

Main points from the current Doctorate Regulations

Basic aspects

The PhD programme is based within the Faculty of Behavioural and Movement Sciences (FGB) Graduate School.

Regarding Form I

At the start of the PhD programme, Form I must be submitted to the Secretariat of the Faculty Board. Once it has been signed by the Dean, the secretariat will forward it to the Beadle's Office.

Form I must be accompanied by:

- A copy of the student's passport.
- A copy of the student's Master's degree certificate, bearing an *original* certification stamp. Excerpts from the degree registry may not be used (however, hard copies can be requested from the Education Executive Agency (DUO), but there is a charge for this service). In cases where it is very difficult to obtain a certification stamp (e.g. because the degree was awarded by a university outside the Netherlands), PhD candidates may take their degree certificate to the Beadle's Office (HG, 2D-02) and have it certified there. If the degree certificate is printed in a language other than Dutch, English, French or German, it must be accompanied by a certified translation.
- The format and information of the Training and Supervision Plan can be found on the website of the Graduate School of our faculty.
- Declaration of ethical behaviour (Netherlands Code of Conduct for Scientific Practice)

NOTE that since the new Doctorate Regulations **it is no longer allowed that a PhD candidate only has one (co-)supervisor!** So next to a supervisor there had to be a second supervisor or a co-supervisor!

Provided that all of the documentation submitted is in order, a decision on the matter is taken at a meeting of the Rectorium (Committee of Rector and Vice-Rectors). Copies of that decision are sent to the prospective PhD candidate, their supervisor(s), any co-supervisor (or co-supervisors) and to the Dean.

Regarding double doctorate programmes or joint degrees, Form I stage

NOTE: If a double doctorate programme or joint degree is involved, then Form I should also be accompanied by a copy of the agreement concluded between Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and the other university (outside the Netherlands)! (The rector may attach conditions to the agreement between the institutions involved.)*

Provided that all of the documentation submitted is in order, a decision on the matter is taken at a meeting of the Rectorium (Committee of Rector and Vice-Rectors). Copies of that decision are sent to the prospective PhD candidate, their supervisor(s), any co-supervisor (or co-supervisors) and to the Dean.

(To view additional information about admission to the PhD programme: see Articles 8 and 9 of the Doctorate Regulations.)

Regarding the Doctorate Examination Committee:

1. The supervisor sends the dean:

- a) A proposal with the names and mail addresses of the (suggested) members of the Doctorate Examination Committee.

Requirements concerning the composition of the Doctorate Examination Committee:

- The Committee must have at least five members.
- At least one member (and no more than two members) should also be a member of the student's faculty, and no more than one of these members must also be a member of the supervising professor's department.
- At least two members must be from a university other than the institution where the doctorate is to be conferred (or co-issued, in the case of a double doctorate programme). These external members must not be the co-authors of any articles included in the PhD student's dissertation.
- The Dean (in his/her role as chair of the Doctorate Board), the supervising professor (or supervising professors) and co-supervisor (or co-supervisors) may not be appointed to the Doctorate Examination Committee.
- The number of full professors (prof.) on the Thesis Committee must exceed the number of non-professors (Dr).

In addition, the supervisor must approach another professor to enquire whether he/she would be willing to act as *chair* of the Doctorate Examination Committee. The chair of the Doctorate Examination Committee (i.e. not the chair of the Doctorate Board, as that would be the Dean or Vice-Dean) is a full professor employed by Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, but is someone other than the supervising professor.

If the Doctorate Examination Committee includes two professors from Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the supervisor will submit a proposal to the Dean concerning which of the two should preferably chair the Doctorate Examination Committee.

- b) A reasoned argued proposal, setting out his/her grounds for believing that the dissertation meets the final attainment levels, set out in article 19 of the Doctorate Regulations. You can find the format of this letter at the departments-manager.
 - c) The thesis: digitally in pdf
 - d) As soon as the Dean gives the supervisor his approval with the proposed members of the Doctorate Examination Committee, the Secretary of the Board takes these next steps:
2. The Secretary of the Board sends to the Chair of the Doctorate Examination Committee:
 - a) A Letter in which the dean appoints him/her as chair of the Doctorate Examination Committee
 - b) The letter of the supervisor with the reasoned argued proposal
 - c) The thesis: digitally in pdf
 - d) The format of the letter the chair of the Doctorate Examination Committee has to send to the members of the Reading Committee.
 3. The chair of the Doctorate Examination Committee sends all information to the members of the Doctorate Examination Committee and monitors the deadline of 30 days for (their) response and comments.
 4. The chair of the Doctorate Examination Committee makes a summary of all responses and sends this to the dean and the Secretary of the Board (Bestuurssecretariaat.fgb@vu.nl)
 5. The Secretary of the Board then fills out form II and sends an a-mail to the PEC (Promotion Education Committee) for checking the amount of ECTS.

