



# PhD

## Guide



Utrecht University

GRADUATE SCHOOL  
OF LIFE SCIENCES



UMC Utrecht









Utrecht University



UMC Utrecht

# PhD Guide

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For the most up-to-date information, please check the GSLS website. We update the information there when necessary. Throughout this guide, you will find QR codes guiding you to the relevant webpages.



# Welcome

“

Dear PhD candidate,

Welcome to our Graduate School of Life Sciences!

We will do our very best to ensure, that during your PhD journey, you grow into an independent researcher. Key elements of our PhD education include conducting state-of-the-art research and following a training program in academic and transferable competencies.

In addition, we consider teaching activities, belonging to and participating in a PhD community, and experiencing an inspiring and safe learning environment as crucial during your PhD journey. Open science and scientific integrity are two of our leading principles in science and education.

And we strive for a good work-life balance.

During your PhD journey, you will explore options for life after doctoral graduation as well, i.e., to get a position either inside or outside academia.

Your PhD supervisory team, your independent advisor(s), your research group, your PhD community, the Graduate School and the PhD council will all support you in these aspects.

We wish you a very inspiring PhD journey.

”

**Prof. Isabel Arends, PhD**

Dean of the Faculty of Science

**Prof. Debbie Jaarsma, PhD**

Dean of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine

**Prof. Arno Hoes, PhD**

Dean of the Faculty of Medicine /  
vice-chair UMC Utrecht

**Prof. Harold van Rijen, PhD**

Director of the Graduate School of Life  
Sciences

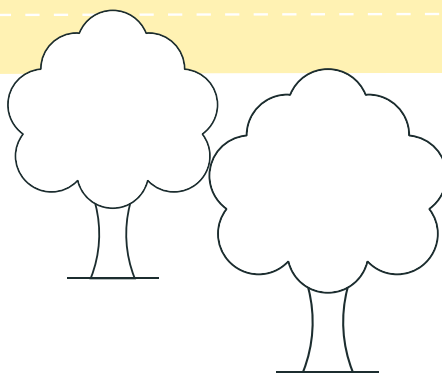
**Prof. Toine Egberts, PhD**

Director of doctoral education of the  
Graduate School of Life Sciences



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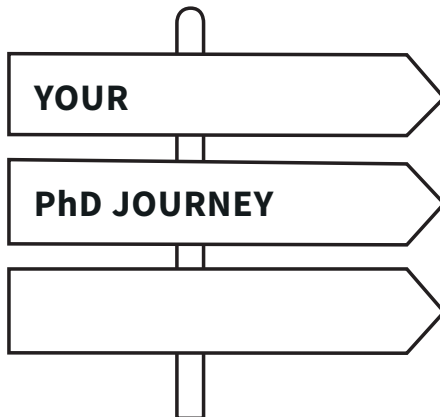
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# 1





## 1.1 Welcome to the GSLS

Welcome to the Graduate School of Life Sciences (GSLS) of Utrecht University. You are about to start, or recently started, your PhD journey. This PhD Guide describes many aspects you might want to know about this journey.



The GSLS is the collective responsibility of the deans of the faculty of Medicine (UMC Utrecht), the faculty of Veterinary Medicine (Utrecht University) and the Faculty of Science (Utrecht University): together the Life Sciences deans. In addition, there is close collaboration with the following non-university/non-UMC research institutes located at the Utrecht Science Park: the Westerdijk Institute, the Hubrecht Institute, and the Princess Máxima Center. If your first supervisor (*promotor*) is a professor (or associate professor granted *ius promovendi*) appointed at one of the three faculties (Faculty of Science only the departments of Biology, Pharmaceutical Sciences and Chemistry (Bijvoet Centre for Biomedical Research)), you are a GSLS PhD candidate.

As part of the Bologna Process, doctoral education has been defined as the third cycle in higher education, the cycle following the Bachelor's and Master's phases. The main goal of your doctoral education is to develop into an independent scientist by performing research and following training, and for many of you also by teaching. Our aim is to provide you with the most optimal environment to develop research skills and other competencies. Future Life Sciences academics require knowledge and expertise in a specific field of science as well as a critical academic attitude. At the same time, insight and experience into other disciplines are relevant to be able to work in an interdisciplinary setting. This implies, that at the end of your PhD journey, you will not only deliver a doctoral thesis, but you will graduate as a person with specific academic skills and competencies as well. You will grow in terms of research skills and knowledge, and will also develop other relevant transferable competencies. Science is teamwork and you are part of, and supervised by, a research team and an active member of the broader research community in a certain thematic area.

The GSLS is a large, multidisciplinary organisation with currently over 1,500 Master's students and approximately 1,800 PhD candidates, with 16 Master's programmes and 15 PhD programmes. Most PhD programmes are connected to a corresponding Master's programme, and are rooted in the strategic research theme Life Sciences of Utrecht University and the thematic research programme of the UMC Utrecht.

The mission of the GSLS is to improve life by providing an inspiring and innovative academic environment that enables you to thrive in the dynamics of life sciences and society.





## GRADUATE SCHOOL OF LIFE SCIENCES

### Master's programmes

### PhD programmes

Bioinformatics & Biocomplexity

Computational Life Sciences

Molecular & Cellular Life Sciences

Biomembranes

Molecular Life Sciences

Biology of Disease

Cardiovascular Research

Cancer, Stem Cells &  
Developmental Biology

Cancer, Stem Cells &  
Developmental Biology  
Clinical & Translational Oncology

Drug Innovation

Drug Innovation

Environmental Biology

Environmental Biology

Epidemiology  
Epidemiology postgraduate

Epidemiology

Infection & Immunity

Infection & Immunity

Medical Imaging

Medical Imaging

Neuroscience & Cognition

Clinical & Experimental Neuroscience

Regenerative Medicine & Technology  
Biofabrication

Regenerative Medicine

Health & Environment

Toxicology & Environmental Health

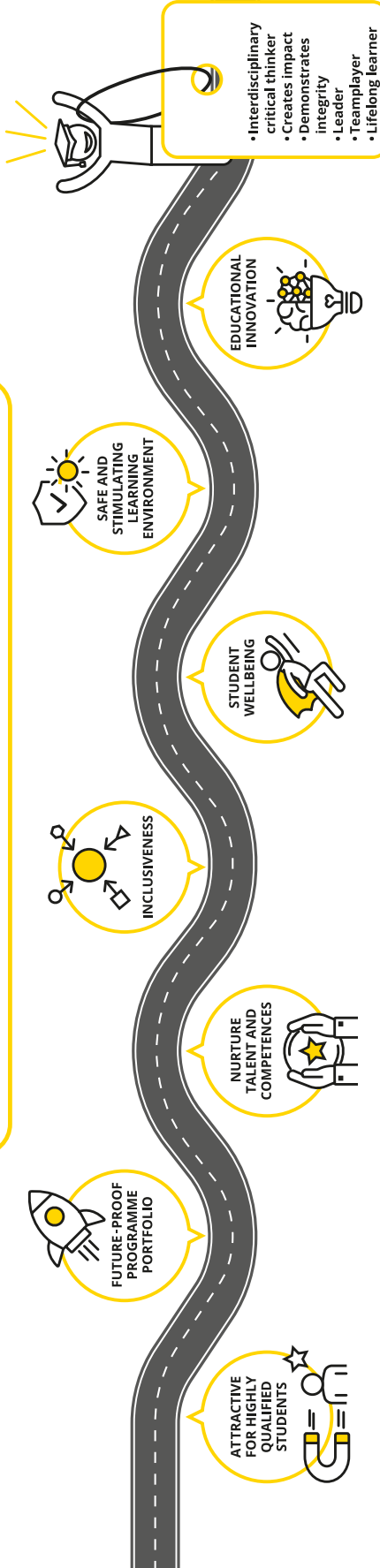
Bio Inspired Innovation

Science & Business Management

Life Sciences Education Research



## MISSION GRADUATE SCHOOL OF LIFE SCIENCES



**Our mission is to improve life, by providing an inspiring and innovative academic environment that enables our graduates to thrive in the dynamics of life sciences and society.**



The strategic goals of the GSLs are to

- ✓ develop and maintain Master's and PhD programmes tailored to the needs of science and society, based on *Life Sciences* – one of the four strategic themes of Utrecht University – and according to the prevailing (inter)national standards;
- ✓ provide an invigorating academic environment for students that fosters the development of professional competencies with a distinct profile, and tailored to the student's needs and talents;
- ✓ offer inspiring and state-of-the-art teaching and supervision by a qualified team that actively and effectively facilitates academic and personal growth.



At the end of your doctoral education, you

- ✓ are an interdisciplinary critical thinker and worker;
- ✓ create impact in the dynamics of science and society;
- ✓ demonstrate integrity towards science and society;
- ✓ show leadership;
- ✓ are a team player;
- ✓ are a lifelong learner.



This PhD Guide describes many aspects you need to know about your PhD journey. You can find more information in the formal documents regarding principles, procedures and regulations relevant for doctoral education:



UU Doctoral Degree  
Regulations

### UTRECHT UNIVERSITY DOCTORAL DEGREE REGULATIONS

This document includes a number of legal stipulations as codified in the Dutch Higher Education and Research Act, as well as a number of conditions that have been set by the Utrecht University Board for the Conferral of Doctoral Degrees. The regulations stipulate, among other things, who has access to the PhD Defence, how the Supervisory team is appointed, guidelines and process for your doctoral thesis and how the Assessment Committee is to be assembled.



UU PhD Manual

### UTRECHT UNIVERSITY PhD MANUAL

This manual includes practical information about the PhD journey for both prospective and current PhD candidates at any faculty of Utrecht University.



Quality Assurance  
Plan

### QUALITY ASSURANCE PLAN OF THE GSLS

This plan describes the different aspects of doctoral education at the GSLS such as training, research, supervision, thesis content, responsibilities, monitoring and evaluation. It is a further elaboration of the Doctoral Degree Regulations applicable to GSLS PhD candidates.

## THE GSLS PhD TEAM

### **Prof. Toine Egberts, PhD**

Director of Doctoral  
Education

### **Anke Hammerschlag, PhD**

Coordinator of Doctoral  
Education & PhD Course  
Centre

### **Saskia Ebeling, PhD**

Managing Director of  
Doctoral Education & PhD  
Course Centre

### **Bianca Zomer**

Course Coordinator of PhD  
Course Centre

“

For the most up-to-date  
information, please  
check the website  
of the GSLS which is  
updated when necessary.  
Throughout this guide  
you will find QR codes  
guiding you to the  
relevant webpages.

Enjoy your time  
at the GSLS!

”



## 1.2 Categories of PhD candidates

A PhD position in the Netherlands is considered employment for most PhD candidates. This means you have associated rights and duties, according to the type of employment contract you have. However, other types of PhD candidates exist as well. Candidates are divided into 4 categories, as defined by the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU).

1

### PhD candidate with employee status

#### a. Employed PhD candidate (*werknemer-promovendus*)

A PhD candidate with a labour contract as a PhD candidate for a period of, usually, 4 years at Utrecht University or the UMC Utrecht. Most PhD candidates fall under this category.

