



THE PROPOSITION

For PhD candidates, the thesis propositions are an opportunity to highlight their professional and personal convictions about science and society. In this feature they explain their most thought-provoking proposition. This time it is Lena Hommes (Water Resources Management), who defended her thesis on 6 July 2022.



‘Synchronizing PhD activities with the menstrual cycle is key for female PhDs’ wellbeing and productivity.’

‘During the last stage of my PhD, I noticed that I was super productive on some days and frustrated on others. I was already monitoring my menstrual cycle and I started talking to other people about it. They forwarded me podcasts and papers. That’s how I became aware that some of the highs and lows in my work were related to my cycle. This awareness helped me accept the fact that there were days when I was less productive, and to make better use of the creative days. I am at my most energetic and creative near my ovulation. These were the days when I wrote my thesis propositions and the general discussion. I have less energy in the days leading up to my menstruation, so I would work shorter days then and focus on simpler tasks such as the references. It helped

me accept myself and my feelings, my needs and my capacities. I felt more balanced and happier.

There is a trend of being more open about menstruation, but the focus is often still on the negative aspects like period pains. This openness is a good

‘There is more openness about menstruation’

thing, but the menstrual cycle is also beautiful and powerful. You can use it to your

advantage. A recent development in society is cycle syncing: aligning your work with the stages of your menstrual cycle. Accepting that you have good days and not so good days can help you be more flexible in planning your work, reduce stress levels and increase productivity.’ ss