6. After that the Secretary of the Board will send form II to the Beadle's office (bureau Pedel), will inform the supervisor about that and form then on the PhD can, together with the Beadle, start setting the date for the ceremony.

Regarding the Doctorate Board

The Dean is, generally, the chair of the Doctorate Board. In situations where the Dean himself/herself is acting as supervisor, the Vice-Dean acts as chair of the Doctorate Board.

The Doctorate Board (which has a minimum of eight members) consists of full professors from the PhD student's faculty.

The chair of the Doctorate Board shall extend Board membership to the supervising professor (or supervising professors), any co-supervisor (or co-supervisors) and to those members of the Thesis Committee who are not already members of the Doctorate Board.

For further details (including PhDs where the distinction of *cum laude* has been conferred), see Articles 14, 29 and 33 of the Doctorate Regulations.

The supervisor must provide the Dean (as Chair of the Doctorate Board) with the following information a few days before the scheduled date of the PhD ceremony:

1. Will there, or will there not be, a presentation?
2. List of opponents in the order of opposition, including details of their position, field of specialization, and affiliation.
3. An indication of the language in which the closed and open parts of the meeting will be conducted.
4. The name of the individual who will be in charge of the degree ceremony (usually the supervising professor) and who, immediately thereafter, presents a speech to mark the occasion ('laudatio').
5. Details of the location of the reception.

Regarding double doctorate programmes or joint degrees, PhD ceremony stage

*In the case of a double doctorate programme, the same dissertation must be defended at both the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and the university (or institution for academic higher education) located outside the Netherlands, within a period of 120 days! In joint degrees, a supervisor from the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and a supervisor from the partner university are involved. This PhD ceremony is subject to the rules and regulations of the institution where the dissertation is to be defended. In other words, in cases involving a double doctorate programme, the dissertation must be defended at both universities while, in the case of a joint degree, a defence at only one of the partner institutions is required!

Incidentally, in the cases of both double doctorate programmes and joint degrees, the supervisor assigned to supervise PhD students jointly with universities located outside the Netherlands need not be a full professor. As the supervisor from the partner institution is authorized to act as a supervising professor in their own country, then he/she may also be appointed as a supervising professor within Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

Regarding requests for the cum laude distinction

Article 32 of the Doctorate Regulations states that: In cases where the supervisor or the co-supervisor is of the opinion that the PhD candidate has demonstrated outstanding ability in their dissertation, he/she shall submit a written and reasoned request to the Chair of the Doctorate Board for the conferral of a doctorate with the distinction of cum laude. This request must be submitted at least sixty days prior to the PhD ceremony. Any member of the Doctorate Examination Committee may also submit such a request within the deadline indicated above.

Once a request for the conferral of the cum laude distinction has been submitted, the Chair of the Doctorate Board shall immediately submit this request to the Doctorate Examination Committee. The latter committee shall then respond in writing within fourteen days, informing the Chair of the Doctorate Board of its recommendation regarding the request to confer the distinction of cum laude. If *more* than one member of the Doctorate Examination Committee does not agree with the proposal to confer the distinction of cum laude, the Doctorate Examination Committee will recommend that the distinction should not be conferred.

If the Doctorate Examination Committee is in favour of conferring the distinction of cum laude, then the Chair of the Doctorate Board shall immediately appoint two external referees. To this end, the supervising professor shall nominate four individuals. The Chair of the Doctorate Board shall then choose two of these individuals.

The referees are to be full professors or associate professors, and experts in the field of the dissertation. The referees shall be asked to submit their recommendations to the Chair of the Doctorate Board.

The proposal to confer the distinction of cum laude shall be introduced by the Chair of the Doctorate Board in the closed meeting of the Doctorate Board prior to the defence of the dissertation. The members and additional members of the Doctorate Board, as referred to in Article 14, paragraph 9, shall receive a copy of the above request in the meeting.

Decision on conferring the distinction of cum laude

The decision on conferring the distinction of cum laude shall be taken by the members of the Doctorate Board, following the defence. The manner in which the PhD candidate defends his/her dissertation shall be taken into account when deciding whether to confer the distinction of cum laude. This distinction of cum laude shall not be conferred if *more* than one of the members or additional members of the Doctorate Board (as referred to in paragraph 1) present at the PhD ceremony expresses disagreement. The supervisor and co-supervisor (if applicable) have an advisory role regarding the decision referred to in Article 14, paragraph 1.

For further details (including PhDs where the distinction of cum laude has been conferred), see Articles 14, 29 and 33 of the Doctorate Regulations.

Frequently asked questions

When did the new regulations enter into force? The new regulations will be applied, except for the additional 30 credits that must be obtained: this will only apply to copies of Form I that were submitted from 1 April 2015.