#### b. Employee in PhD track (*promoverende medewerker*)

Other types of appointments at one of the institutes at Utrecht Science Park that combine research with other tasks such as patient care or teaching. Many clinicians fall into this category.

2

### PhD candidate with a scholarship (*beurspromovendus*)

A PhD candidate with a scholarship does not have an employment contract with the university but receives funding for doctoral research from an external scholarship provider. In addition to the requirements of the scholarship programme, Utrecht University must admit you as a PhD candidate. This means that the PhD candidate has to meet the entrance requirements and should have a prospective supervisor affiliated with Utrecht University.

3

### Externally funded PhD candidate (*extern gefinancierde promovendus*)

Externally funded PhD candidates are permitted to work on their doctoral research in their employer's time (which might be at a government, company or research institute). Their salaries are therefore paid by their employers, but their doctoral research is conducted under the guidance of a supervisor at Utrecht University.

4

### External PhD candidate (*buitenpromovendus*)

External PhD candidates receive no funding for their doctoral research in the form of a salary or scholarship, but obtain their doctorates in their own time, supported by their own resources. They receive guidance from a supervisor at Utrecht University. Research is often conducted on a part-time basis and such candidates have no dedicated workspace at the university, which means that external PhD candidates are somewhat detached from the university. This demands a high degree of independence. Nevertheless, the same requirements are placed on the quality of supervision and thesis, as in all types of doctoral programmes.



It is important to know to which category you belong. Please check with your supervisors about your employee status, if you are unsure. PhD candidates with the status of an employee have the rights and duties as defined in the Collective Labour Agreement (CAO) of their institution. As an employee, you will have an annual assessment interview and often an obligation to teach. PhD candidates without the employee status are not obliged to teach and do not have an annual assessment interview. However, all PhD candidates have an annual PhD progress meeting.

### 1.3 Annual PhD progress meeting

As stated in the paragraph above, PhD candidates with the status of an employee have an annual assessment interview as defined by their institute. PhD candidates without the employee status do not have an annual assessment interview. However, because it is highly important to monitor the progress of your PhD journey, all candidates pursuing a PhD degree at Utrecht University are required to have an **annual PhD progress meeting** with their supervisory team and independent advisor(s). We encourage PhD candidates with employee status to combine this with the annual assessment interview. You can find the form and instructions for the annual PhD progress report at our website. Please note that these forms are different from those for the annual assessment interview of your institute.

“ It is important to register in MyPhD as soon as possible. ”



“ This guide applies to all GSLS PhD candidates, irrespective of the category to which they belong. ”



## 1.4 MyPhD

At the start of your PhD journey, it is mandatory to register in **MyPhD**, the official PhD candidate tracking system of Utrecht University. This applies to all categories of PhD candidates described in Chapter 1.2. All the formal stages of your PhD journey will be recorded in MyPhD in accordance with the rules and guidelines of the Board for the Conferral of Doctoral Degrees. You will be able to monitor your progress. Supplements may be entered during the course of your PhD journey.

You need to have the following documents and information when registering in MyPhD:

- ✓ An electronic copy of your most relevant diploma, including the name of the institute, type of degree programme, type of diploma and date of diploma. If you have questions about the validity of foreign or other diplomas, please contact the Admissions Office ([admissionsoffice@uu.nl](mailto:admissionsoffice@uu.nl)).
- ✓ An electronic copy of a valid ID. If you wish, you may make your Citizens Service Number (BSN) illegible on the copy. [Rijksoverheid.nl](https://rijksoverheid.nl) describes how to make a secure copy of your ID (only in Dutch).
- ✓ The working title of your doctoral thesis. You can adjust this at any stage of your PhD journey.
- ✓ Information concerning the members of your supervisory team. The particular information of supervisors with an employment contract at Utrecht University is automatically completed by MyPhD. For supervisors outside Utrecht University, you have to fill in the details yourself. These include full name, initials, title, name of institute, address of institute and e-mail address.
- ✓ The PhD programme you will join (see Chapter 3.2). In MyPhD you have to select the Graduate School of Life Sciences and the PhD programme you will join (field 'PhD program').



Keyusers MyPhD

**For more information regarding your registration in MyPhD, please contact your faculty keyuser for MyPhD which can be found on our website. For more information about technical matters, please contact the**  
**IT SERVICE CENTRE**  
**[ict-servicedesk@uu.nl](mailto:ict-servicedesk@uu.nl)**  
**+31 (0)30 253 45 00**



## 1.5 Your PhD journey – A bird's eye view

And off you go on the adventure of your PhD journey! This list represents a summary of your PhD journey. Check the different chapters of this PhD Guide for more information.

### STARTING your PhD

- ✓ Choose one of the **GSLS PhD programmes**. Do this in consultation with your supervisors. **Chapter 3.1**
- ✓ Contact your **PhD programme coordinator** to meet.
- ✓ Appoint one or – preferably – two **independent advisors** together with your supervisors. **Chapter 2.2**
- ✓ Register in **MyPhD**, the official registration system of Utrecht University. Do this as soon as the points above are arranged.
- ✓ Complete the **Training and Supervision Agreement (TSA)** together with your supervisors. Use the TSA form (available at GSLS website) and upload the information in MyPhD. An **individual training plan** is part of the TSA. It has to be approved by your supervisory team, independent advisor(s) and PhD programme coordinator. **It is mandatory to complete the TSA within 3 months after the start of your PhD. Chapter 5.2 & 5.3**
- ✓ Know your **rights and responsibilities**. **Chapter 4**
- ✓ Know where you can go for **support during your PhD journey**. **Chapter 7**

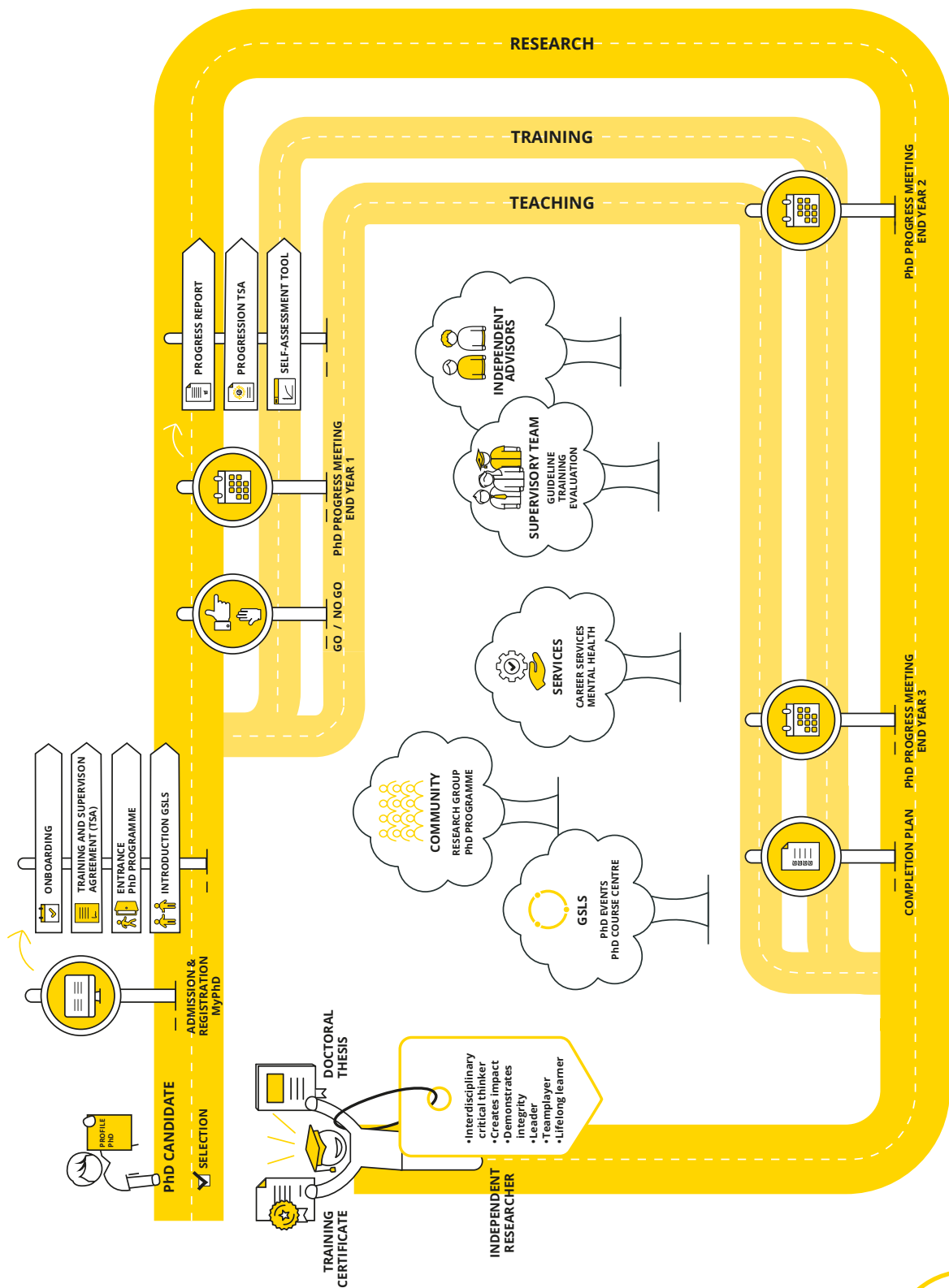
### DURING your PhD

- ✓ Before the end of your 1<sup>st</sup> year, arrange your first **annual PhD progress meeting**. This meeting includes the **go/no-go decision**. **Chapter 1.3**
- ✓ Each consecutive year, arrange your **annual PhD progress meeting** to discuss the progress of your research and the development of your academic and transferable skills. As part of this meeting, you complete the **PhD progress report**, discuss the **progression of your competencies and skills** on the basis of your goals in the TSA, and consult your independent advisor(s). You can use the **self-assessment tool** to keep track of your progression on your competencies of interest. **Chapter 5.1**
- ✓ During your last annual PhD progress meeting – one year before the end of your PhD journey – make a **completion plan** together with your supervisors.
- ✓ Check the **doctoral thesis requirements** to be prepared for finishing your PhD. **Chapter 6.**

### FINISHING your PhD

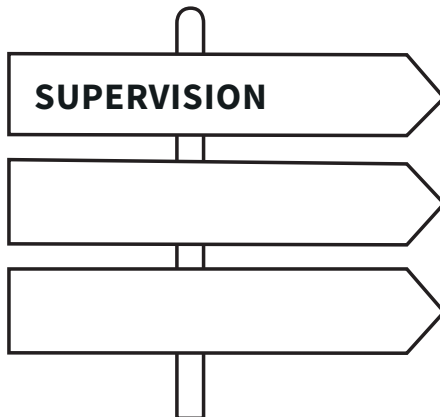
- ✓ Write a thesis according to the **doctoral thesis requirements**. **Chapter 6.1**
- ✓ Your supervisors will assess and approve your manuscript. Next, upload your thesis to MyPhD. Your supervisors will assemble an **Assessment Committee** and send your thesis through MyPhD. **Chapter 6.2**
- ✓ When all members of the Assessment Committee have been registered in MyPhD, you can contact the **Beadle's Office** to set a preliminary date for your PhD defence. **Chapter 6.3**
- ✓ When your doctoral thesis has been approved by all members of the Assessment Committee, the preliminary date of your defence will be changed to definite date.
- ✓ Check the arrangements you have to make for your **PhD defence ceremony**, including deadlines. The Beadle's Office will provide all information. **Chapter 6.3**
- ✓ Request a **Training Certificate** from the GSLS with your PhD programme coordinator. **Chapter 4.3**
- ✓ **Defend** your doctoral thesis. Congratulations! You have developed into an independent researcher.







