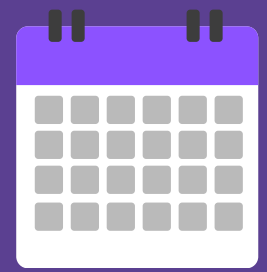# Annual Planning for PhD Students 2026

Review 2025

Create a timeline of the past year 📅

Go through your calendar, GitHub, experiment logs, lab notebooks, Teams/Slack, and email. Capture *verifiable* milestones (papers, experiments, conferences, teaching, pivots, etc.)

Reflect

The big threes 🏆
- achievements
- challenges (technical & structural)
- skills developed
- lessons learned
- energy & enjoyment

Workflow & habits 🛠️
- most/least productive months & why?
- habits that helped/hurt your progress?
- largest time sinks?
- neglected areas?

People & well-being 💛
- who enabled your progress this year?
- did you feel supported by your supervisor and lab?
- early warning signs of burnout & disengagement?

Time awareness ⏳

Understanding how much time you have left in your PhD helps prioritising what to focus on.
Estimate remaining time in PhD in *weeks* (use the previous year as estimate).
Account for: meetings, traveling (e.g. conferences), teaching, annual leave & recovery time, thesis writing, revisions and side projects.

Ideal PhD ✨
- Define your *ideal* vs *good-enough* PhD.
- ideal contributions vs. minimum viable thesis
- typical week structure
- skills set at graduation

Strategy & risk mitigation 🛡️
- create a quarterly roadmap for the remainder of your PhD
- identify potential risks
- plan safeguards and mitigation strategies

Goal setting ✅
Plan the your goals for the next year and assign each goal a priority (low, medium, high)

Plan 2026

Create a monthly overview for this year 📅

Assign your goals to months or quarters. Ask yourself:
- *When are important deadlines & events (conferences, coursework, funding, annual leave)?*
- *Which months are likely to be high-pressure and require buffer time?*
- *Any actions that could help me achieve my goal? Biggest risks?*

Note Schedule your next quarterly review session in your calendar to reflect on your goals and track progress.