities described above (duration of the individual support, duration of each meeting, way(s) of communication etc.). However, if the tutee or the tutor wishes a change of pair, they can contact one of the A2DA approach referents.

3) Function of the tutor

The tutor function is to: listen, share, reassure, and inform (in the limits of its own skills and knowledge).

The tutor volunteers to be part of this individual support approach without financial compensation, based on his/her own professional and personal experience.

The tutor accepts that his/her answers to the questionnaire be accessible to the A2DA referents. In order to establish the tutor/tutee's pairs that best meet the requests of both tutors and tutees, the anonymous answers to the tutor's form will be at the disposal of other tutors.

Although no training is compulsory to be part of this approach, tutors are advised to follow or have followed a course/training on ethics and scientific integrity, like the one made available by ABIES, on the Agreenium Moodle platform: <https://lms.agreenium.fr/course/index.php?categoryid=16>.

The tutor does not mitigate a structural lack of support during the PhD. He does not interfere with the tutee's supervisor(s). He or she informs the tutee when the highlighted questioning (in the frame of the approach) is not part of his/her area of expertise. In this case, he/she does not deal with those questionings himself/herself, but redirects the tutee to the ABIES doctoral school.

The tutor commits himself/herself to a duty of confidentiality regarding the exchanges with the tutee, along with any information gathered on the tutee and regarding the context of the request for individual support, should that be inside or outside the ABIES doctoral school perimeter.

The tutor refuses any external intrusion in his/her relationship with the tutee.

The tutor can decline to accompany a PhD student or stop accompanying one for his/her own reasons, or reasons related to the tutee. In this case he/she must inform the tutee and contact one of the A2DA referents.

The tutor accepts that the tutee can request to stop the individual support, either by removing himself/herself from the approach or changing tutor.

4) Function of the tutee

The tutee accepts that his/her answers to the questionnaire be available to the A2DA referents and then anonymised and made available to tutors in order to allow the pair formation. Those data could be kept up to two years after the tutee's PhD defense.

The tutee commits himself/herself to a first meeting/exchange with the tutor, and respects the modalities defined in the frame of this meeting in particular regarding the rhythm of the exchanges/meetings.

Ideally, this first meeting/exchange would occur in the first month following the pair formation.

The tutee refuses any external intrusion in his/her relationship with the tutor.

The tutee accepts that, during the exchanges, the tutor can offer only pieces of advice, and that all decisions taken or actions undertaken by the tutee are of his/her own responsibility.

The tutee can ask to be removed from the A2DA approach or for a change of tutor for his/her own reasons or reasons related to the tutor. In this case, he/she must inform the tutor and contact one of the A2DA approach referents.

The tutee accepts that the tutor can request to be removed from the A2DA approach or change tutee.

5) Function of the referents

The A2DA referent roles are:

- To guarantee the quality of the tutor/tutee pairing:
 - make sure the tutor/tutee pairs are established,
 - suggest a new tutor if the tutor or the tutee requires a change of pairs,
 - suggest a new tutor if no PhD offers himself/herself as a tutor for one PhD student;
- To be the contact person for ABIES direction and the ABIES Scientific and Educational Council relating to the A2DA approach:
 - communicate on the follow-up and the progress of the A2DA approach;
 - discuss with those two authorities to make sure the A2DA approach is consistent with regard to documents and other processes within ABIES;
- To be in charge of communication:
 - answer questions asked by external people or bodies regarding the A2DA approach,
 - ensure the follow-up of the discussions taking place within the A2DA approach,
 - if necessary, give talks in events such as the ABIES doctoral days and take part in the redaction of assessment reports regarding the A2DA approach.

As the contact person for the tutors and tutees, in the frame of this approach, the referents commit themselves to keep PhD student names and the content of discussions that occur between referent and ABIES PhD students/PhDs confidential, including regarding the ABIES Doctoral School and the other members of the A2DA approach. The content of those discussions could be communicated only with the agreement of the considered PhD student/PhD.

In order to ensure continuity of the approach, a referent wishing to put an end to its function would have first to find an ABIES PhD volunteer to take up the position.

6) Assessment of the A2DA approach and follow-up of the pairs

Following the first meeting/exchange between the tutor and the tutee, each of them sends some feedback to one of the A2DA referents in order to confirm the pair formation, ask for a change of tutor/tutee or ask to be removed from the A2DA approach, briefly specifying the reasons why.

Following this short feedback the individual support takes place according to the modalities mutually agreed upon by both parts of the pair during the first meeting.

At the end of the individual support, the tutee may be offered to fill in an anonymous questionnaire to assess the A2DA approach. Similarly, tutors and PhDs part of the A2DA approach could be asked to fill in a questionnaire.

In the aim of improving the approach, data collected within those questionnaires may be used to write an assessment report on the A2DA approach.

I undersigned (family name).....(first name).....confirm having read the present charter and committing myself to act in accordance to what is hereby written.

The..... at

Signature