# 2





## 2.1 Supervisory team

You need a formal supervisory team, as defined by the Utrecht University Doctoral Degree Regulations (*promotieregeling*). This is compulsory and consists of a minimum of 2 and maximum of 4 supervisors (*promotors* and *co-promotors*). See the **Doctoral Degree Regulations** on the Utrecht University website for more information. In Chapter 1.1 you can find the QR code guiding you to this website.

“One member should be assigned to daily supervision.”

You are part of the GSLS when your first promotor is a professor (or associate professor granted *ius promovendi*) at one of the GSLS faculties:

1. **UTRECHT UNIVERSITY**  
Faculty of Science, Departments of Pharmacy, Biology, or Chemistry (Bijvoet Institute)
2. **UTRECHT UNIVERSITY**  
Faculty of Veterinary Medicine
3. **UMC UTRECHT**  
Faculty of Medicine

Only when the above applies, are you eligible for registration as a PhD candidate at the GSLS, which includes access to our courses. Please note that when you are a PhD candidate at the Hubrecht Institute, Princess Máxima Center or an external PhD at a different institute, your first promotor should be associated with one of the three GSLS faculties.

Discuss with your supervisory team how the various supervisory tasks will be divided over the different members.

It is important to align expectations. A PhD project is a joint effort with responsibilities for both you and the supervisory team. Together, you are responsible for the quality of your research, the quality of your doctoral thesis, and the development of your skills and competencies. Please have a look at Chapter 4 **Profile of you as a PhD candidate** to learn more about our vision on good supervision practices and the interaction between you and your supervisory team with responsibilities for both sides.

Your supervisory team is responsible for the availability of resources, including budget, for your entire PhD journey. If, at the end of your PhD journey, your manuscript is rejected by the



### PhD SUPERVISOR GUIDE

Flip this booklet and you will find the PhD Supervisor Guide. It is certainly worth it to check the information in there to find out what support we offer for supervisors.



Assessment Committee and requires additional work, your supervisory team is responsible for the required budget (salary) and extension of your track needs to be approved by the relevant department (faculties of Veterinary Medicine and Science) or division (UMC Utrecht).

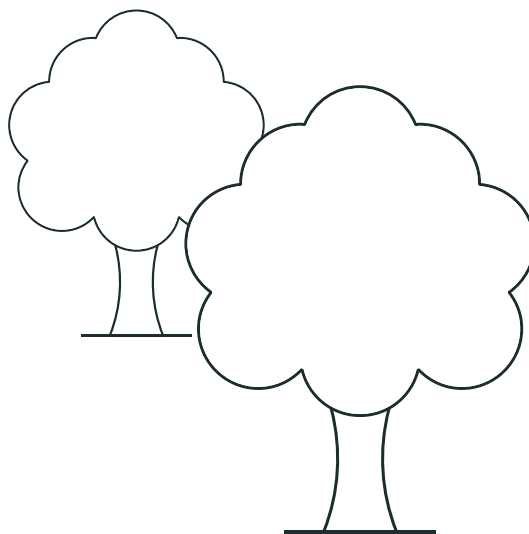
## 2.2 Independent advisor(s)

At the start of your PhD journey, one or – preferably – two independent advisors need to be appointed (and registered in MyPhD); this is compulsory. Independent advisors are researchers in a field related to your PhD research field, but are not involved in your research project. They should be invited to this role by you and your supervisors at the beginning of your PhD journey. Your supervisors or PhD programme coordinator can help select them.

**Independent advisors are formerly known as the supervisory committee (aio begeleidingscommissie)**

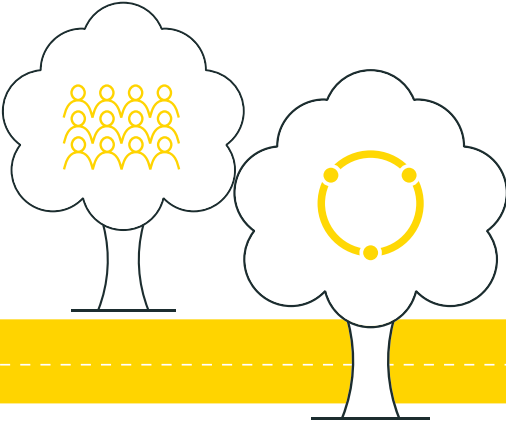
**It is compulsory to appoint one or - preferably - two independent advisors at the start of your PhD journey.**

The role of an independent advisor is to provide independent advice to both you and your supervisory team concerning the progress (rate, direction) of your PhD journey. You will meet your independent advisors at least once a year to discuss your **annual PhD progress report**. Your independent advisors can also act as confidential support or a sparring partner, should you want to talk to someone outside of your supervisory team (see Chapter 7.2 about support during your PhD).





# 3





In addition to your supervisory team and your research group, you will be in contact with many individuals and entities during your PhD journey. Below, we provide an overview of the most important entities in this network and their roles. Beside these, you will build additional networks, for example, within your research group or international collaborations.

### 3.1 PhD programmes

The GSLS has 15 thematic PhD programmes (see the figure in Chapter 1.1), each covering a specific domain within the Life Sciences. In consultation with your supervisory team, you will choose to join one of the PhD programmes. What can you get out of a programme?

- ✓ You can participate in well-defined, high-quality, in-depth thematic training. This includes courses, seminars, presentations at conferences, PhD candidate retreats, journal clubs, and teaching of Master's students.
- ✓ You will boost your knowledge on your research topic, as well as other exciting topics.
- ✓ The PhD programme coordinator can give you advice on valuable courses for your research field.
- ✓ Last but not least, the PhD programme offers you an active and inspirational PhD community. You can connect to fellow PhD candidates, principal investigators and other researchers, and alumni.

Each PhD programme is led by a PhD programme director and a PhD programme coordinator. The director is a professor of Utrecht University or UMC Utrecht and is accountable for an original and high-quality PhD programme and community. The programme coordinator supports the programme director in the organisation of the PhD programme and is your main contact. Each PhD programme has a PhD programme committee to support the director and coordinator, and consists of representative research leaders participating in the research focus areas, and at least one PhD candidate. The PhD representatives from the different programmes form the PhD Council of the GSLS.

Have a look at our website for a description of the PhD programmes. You can find the contact details of the director and coordinator of each PhD programme as well.

We strongly advise that you become part of the community of a PhD programme. If your research project really does not fit into any one of the programmes, select 'not in a programme' when you register in MyPhD. In this case, the managing director of doctoral education of the GSLS will act as your programme coordinator, and the director of doctoral education of the GSLS as your programme director.





## 3.2 PhD Council

The GSLS PhD Council consists of representative PhD candidates from all the GSLS PhD programmes and main institutes. The PhD Council advises the GSLS management team and the Board of Studies on the quality of doctoral education. Their activities include the evaluation of the PhD research environment and PhD programmes through an annual survey, and organisation of an annual *PhD Day* and additional PhD events. The council meets once a month, together with the GSLS coordinator of doctoral education.



You can contact the PhD Council for questions, suggestions or advice concerning your PhD journey. They are here for you, as fellow PhD candidates. Together, you can also decide whether your representative should raise any issues at the PhD Council meeting. Check out our website to find

“

**Interested in joining  
the PhD Council?  
Send an e-mail to  
[phd-council-ugsls@googlegroups.com](mailto:phd-council-ugsls@googlegroups.com)**

”

out who the PhD representative of your PhD programme is, with their contact details. You can e-mail all members of the PhD Council via [phd-council-ugsls@googlegroups.com](mailto:phd-council-ugsls@googlegroups.com).

In addition to the GSLS PhD Council, several other PhD Councils are here to represent you. Check out the table to see which councils interest you.

COUNCIL	REPRESENTS	CONTACT
GSLS PhD Council	GSLS	<a href="mailto:phd-council-ugsls@googlegroups.com">phd-council-ugsls@googlegroups.com</a>
Beta PhD Council	Faculty of Science	<a href="mailto:betapc@googlegroups.com">betapc@googlegroups.com</a>
VetPhDC	Faculty of Veterinary Medicine	<a href="mailto:VetPhDC@uu.nl">VetPhDC@uu.nl</a>
MD-PhD committee	Faculty of Medicine	<a href="mailto:mdphd@umcutrecht.nl">mdphd@umcutrecht.nl</a>
PhD committee Hubrecht	Hubrecht Institute	<a href="mailto:phd-committee-hubrecht@hubrecht.eu">phd-committee-hubrecht@hubrecht.eu</a>
PrimaPhD group	Princess Máxima Center	<a href="mailto:primaphd@prinsesmaximacentrum.nl">primaphd@prinsesmaximacentrum.nl</a>
Prout	Utrecht University	<a href="mailto:info@prout.nl">info@prout.nl</a>
PNN	14 Dutch Universities	<a href="mailto:info@hetpnn.nl">info@hetpnn.nl</a>



### 3.3 PhD Course Centre

The GSLS maintains a *PhD Course Centre* that organises trainings on general skills and competencies for PhD candidates at the GSLS. The development of transferrable skills becomes increasingly important in pursuit of a career inside or outside academia. You are challenged to model your learning process to be well equipped for your next step. The PhD Course Centre offers courses tailored to develop the competencies described in the PhD Competence Model. You can find more information in Chapter 4 of this guide.

Furthermore, the PhD Course Centre sends out the **PhD Update**, a newsletter to inform you about important matters for PhD candidates, events and courses. You can subscribe to the PhD Update via the QR code.

### 3.4 PhD team GSLS

#### COORDINATOR OF DOCTORAL EDUCATION & PhD COURSE CENTRE



**Anke Hammerschlag, PhD**

[a.r.hammerschlag@umcutrecht.nl](mailto:a.r.hammerschlag@umcutrecht.nl)

[a.hammerschlag@uu.nl](mailto:a.hammerschlag@uu.nl)

Anke is the first point of contact for PhD candidates. You can contact her if you have questions about your PhD journey. Anke joined the PhD team of the GSLS after a PhD and a postdoc position, during which she co-supervised two PhD candidates. She works on the quality assurance of your doctoral education and is committed to improving your PhD where necessary. She is in close contact with the PhD Council and is informed what is going on in the PhD community. Furthermore, Anke works on the portfolio of the PhD Course Centre to harmonise it with your needs.

