

## Meeting report: 12-05-2024

**Present :** Yuanjin Wu (employee), Prof.dr. George Fletcher (promotor), Regina Nieboer (confidential advisor) , Sharon de Groot (HR and writer of report)

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The meeting began with an overview of the recent situation, emphasizing that there Yuanjin has had technical and scientific challenges from the outset. These challenges resulted in a delay in progress, with no significant improvements observed despite multiple attempts to address them. A specific project experiencing technical difficulties was cited as an illustration of this problem. Despite multiple attempts to find solutions, the desired outcome remained elusive. Results that a bachelor student could have achieved were mentioned, highlighting the employee's lack of basic skills.

The lack of progress led to a direct feedback meeting in October, attended by HR, the daily supervisor, and the managing director. Concerns about progress and behavior were voiced during this meeting, but unfortunately, no significant changes were observed in attitude and technical skills after this discussion, despite multiple feedback moments following the meeting.

Subsequently, the evaluation process was extensively discussed, noting that there was no dispute over the factual aspects but rather over the evaluation itself. Previous discussions and attempts to reach consensus were mentioned, but it was determined that there were no new points to discuss. The employee believes that they have performed well, while TU/e has assessed otherwise, stating that the employee lacks the necessary competencies to successfully complete their PhD, including the ability to receive feedback and a lack of their technical and scientific skills.

Reference was made to an email discussing a "dispute," raising questions about confidence in the evaluation process. This led to a discussion about trust in the evaluator and Yuanjin's ability to receive feedback. It was emphasized that the evaluator, as a full professor with (international) experience and expertise had been appointed by the university based on their track record and ability to supervise PhD candidates. This professor has concluded that despite all attempts to help the employee succeed, they do not meet the requirements for a PhD, and the trajectory is not viable. They have been closely involved from the beginning, guiding the supervisor and having discussions with the employee. This is not a decision taken lightly but is the only appropriate decision given the circumstances.

However, doubts persisted with the employee about the evaluator's judgment, which may have contributed to the inability of the employee to accept feedback. The supervisor noted that trust is essential for a successful working relationship.

Ultimately, it was concluded that, despite the good relationship between all parties involved, the current situation is not sustainable. It was recommended that the employee consider another position or find another PhD project outside TU/e. A settlement agreement was proposed and discussed four weeks ago, making it clear that there were no hard feelings, but that this simply was not the right fit, and there is also no prospect of the significant improvements needed to make the project successful and thereby obtain a PhD.

The employee was encouraged to see this as a learning experience and to recognize that this position was not the right choice. It was emphasized that this was not personal criticism but a professional evaluation of the situation.

The employee indicated that filing a dispute with the arbitration committee was an option, and it was conveyed from TU/e that this right would be respected. The meeting concluded with thanks for the time and understanding of all parties involved.