Is it possible to obtain an exemption from the requirement that at least 30 educational programme credits must be obtained? Yes, the faculty may extend an exemption covering all, or parts of, this requirement. Of course, any such request must be accompanied by a document setting out reasoned

arguments, which should be enclosed with Form I. The Faculty of Behavioural and Movement Sciences' (FBG) PEC (Promotion Education Committee) defines the rules that apply to such exemptions.

Can retired professors who previously occupied an endowed chair still carry out the duties of a supervising professor/supervise PhD students? Provided that such retired professors who previously occupied an endowed chair were granted an honourable discharge from their duties, they will retain the right to supervise PhD students for a period of five years thereafter. When that five-year period has elapsed, they can continue to supervise PhD students, but only in the role of a co-supervisor (not as a supervisor).

Can a full professor from a university other than Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam act as a supervising professor? Yes, at the proposal of the Doctorate Board, the College of Deans can designate a full professor from another university or from an institution for academic higher education outside the Netherlands, as a supervising professor. However, at the proposal of the Doctorate Board, a full professor from Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam has to be appointed as second supervising professor. If an institution outside the Netherlands is involved, then the professor in question must hold a position equivalent to that of a full professor appointed to a Dutch university.

Can there be more than one supervisor and one co-supervisor? Yes, that is permitted. However, no more than two supervising professors and two co-supervisors are permitted. Where there are more than two supervising professors and two co-supervisors (i.e. four supervisors), the Beadle requests a short letter explaining the need for so many supervisors (this usually occurs when two separate disciplines converge in the area of research involved in the dissertation).

Use of a 'Changes Form' to give notification of any changes: if, during the PhD programme, there is a change in the number of supervising professors (or co-supervisors), or if there is a change of supervisor, then the Beadle must be informed. [Link to "Changes Form"](#). This must be signed by all those involved, to make it clear that everyone agrees with the proposed change. Once the form has been signed by the Dean, the Secretary of the Faculty Board returns it to the Beadle.

Is it possible to be awarded a PhD if you have not first obtained a Master's degree? Yes, indeed, in exceptional cases. In such cases, Form I must be accompanied by:

- A copy of the student's passport
- Certified copies of relevant diplomas
- Certified copies of the course components taken and/or a diploma supplement
- CV including the results of any scientific work carried out
- The proposed supervising professor's reasoned opinion stating why the applicant is deemed capable of conducting independent scientific research
- Assessment of the Dean as Chair of the Doctorate Board (if the Dean has signed Form I, then he/she has basically given his/her approval)

Where departments work together with large consortiums, individual articles may involve large numbers of co-authors. Accordingly, it can be difficult to find external members for the Thesis Committee who have expertise in the research field in question, but who have not published an article that was used in the dissertation. How should you proceed in such cases? This rule is, of course, related to the question of integrity. The Dean can grant dispensation in such cases, provided that a reasoned explanation is provided, and provided the author in question does not appear in too many articles in the dissertation.

How many members of the Doctorate Examination Committee may be replaced at the actual PhD ceremony?

The advice from the Beadle's Office is that the Committee's original composition should be retained, as far as possible. If it really is impossible to get them all together, then there is the option of using replacements (but no more than two). If this number is exceeded, then a request (accompanied by a reasoned explanation) must be submitted to the Dean.

If, in the event that conferral of the distinction of cum laude is proposed, one of the members expresses disagreement, can the distinction still be conferred and does it matter whether the objector is a member of the Thesis Committee or one of the referees? If no more than one member expresses disagreement with conferral of the distinction cum laude, it can still go ahead. This applies to any member, whether they are an internal member of the Thesis Committee or an external referee.

For example, my grandfather's brother was a Professor of Ancient Cultures at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, but he retired last year. Is he still entitled to participate in the procession? The official position of the Beadle's Office is that relatives of PhD candidates (even if they are professors) should be seated among the audience in the hall. However, if this professor has his mind set on walking in the procession then he may do so, but he may under no circumstances attend the deliberations.

If a joint degree is involved, between Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and another university/a university outside the Netherlands, is it necessary for the supervisor to be a supervisor of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (Faculty of Behavioural and Movement Sciences) in order to qualify (as a faculty) for the PhD remuneration? The Beadle's Office draws no distinction between the first and second supervisor professor. However, a supervisor from the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam must be present. If only a co-supervisor is present, then the PhD remuneration will not be paid to the university (/faculty).

Are there any requirements concerning the Acknowledgments section of the dissertation (e.g. is a maximum length stipulated for this section)? The Beadle's Office imposes no requirements on (1) the Dutch Summary, (2) About the Author, or (3) Acknowledgements.

Are PhD ceremonies ever held in private? Yes, PhD ceremonies can be held in private (e.g. if someone has a reason for not wanting an audience, due to illness or the like). Such ceremonies are not held in the Aula, but in the Forum Hall, which is smaller. Five 'personal guests' may be invited in such cases, if so desired. Beyond that, only the Beadle and the members of the Doctorate Board would be present.