#### COURSE COORDINATOR OF PhD COURSE CENTRE



**Bianca Zomer**

[pcc@uu.nl](mailto:pcc@uu.nl)

Bianca takes care of organising the courses that we offer through the PhD Course Centre. She makes sure that everything goes smoothly and communicates all relevant issues and arrangements with course participants and trainers. You can contact her if you have questions about courses.



## DIRECTOR OF DOCTORAL EDUCATION



**Prof. Toine Egberts, PhD**

[a.c.g.egberts@umcutrecht.nl](mailto:a.c.g.egberts@umcutrecht.nl)

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Toine is Director of Doctoral Education of the Graduate School of Life Sciences in addition to his work as a hospital pharmacist and a Professor of Clinical Pharmacy. The coaching of PhD candidates gives him energy, as it balances performing research with the personal development of young academic professionals.

## MANAGING DIRECTOR OF DOCTORAL EDUCATION & PhD COURSE CENTRE



**Saskia Ebeling, PhD**

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[s.b.ebeling-2@umcutrecht.nl](mailto:s.b.ebeling-2@umcutrecht.nl)

After a career as a researcher, Saskia joined the GSLS to help organise better support for both PhD candidates and PhD supervisors. She strongly believes that a good and professional relationship between the PhD candidate and supervisor is vital to a successful PhD journey.



PhD Course Centre



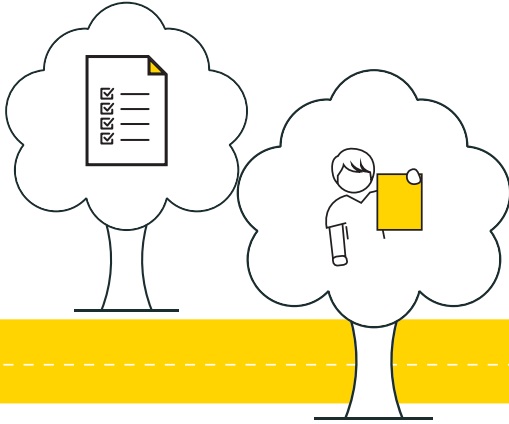
PhD Team GSLS



PhD Update



# 4



“ The PhD candidate is  
the driver of their own  
development.  
*League of European Research  
Universities (LERU)* ”

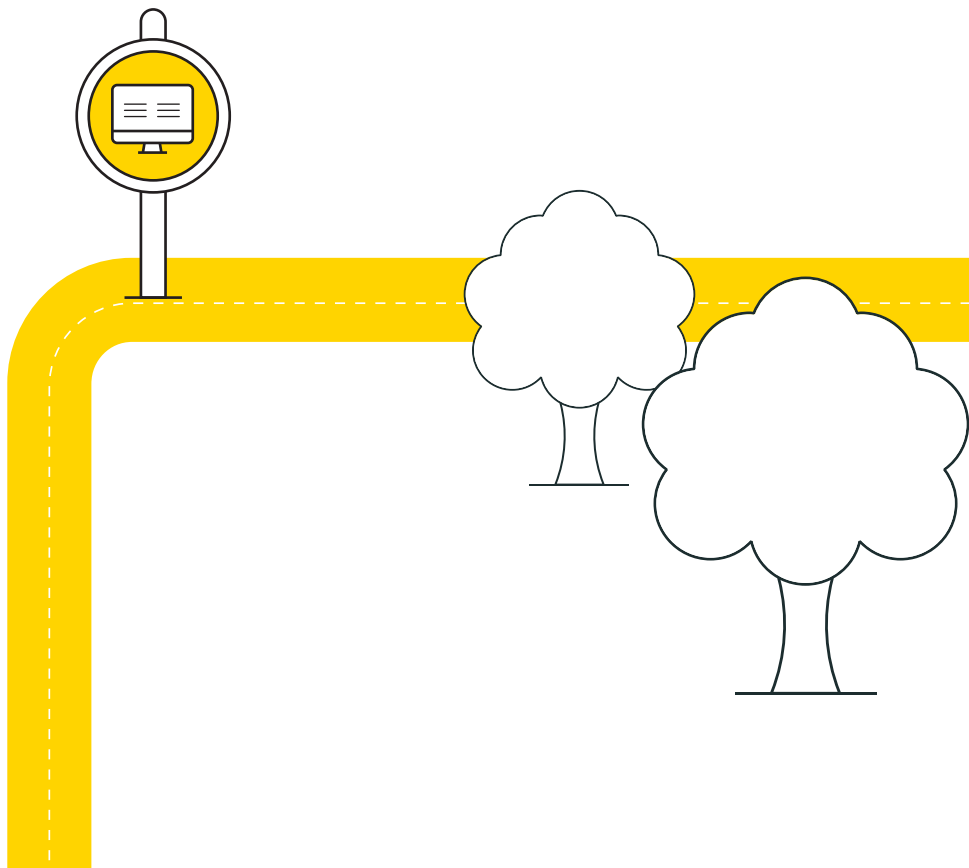




## 4.1 Responsibilities of PhD candidates

How can you excel during your PhD and make it a success? First of all, by taking responsibility as a PhD candidate. Setting up your research and acquiring the necessary skills in problem solving and communication is your responsibility. As a PhD candidate, you should possess, acquire, and/or refine the qualities necessary to mature into an independent researcher. We expect you to cultivate your talents. This will help you to prepare for a future career. You are also responsible for meeting the commitments linked to the funding of your doctoral research.

We have summarised the profile and responsibilities of a PhD candidate in two parts. The first part, **Profile and research responsibilities of the PhD candidate**, reflects our vision on your academic responsibilities as a junior researcher. The second part, **Effective supervisor-PhD interaction: a two-way process**, describes your responsibilities as a member of a research community and the interaction with your supervisory team, as well as your individual growth as a person. The latter is based on the 'Golden rules for PhD supervision' of Leiden University. Currently, Utrecht University is working on a policy for PhD supervision to bring about transparency for both supervisors and PhD candidates. This will make it easier for supervisors to focus on their responsibilities and to encourage you to take initiative and ask for support. Awaiting the Utrecht University policy, the GSLS has set the following guidelines, which are balanced for you and your supervisory team. Underlying this balance is the understanding that you and your supervisors enter into a professional work relationship with each other. It is a joint effort with the shared goal to have you obtain your doctorate and be prepared for your next steps in your career.





## PROFILE AND RESEARCH RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PhD CANDIDATE

- ✓ You are responsible for the quality of your research, together with your supervisory team.
- ✓ You are proactive and undertake the necessary efforts to ensure good progress in your doctoral research project.
- ✓ You actively engage in setting up the research questions in your doctoral project.
- ✓ You are jointly responsible for developing the research methodology that will be used to address your research questions.
- ✓ You are responsible for planning, implementing and, where necessary, modifying your research.
- ✓ You are responsible for interpreting and analysing your research results, to frame your research in a broader context, and to reflect critically on the research process.
- ✓ Together with your supervisory team, you ensure that you communicate and share your doctoral research results (e.g., in publications and/or other scientific communications).
- ✓ You are aware of, and adhere to, the generally accepted norms of responsible conduct of research (see Chapter 4.2).
- ✓ You ensure that data generated during your research are always available upon request. In this matter, you abide by the principles of research data management, according to the current methods in the research unit and of Utrecht University, UMC Utrecht or relevant other institution policy concerning research data management (check the QR code at this page).
- ✓ You respect the intellectual property rights relating to concepts and findings of Utrecht University, UMC Utrecht or relevant other institution and take proper care of materials and equipment.
- ✓ Together with your supervisory team, you compile a plan for your doctoral programme (i.e., the Training and Supervision Agreement) and maintain a Training Portfolio (more information in Chapter 5 of this guide). Your plan will consist of research-related training and activities, as well as the development of transferable competencies you many need. These will help advance the quality and efficiency of your research and prepare you for a professional career. You ensure that the activities in the context of the doctoral program are completed within the proposed deadlines.
- ✓ You are responsible for keeping an eye on your progress and for organising your annual PhD progress meetings.
- ✓ You are jointly responsible for the efficient progress of your PhD journey and endeavour to finalise your doctoral thesis within a reasonable timeline. If you have funding, it is recommended not to exceed the funding term.





## EFFECTIVE SUPERVISOR-PhD INTERACTION: A TWO-WAY PROCESS

This table summarises our vision for a good working relationship between you and your supervisory team. It reflects both sides, as you are a team, and management of expectations and providing feedback is important to make your PhD journey a success. The different parts describe your responsibilities as a member of a research community and the interaction with your supervisory team, as well as your individual growth as a person.



***Be aware that all supervisors are unique human beings, with strengths and weaknesses.***

- ✓ During supervision, you will encounter your supervisors' personalities and leadership styles. If something bothers you, discuss it.
- ✓ The four-eye principle (at least 2 supervisors) is here to help you and to support your supervision process. If you observe friction in the supervision, this has to be discussed, if necessary, with the help of your independent advisor(s) or another neutral conversation partner.
- ✓ A professional environment is created by all who participate in it. A professional relationship requires respect for the social boundaries that come with it. If you feel a lack of respect in the way you are approached, or if other problems occur that you cannot solve on your own, the independent advisors and confidential PhD advisor of your institute are here to give advice and support.

***Be aware that all PhD candidates are different, with their own individual story, culture, competencies and needs.***

- ✓ Being a supervisor is a demanding job. There is no template for supervision. Keep an open mind and adapt to your PhD candidate.
- ✓ Co-supervision can be difficult. Invest time to come to a joint view on the process so that your PhD candidate is not left with uncertainty.
- ✓ For a professional environment to function well it needs to be a safe environment. Be aware of the hierarchical character that marks the supervisor-PhD candidate relationship. Build bridges to overcome the distance. Respect the social boundaries that mark a professional relationship.



PhD  
candidate

“

BE COMMITTED

”

Supervisory  
team

***Be aware that the PhD journey will be lengthy and not always easy, and that it can, at times, be hard to maintain your initial motivation and enthusiasm.***

- ✓ If things are tough and motivation is low, bring this up during conversations with your colleagues and supervisors. These are stages that all PhD candidates go through.
- ✓ If working conditions are not optimal, be aware that there is not one fixed structure. You are free to bring up suggestions for change if you think this will improve the situation.
- ✓ As a PhD candidate, you are member of a larger academic community that is here to support you and we invite you to contribute to it.

***Be aware that doing a PhD is a lengthy process that requires long-term commitment from both sides.***

- ✓ PhD candidates need to feel that you care about the project's progress and outcome. Your input on the project and its development is essential for your PhD candidate to grow and carry on.
- ✓ Take responsibility for the project. Be up-to-date, provide your PhD candidate with valuable scientific input, and involve your network in the process. Be a coach when their spirit is low.

“

BE AVAILABLE

”

***Be aware that the success of your project is a joint responsibility.***

- ✓ It is your PhD project and you have a responsibility towards the success of the regular meetings with your supervisors. Take initiative to plan regular meetings. Be well prepared when meeting with your supervisors and ensure that your supervisors can be prepared, too.
- ✓ Make sure that you get the time you need from your supervisors while being aware of their time constraints.

***Be aware that your regular availability is key to the success of the project.***

- ✓ It is part of your responsibility as a supervisor to take initiative in planning regular supervision meetings.
- ✓ You are expected to be sufficiently available to your PhD candidate in a professional way. The frequency of meetings and who participate(s) when may vary through the process. Be aware that previous arrangements may need regular adjustment.



PhD  
candidate

BE A  
TEAM-PLAYER

Supervisory  
team

***Be aware that you are, with your research project, part of a team that can have various shapes and sizes.***

- ✓ Doing research is teamwork. Apart from you and your supervisors, there may be other researchers involved. Define your contribution to the team that you are part of.
- ✓ Be willing to develop as a team player and to contribute to the teamwork that you are part of, be it the collaboration with your supervisors, your local research team, the research institute or the GSLS.

***Be aware that your supervision includes team building.***

- ✓ Supervision is by definition a joint enterprise: together with the other (co-) supervisor(s), you are a team. Make sure you define your roles and act as a team for your PhD candidate.
- ✓ If you supervise a team of young researchers, it is your task to balance the common good as well as each individual's needs. The division of tasks within the team is your responsibility. Train yourself as a team builder and be a team player yourself.
- ✓ Be aware that you combine different roles and responsibilities as a supervisor and a project leader.

BE CONSISTENT  
AND CLEAR

***Be aware that being honest about your progress is key to the success of your project. Be open about what you need and expect from your supervisors.***

- ✓ Meetings are there to discuss progress as well as struggles and obstacles. Include your questions and uncertainties in the documents you prepare for your meetings. Make notes of the discussion and what next steps to take.

***Be aware that the (perception of) research progress should be discussed. Be open and realistic about your expectations.***

- ✓ Doing research is, by definition, charting unknown territory. Your view on the best next step may change with the development of the project. Be honest about this and show ownership of your changing views. Remember what you say and advise.



PhD  
candidate

“  
BE PART OF  
THE GRADUATE  
SCHOOL  
”

Supervisory  
team

***Be aware that your PhD journey is part of the GSLS.***

- ✓ The relationship between a supervisor and a PhD candidate can suffer from (perceived) interdependence. Be aware of the larger context in which you work as a PhD candidate and member of the GSLS.
- ✓ Be aware of the possibilities the GSLS offers in terms of professional development and support. The GSLS also offers support in cases of difficulties with regard to your supervision.

***Be aware that the PhD projects you supervise are part of the GSLS.***

- ✓ The relationship between a supervisor and a PhD candidate can suffer from (perceived) interdependence. At the same time, the GSLS forms the larger academic context in which you, as an academic supervisor, and your PhD candidate, as an academic researcher, work and relate to.
- ✓ Be aware of and commit to the rules and regulations of the GSLS as well as its expectations with respect to professionalism. Be aware of the responsibility the GSLS has towards the quality assurance of all PhD journeys. Please read the Quality Assurance Plan for more information.

“  
BE TIME  
AWARE  
”

***Be aware that planning is one of the harder things to do in research and that the original plan is almost certainly going to change.***

- ✓ Keep track of the time you spend on a particular issue. Discuss planning issues with your supervisor on a regular basis. Discuss short-term goals with your supervisor and celebrate your successes together.
- ✓ Be informed about the expected level and scope of your dissertation and be realistic about its contents. You will write a master proof, not your life's work.

***Be aware that realistic planning is essential for a PhD candidate.***

- ✓ The plan as initially foreseen, will undoubtedly change during the course of the project. Be prepared for a change by thinking about a plan B when the original plan needs revision. Set short-term goals and celebrate the successes with your PhD candidate.
- ✓ Make certain that your PhD candidate knows what, in terms of thesis content, is sufficient to graduate.



PhD  
candidate

“  
BE WILLING  
TO RECEIVE  
FEEDBACK  
”

Supervisory  
team

***Be aware that receiving feedback is very helpful for your progress.***

- ✓ Keep in mind that feedback is meant to help you and is not targeted against you as a person. Feedback is needed to advance your project. If it is not forthcoming, ask for it and use the feedback to your best advantage. Do not be afraid to ask for feedback at an early stage; this prevents you and your supervisor from going in separate directions.
- ✓ If you experience the feedback as unhelpful, reflect on it for a while (with others) and discuss it with your supervisor in a professional and inoffensive way.

***Be aware that feedback is a two-way exchange.***

- ✓ You should expect feedback from your PhD candidate just as the latter expects it from you. Be open to the feedback you receive and take it seriously. If no feedback is given, ask for it. You are encouraged to do so a couple of times a year, and at a minimum, during the annual PhD progress meeting with the PhD candidate.
- ✓ Remember that your reaction to feedback will have an impact on the openness of your discussions with the PhD candidate.

“  
BE WILLING  
TO GIVE  
FEEDBACK  
”

***Be aware that your project will benefit from your feedback on the supervision.***

- ✓ Supervision is meant to guide and accompany you through your PhD journey. You can contribute to your supervision by giving open feedback to your supervisors, always with respect and consideration.

***Be aware that a PhD candidate needs regular feedback that has to be professional, objective, constructive, and balanced.***

- ✓ Feedback may have a large (emotional) impact on a PhD candidate. Be cautious in choosing where and when to give feedback and be aware of the cultural/ethnic/gender/etc. variation in the research group. Employ language that is inclusive and not hurtful to people with different backgrounds and traditions. Positive feedback is as important as critical comments.



PhD  
candidate

### BE AWARE OF STRESSORS

Supervisory  
team

#### ***Be aware that your life involves more than your work.***

- ✓ Manage your stress level and respect your boundaries. Also talk to your colleagues and peers about their struggles with doing research. Sharing experiences may help make life as a PhD candidate more agreeable.
- ✓ Maintain communication with your supervisor and remember that your supervisor has followed the same path before you and can help you put things into perspective.

#### ***Be aware, that as a supervisor, you are a role model for your PhD candidate, also in terms of stress management and work-life balance.***

- ✓ Be aware that your work attitudes are easily seen as a professional standard. Stimulate your PhD candidates to take breaks and set an example with your own practices.
- ✓ Be aware that your PhD candidate's personal life can affect their work and have an open ear for signals that might indicate (too much) stress.

### BE FUTURE- ORIENTED

#### ***Be aware that you need to think about your post-graduation career.***

- ✓ Consider your future career, in or outside academia. Spend some dedicated time on this issue. Pursuing a career in science can be stressful and is highly competitive, with fewer jobs in academia. Your supervisor knows you well and can advise you, including about the job market outside academia.
- ✓ Work on building and growing your network. Let the outside world know who you are.
- ✓ Invest time in (university-wide) career events.

#### ***Be aware that your PhD candidates need stimulation to think about their career after graduation.***

- ✓ Many PhD candidates focus on an academic career only, where jobs are rare and competition is fierce. Anxiety about future career development triggers and increases stress. You can make a difference in discussing this point timely and with well-balanced frequency with your PhD candidate.
- ✓ Make your professional network available to your PhD candidates.
- ✓ Help your PhD candidates become aware of different ways to explore the job market.



## 4.2 Responsible conduct of research

You are required to comply with the **Netherlands' Code of Conduct for Research Integrity**. The Code sets out the principles that should be observed by everyone, which are honesty, scrupulousness, transparency, independence and responsibility.



In addition to the national guidelines, **Utrecht University's Code of Conduct** provides a framework for behaviour and reflection for employees and students of Utrecht University. The Code describes the values that govern the way people work and study at the university. Furthermore, **Utrecht University's Code of Conduct for Inappropriate Behaviour** has been established to prevent and combat inappropriate behaviour. This Code contains more information about what falls under inappropriate behaviour.

## 4.3 Open science

Utrecht University aims to be at the forefront of open science and has therefore launched the **Utrecht University Open Science Programme**. This programme aims to stimulate and facilitate researchers to put open science into practice. Open science promotes accountability, replicability, integrity and openness. Utrecht University has centred good practices of open science around four tracks: open access, FAIR data and software, public engagement, and recognition and reward. Visit the website to find more information about the Open Science Programme.



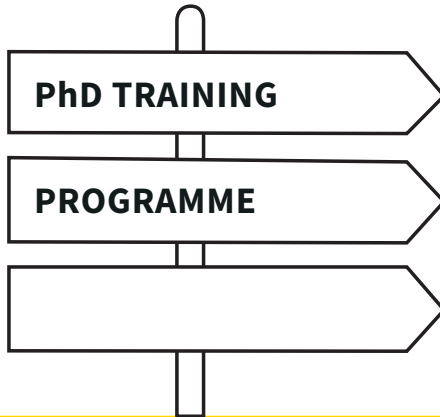
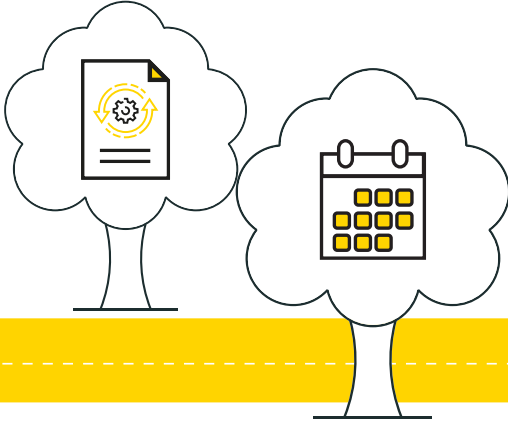
## 4.4 Diversity and inclusion

A diverse community of students, lecturers and other types of employees helps build an inspiring and challenging learning environment at Utrecht University. You are part of a pluralistic work society in which diversity and inclusion enrich academic debate and foster intensive collaboration and exchange with civil society organisations. Utrecht University considers it important to be a factor in bridging divides and creating equal opportunities for all. You are encouraged to be aware of diversity and inclusion. Utrecht University has several initiatives improving diversity and inclusion in education, research and the organisation by organising activities and trainings. You can find out more at the **Equality, Diversity & Inclusion** webpage.





# 5





Getting your PhD is more than just conducting a research project. It is also a time where you can develop, improve or refine your academic and transferable skills. The combination of research capabilities and individual skills will prepare you for a bright career beyond the walls of Utrecht University. The two sections **Objectives of the PhD training programme** and **Learning outcomes for PhD candidates** provide you with more details.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE PhD TRAINING PROGRAMME**

The aim of the PhD training is to provide you, the PhD candidate, with:

- ✓ Practical and methodological knowledge and skills to collect, analyse, present, and discuss research data. With this, you can contribute independent and original scientific work in the domain of your research project;
- ✓ Discipline-specific knowledge to read, discuss and contribute to scientific literature in the domain of your research project;
- ✓ Transferable skills (e.g., with regard to teaching, management, writing, presenting, working in a team, applying for grants) to continue an academic career at a university or elsewhere in society;
- ✓ Awareness of the principles of open science and responsibilities of scientists towards society and in particular, the obligation to conduct scientific practice with integrity.

### **LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR PhD CANDIDATES**

According to the Doctoral Degree Regulations of Utrecht University, you should have achieved the following learning outcomes at the end of your PhD journey:

- ✓ You should have made an original contribution to academic research of a quality that withstands peer review;
- ✓ You have demonstrated the ability to independently apply the academic methods used in your discipline for developing, interpreting and implementing new knowledge;
- ✓ You have acquired and worked with a substantial body of knowledge which, at the very least, embraces the principles and methods of international academic practice and theorisation, methodology and study in your discipline;
- ✓ You possess the ability to design and implement a substantial research project to develop new knowledge;
- ✓ You can pass on knowledge and methods from your discipline or specialism in an effective way;
- ✓ You can exercise social responsibility in conducting, applying and making use of your own research.



# 5.1 PhD competence model

To develop your academic and transferable skills, the GSLS offers a wide variety of courses that we classify according to the **PhD Competence Model**. This model contains a set of core competencies every PhD candidate should have. Next to academic skills, it emphasises personal development and career orientation. To help you identify what skills and competencies you may want to develop or improve, we encourage you to take a self-assessment of competence development. This tool provides you with the possibility of monitoring your development during your PhD journey. We advise you to do this yearly, as part of your preparation for your annual PhD progress meetings.

The **PhD programme** offers education in discipline-relevant research skills and knowledge, while the **PhD Course Centre** offers programme-overarching courses tailored to developing other academic and transferable competencies. Your PhD programme coordinator can give you information about the training that the particular programme offers. Have a look at the website of the PhD Course Centre to find up-to-date education programmes.



The PhD competence model describes the competencies that PhD candidates should develop during their PhD journey.



## COMPETENCE AREAS OF THE PhD COMPETENCE MODEL



### COMMUNICATION

Researchers demonstrate interpersonal, written, verbal, listening and non-verbal communication skills enabling them to effectively and appropriately communicate facts, ideas or opinions to colleagues, members of public and media.



### RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT OF SCIENCE

Researchers demonstrate the ability to make sound ethical and legal choices based on knowledge of accepted professional research practices, relevant policies and guidelines. Researchers should be aware of the resources available, should ethical or integrity concerns arise.



### LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

Researchers are equipped to manage and develop project ideas as well as facilitate effective team work including problem solving skills. Researchers are able to mentor others (e.g., students).



### RESEARCH SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE

Researchers are able to formulate clear research questions and hypotheses, and design solid research protocols. Researchers demonstrate in-depth knowledge of their field, the challenges that lie ahead and a broad scientific interest outside their specific research area.



### TEACHING

Researchers are able to define the learning outcomes for the target group as well as adequately and suitably convey the material in a motivational manner.



### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Researchers are able to improve their transferable skills to further their career prospects.



### PERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Researchers are able to adapt their personal qualities and behaviours to achieve improved results.



PhD Course  
Centre GSLS



PhD Programmes



## 5.2 Training and Supervision Agreement (TSA)

The Training and Supervision Agreement (TSA) is a standard agreement between the PhD candidate and the supervisory team and is approved by relevant PhD programme coordinator. The TSA is a contract that protects your right to proper supervision, as well as appropriate training and education during your PhD journey.

The TSA contains:

- ✓ the name of the **PhD programme** that you have been admitted to;
- ✓ the names of your **supervisory team** and your **independent advisor(s)**;
- ✓ your **individual training plan**, detailing your intended training activities such as thematic and general training and research-related meetings (see the section **Requirements PhD Training Portfolio** for a list of requirements);
- ✓ **signatures** of the PhD candidate, (daily) supervisor and PhD programme coordinator.

**You have to complete your TSA in the Utrecht University-wide PhD registration system, MyPhD, within 3 months after starting your PhD journey.**

The TSA form contains more detailed information about the content. Your TSA should be a living document and be discussed during the annual PhD progress meeting. As your PhD progresses, it is common to adjust your initial training plan, for example, in relation to the monitoring of your development with the self-assessment tool and your annual PhD progress meetings. You can adjust your TSA and resubmit to MyPhD.

## 5.3 PhD Training Portfolio and GSLS Training Certificate

In addition to your doctoral diploma and your thesis, you can apply for the GSLS Training Certificate, which demonstrates that you actively participated in doctoral education and developed your personal competencies.

As a PhD candidate, you are responsible for collecting documentation (certificates of attendance) of the training activities you have followed during your PhD journey. These build your PhD Training Portfolio. The requirements are listed in **Requirements PhD Training Portfolio**. The discipline-specific training and education is offered by your PhD programme. You may also take discipline-specific courses of other PhD programmes, if space permits (PhD candidates of the specific programme have priority). Please contact the appropriate PhD programme coordinator(s) for more information.



Training and Supervision Agreement (TSA)



Request Training Certificate



Your PhD programme coordinator, on behalf of the Board of Studies of the GSLS, will review your PhD Training Portfolio and decide if you qualify for the GSLS Training Certificate. Your portfolio should meet the requirements listed in the section **Requirements PhD Training Portfolio**. The GSLS Training Certificate is usually presented to you at the end of your PhD defence ceremony. Please request your Training Certificate at least 2 months before your defence using the application form available on our website.

### REQUIREMENTS PhD TRAINING PORTFOLIO

- ✓ Your training should comprise a minimum of 5 credits (according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), 1 credit = 28 hours and 1.5 credits = 1 week) for each fulltime equivalent year of research appointment, which will be at least 3 years (at least 15-20 ECs in total).
- ✓ A minimum of 40% of the total credits should consist of discipline-specific educational activities (of your PhD programme or other programme or institute).
- ✓ A minimum of 20% of the total credits should include general educational activities.
- ✓ A maximum of 20% of the total credits may comprise of symposia/conferences where you are an oral/poster presenter.

## 5.4 Compulsory trainings

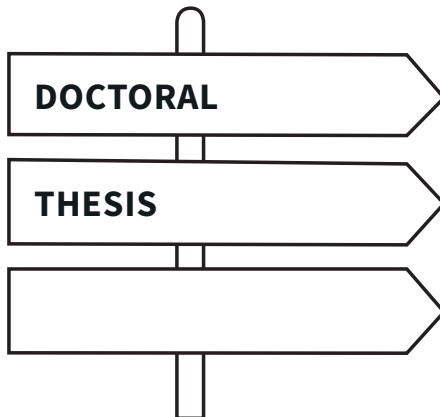
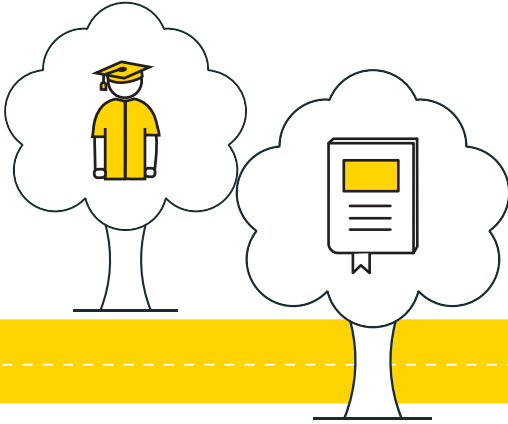
If you have started your PhD journey after September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020, training in **education** (if you have any education tasks) and **research integrity** are a compulsory part of your doctoral education. This holds for all PhD candidates at Utrecht University and is based on the advice of PhD candidates themselves, indicating that they wish to be better educated on these subjects. Both types of training should be included in your individual training plan of the TSA.

The GSLS organises the training **Responsible Conduct of Research**, which consists of a half-day training session every year of your PhD journey (4 in total). During each training, you will discuss different aspects of research integrity, illustrated by a wide variety of cases, and share your experiences with fellow PhD candidates.

The GSLS also offers training for various types of education. Please visit the PhD Course Centre's webpage for more information on all trainings.



# 6





## 6.1 Thesis requirements

At the end of your PhD journey, you will write a doctoral thesis and defend it in public. The doctoral thesis is submitted to the Assessment Committee before the end of your contract (if you are a PhD candidate with employee status, see chapter 1.2). The requirements, procedures, responsibilities and rules are described in the Doctoral Degree Regulations of Utrecht University (*promotiereglement*). You can find it on the university's website in English and Dutch (see Chapter 1.1 for the QR code). The supervisory team, as well as the PhD candidate, are responsible for the quality of the research in the doctoral thesis, according to the prevailing standards.

The GSLS provides further details for the content of the doctoral thesis of a GSLS PhD candidate. A PhD journey is a training of a young academic towards an independent scientist, who is fit for a career inside or outside academia. Your doctoral thesis is a written document demonstrating your scientific development.



### THESIS CONTENT

Your doctoral thesis contains at least a general introduction, publishable research chapters and a general discussion. The chapters in a thesis form a collective unit; you create a thread through your thesis that is reflected upon in the general discussion.

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

In the general introduction, you describe your view of the current state-of-the-art in your discipline. You highlight gaps in scientific knowledge and introduce an overview of your thesis. The general introduction contains information that readers need to know in order to comprehend the context of your research chapters. A review article may be used as part of the general introduction. In that case, a short general introduction and overview of the thesis has to be added. There is explicitly no minimum length for the introduction; quality is the only criterion.

### RESEARCH CHAPTERS

Each research chapter contains work, demonstrating that you followed the scientific research cycle:

- ✓ you identify a gap in scientific knowledge;
- ✓ you outline an approach;
- ✓ you describe an appropriate collection and analysis of data, or existing relevant databases;
- ✓ you reflect on the results within the context of the specific field.

The length and format of a chapter, the scientific depth, the quality of data collection and analysis thereof, should be of a level customary to your specific discipline. For further



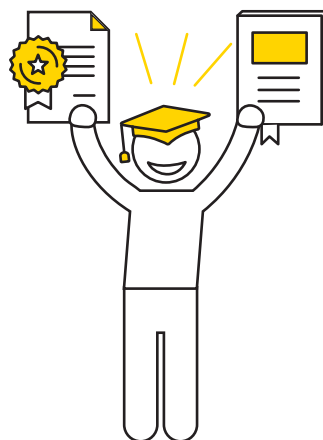
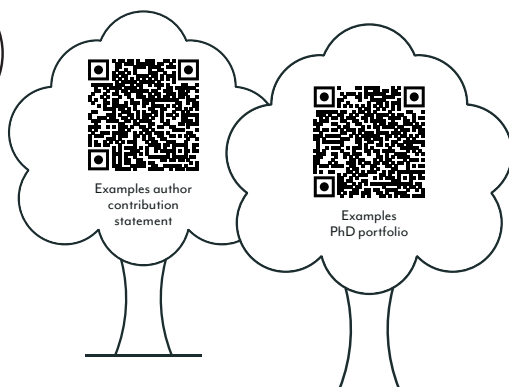
details, please read the section, **When can a manuscript be part of my thesis?**. There is no requirement for the number of research chapters in a thesis: quality, coherence and your specific contributions prevail over quantity. The guideline is 3 or more publishable chapters, but fewer can be justified, for example, by the extensiveness of the work. We define a publishable research chapter as a (future) publication or a substantial part of a more extensive study.

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

Where research chapters, and sometimes the general introduction, are collaborative efforts, the general discussion should be your own product. In this final chapter, you reflect with a birds-eye perspective on your research chapters and notable findings. You identify future opportunities for research, and discuss the impact on the research field and society. There is explicitly no minimum length for the discussion; quality is the only criterion.

## PERSONAL & SCIENTIFIC DEVELOPMENT

Your development is typically broader than the scientific content of your research chapters. You can reflect on your broader personal and scientific development in an attachment to your thesis. This is optional and may be used by the Assessment Committee to acquire a complete picture of you, as an academic in training. However, it falls outside your thesis content, and will not be judged by the Assessment Committee. You may use the GSLS PhD Competence Model (see Chapter 5.1) as a guideline to draft this attachment. Examples of such a PhD portfolio can be found at our website.





### WHEN CAN A MANUSCRIPT BE PART OF MY DOCTORAL THESIS?

- ✓ The **degree of your scientific contribution** determines whether a manuscript can be part of your thesis. Not your position in the list of authors. Therefore, each chapter of your thesis should explicitly indicate how you have contributed to this work. If relevant, this also applies to the general introduction and discussion. Please use the QR code to find examples of author contribution statements at our website.
- ✓ Collection of data only by you is not sufficient in itself for inclusion of a chapter. You should have **followed the scientific research cycle** (see the section ‘Research Chapters’).
- ✓ If you, as **part of a team effort**, have conducted a crucial part of a larger study, but you are not the first, second or last author, the work can still be included in your thesis, as long as you explain your role in the study. If your contribution to that publication is not sufficient in itself to be a chapter, you may supplement the material with your own relevant work.
- ✓ A **(publishable) research chapter** does not already have to be submitted or accepted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal to be included in the thesis. However, you and your supervisors should strive to publish these chapters in peer-reviewed open-access scientific journals. For manuscripts that are published or will be in the future, you will be (co)author of the respective thesis chapters, in recognition of your scientific work.

## 6.2 Assessment Committee

In assessing the doctoral thesis, the Assessment Committee uses an assessment form based on these guidelines and those in the Doctoral Degree Regulations of Utrecht University. When committee members accept the invitation to take part in the committee, they are asked to document their decision within one month in MyPhD. They assess your thesis based on four aspects: originality, scientific level, written presentation and an overall assessment. In addition, they are asked if the thesis might be awarded *cum laude* (with distinction) designation; i.e., thesis quality is among the top 3-5% in the relevant field of research worldwide.



## 6.3 From completing to graduating as a PhD: what do you have to arrange?

Completing your PhD is something to celebrate! The PhD defence ceremonies of Utrecht University take place in the University Hall in the centre of Utrecht. During the ceremony, you will defend your thesis in front of a Doctoral Examination Committee, where you will pledge to act with academic and research integrity. At the end of the ceremony, you will receive a diploma written in Latin (degree certificate), an English translation of the Latin and a legally valid confirmation in English of your Doctoral Degree. You will only receive 1 original of the degree certificate. If you applied for a Training Certificate of the GSLS (see Chapter 4), you will receive that as well.

You can find a detailed description of the requirements for the defence ceremony in the Doctoral Degree Regulations and PhD manual of Utrecht University (see Chapter 1.1 for the QR codes guiding you to the documents). Below is a summary of the most important steps.

At least 4 months before the intended date of the doctoral thesis defence, your supervisory team must approve your doctoral thesis. To do this, you will need to upload your thesis to MyPhD. Your first supervisor will receive an email from MyPhD with the request to assemble an Assessment Committee. When the Assessment Committee has been approved in MyPhD, each member of the committee will receive a request from MyPhD to perform the assessment within 4 weeks with a link to the uploaded manuscript.



When all members of the Assessment Committee have been added to MyPhD, you will automatically receive a message to contact the Beadle's Office to set a preliminary date for your PhD defence. When your thesis has been approved by all members of the Assessment Committee, you can contact the Beadle's Office to make your preliminary date definite.

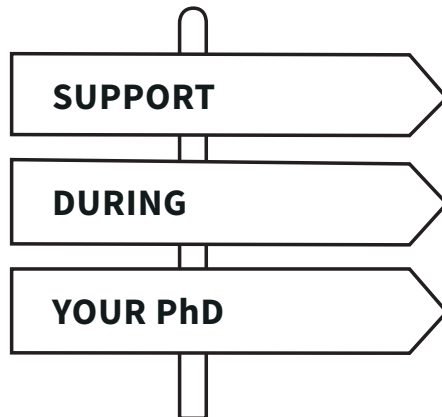
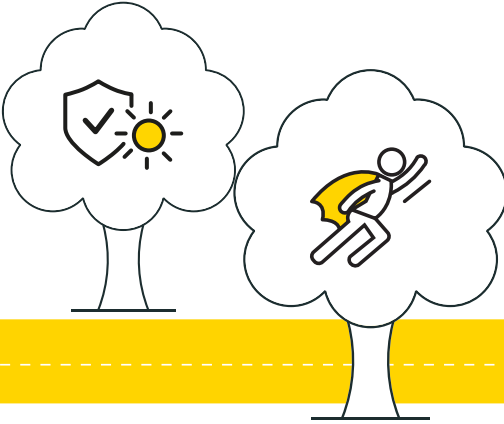
You will receive information about all arrangements regarding your PhD defence from the Beadle's Office, including registration of your title page and the back of the titlepage in MyPhD, printing your thesis, documents for the Communications and Marketing Office, publication by the University Library, and all you need to know about the day itself.

It is important to know that PhD candidates of Utrecht University are required to offer a digital version of their thesis to the University Library. The thesis will be incorporated into the Utrecht University Repository, the digital scientific archive of the university that is publicly available. You have the possibility to place an embargo on certain chapters of your thesis.





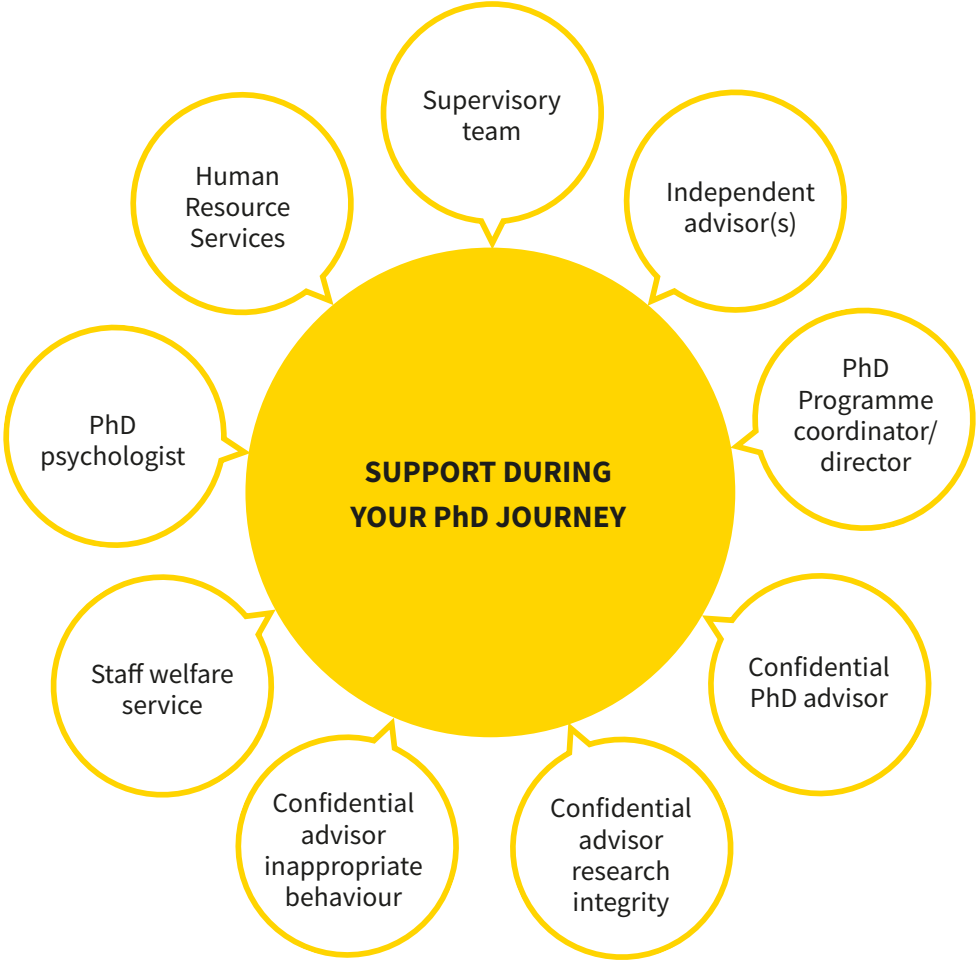
# 7





Every PhD experience is unique, yet you are not in this alone. Doing PhD research can, at times, be demanding and your mental health is of the utmost importance to us. Instances of success may alternate with a sense of failure. Being part of a community, in your research group and as a member of a PhD programme, helps alleviate this burden by sharing daily struggles with your fellow PhD candidates. If issues are more persistent or more structural, it is best to tackle them as soon as they arise. Waiting will only let them grow and make it more difficult to address. Early intervention may prevent escalation of the situation. Hence, if you think you need help, or would just like to talk to someone, we strongly encourage you to reach out.

At Utrecht University, we have multiple layers of support and supervision, depending on what you need. In the figure, you can see the types of support that are available to you when you encounter a problem. Below, we explain for each one the types of problems you can consult with them. In addition, have a look at our website where you can find more information, including links to the different layers of support at the different faculties and institutes. They have organised this in a different way.





If you are unsure or do not see the type of support you are looking for, please contact your supervisory team or the Confidential PhD Advisor (see Chapter 7.4). We are here for you.

In addition, see Chapter 4.1 to learn more about the attitudes and behaviours we expect from both PhD candidates and supervisors.



## 7.1 Supervisory team

Your first line of referral is of course your supervisory team, which includes a minimum of 2 (co-)promotors with whom you should interact on a regular basis (as a rule of thumb, co-promotor once a week and promotor once a month). See Chapter 2 of this guide for more information on the formation of your supervisory team and their responsibilities. Also check out the **PhD Supervisor Guide** by flipping this booklet. It will give you insight into our vision on good supervision of PhD candidates of the GSLS.

Your supervisors are here for you and guide you on your journey through your PhD. Issues to discuss include your PhD project, work load, supervision, personal issues affecting performance, etc. These issues can also have a mixed character. Sometimes you may not find it easy to raise an issue with your supervisor, for example, if the issue involves the supervision itself. Taking a training in addressing difficult issues and giving and receiving feedback may help you start the conversation (see Chapter 7.9). You may also wish to consult an independent person before you talk to your (co-)supervisor. Therefore, it is important that you make sure one – or preferably two – independent advisors are assigned to you at the start of your PhD journey.

## 7.2 Independent advisor(s)

The independent advisors are here during your PhD journey to monitor your progress and collaboration with your supervisors. You will meet with them at least once a year to discuss your annual PhD progress report. Your independent advisor(s) can also act as confidential support or a sparring partner, if you would like to talk to someone outside of your supervisory team, for example, in cases of disagreement with one of your supervisors. They may act as a mediator, if necessary. We strongly advise that you reach out to them if you encounter a problem that you and your supervisor cannot resolve together. You can talk to your independent advisor freely and confidentially in an informal way. Take advantage of their expertise in academia and have a chat over a cup of coffee or tea.

If no independent advisor was assigned at the start of your PhD journey, you can always add them at a later stage. Your supervisor, PhD programme coordinator or another staff member can help you identify a suitable person for this role. See Chapter 2.2 for more information about the role of the independent advisors.



### 7.3 PhD programme coordinator & PhD programme director

The coordinator and director of your PhD programme can assist you during your PhD journey and are here to help you find resources and answers related to your PhD journey. This includes support related to your training plan (e.g., advice about courses) and problems that may arise with your supervisors. If, for any reason, you are unwilling or unable to consult with your independent advisor, you can also seek advice from your PhD programme coordinator or director, who generally have a good overview of your research environment and know the people involved. For more confidential, private matters, you can consult the confidential PhD advisor.

You can find more information about the role of the PhD programme coordinator and director in Chapter 3.1, including a QR code guiding you to their contact details.

### 7.4 Confidential PhD advisor (*PhD vertrouwenspersoon*)

You may find yourself in situations that you cannot or do not want to discuss with the persons involved in your PhD project (see Chapter 7.1 - 7.3). For all employees of an institution, it is therefore possible to consult their institution's confidential advisor (*vertrouwenspersoon*). Each faculty (Science, Veterinary Medicine, Medicine/UMC Utrecht) has dedicated confidential advisors for PhD candidates.

You can consult the confidential PhD advisor for issues or situations that may be related to inappropriate behaviour, the complex work relationship between PhD candidates and their supervisors influenced by dependency, not receiving feedback in time, false expectations, work atmosphere, (sexual) harassment, discrimination, bullying, aggression and violence. At Utrecht University you can also contact the confidential PhD advisor for problems that affect more people than yourself, such as abuse of power, fraud or data manipulation.

At UMC Utrecht, the confidential PhD advisor is part of the Office Ombuds and Confidential Affairs (*Bureau Ombuds-en Vertrouwenszaken*). There, the confidential PhD advisor can be consulted if you encounter inappropriate behaviour. For matters regarding working conditions and employment law you can consult the ombuds. The UMC Utrecht Office Ombuds and Confidential Affairs can refer you to the right person based on your question.

A confidential advisor will never disclose information without your consent. The advisor will inform, advise and refer you if necessary. At your request, the advisor can arrange mediation of personal or professional disputes between you

**“ Sometimes it is difficult to know who the right person is to help you out. If you do not know whom to turn to, the confidential PhD advisor is the right person to start with. They will help point you in the right direction based on the character of your complaint. They are, in other words, the pivot in your support network. ”**



and your supervisor(s) or other colleagues. Consulting a confidential advisor will not be recorded in your personnel file.

Institutions other than the 3 Life Sciences faculties may not have a dedicated confidential PhD advisor. If this is the case, you may seek advice from that institution's (general) confidential advisor. Alternatively, you may wish to contact the confidential PhD advisor of the faculty of your first promotor.

## 7.5 Confidential advisor inappropriate behaviour

Utrecht University has a confidential advisor dedicated to inappropriate behaviour. If you are confronted with inappropriate behaviour, you can consult this confidential advisor. Inappropriate behaviour includes, but is not limited to, (sexual) harassment, discrimination, aggression, violence and bullying.

If you are confronted with inappropriate behaviour at UMC Utrecht, the confidential PhD advisor is the right person to consult.

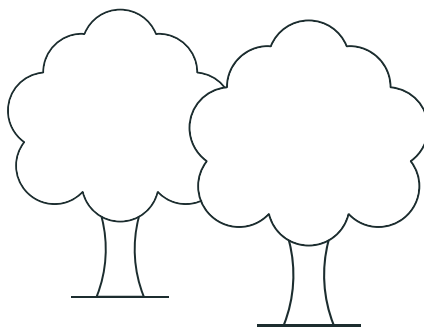
## 7.6 Confidential advisor research integrity

Questions or complaints about research integrity can be discussed confidentially with the confidential advisor research integrity of Utrecht University. This includes suspicion or observation of an injustice (violation of integrity), and scientific misconduct.

At UMC Utrecht, the ombuds has the role of confidential advisor concerning research integrity.

## 7.7 Staff welfare service (*bedrijfsmaatschappelijk werk*)

If you are unable to resolve problems on your own and if they affect you to such an extent that your work and/or health suffers, you can contact the staff welfare service (*bedrijfsmaatschappelijk werk*). Together with the staff welfare officer, you can start to identify and clarify your problems. You will then discuss a way to manage your issues so you that you can solve them. Increasing your resilience and problem-solving skills is central here. For further support, you may be referred to a confidential advisor.





## 7.8 PhD psychologist

Utrecht University has a dedicated psychologist who specialises in issues relevant for PhD candidates. The PhD psychologist has expertise in short-term treatment of anxiety issues, mood complaints, concentration and motivation problems, fear of failure and more. In addition to counselling, the psychologist organises a prevention programme consisting of workshops to teach PhD candidates about different topics related to mental well-being. Visit the PhD Course Centre website (Chapter 5.1) for more information about the workshops.

“  
In cases of acute mental stress,  
it is best to consult the PhD  
psychologist and/or your general  
practitioner. They provide the first  
line of healthcare and are able to  
refer you to more specialised help  
if necessary.  
”

## 7.9 Training offered by your institute

In addition to the above, human resources departments of several institutes offer trainings to develop skills related to personal development. They find it important that you enjoy your work and continue to develop. For example, Utrecht University offers training through the **Development Guide** and the UMC Utrecht through **ULearn**. Check out the trainings offered by your institute and discover the next steps in your professional development.



PhD psychologist



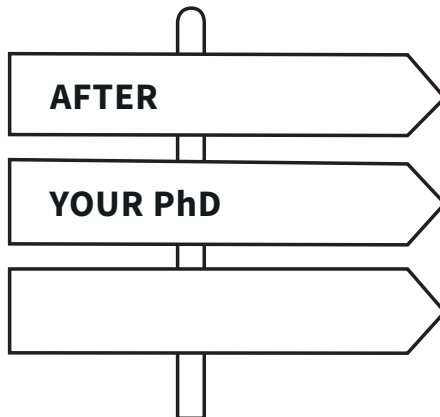
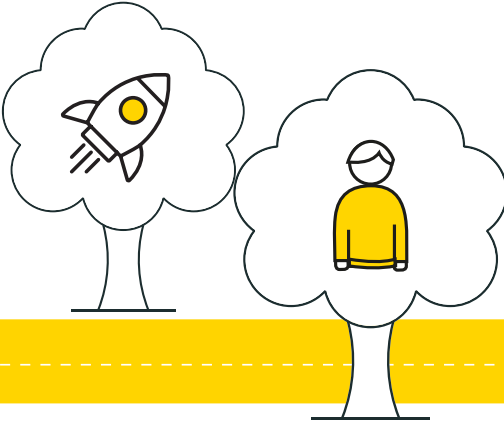
Development Guide  
(UU intranet)



ULearn  
(UMCU intranet)



# 8

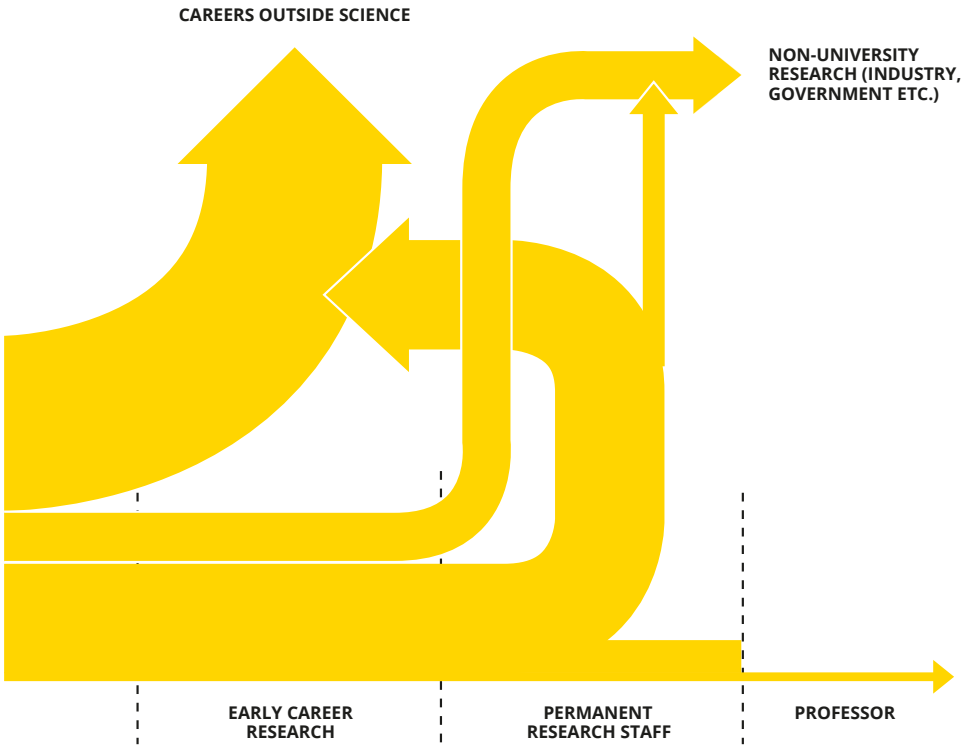




Many of you will start your PhD journey with the idea to become an academic researcher one day. We will help you prepare for a professional career, be it as an academic researcher, industry leader, science educator or journal editor. As you can see in the figure, some of you will continue in academia, while most of you will continue with a career outside academia.

### CAREER PATHS FOLLOWING A PhD

Based on Figure 1.6 printed in *The Scientific Century: securing our future prosperity*. The Royal Society, 2010.



The Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (*Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen*, KNAW) investigated careers outside academia of individuals who obtained a doctoral degree and how employers value them. They concluded that PhDs are often more advanced in their development than employees with Master's degrees: "In particular, PhDs are better at working independently and thematically, documenting (including writing publications) and oral presentations." Also, research skills and knowledge are well appreciated: "In addition, employers appreciate the fact that PhDs have specialised in a particular field and have therefore



mastered a broader and deeper range of research skills. Employers can make good use of PhDs' specialised knowledge and specific skills."

To prepare you for your future, we offer a wide variety of trainings to develop your academic and transferable competencies. We describe this in more detail in Chapter 5. You can also take part in workshops and events, or make use of coaching to explore options for your future career steps after your PhD.

## 8.1 Career Services

Career Services at Utrecht University offers PhD candidates help with preparing for a career after finishing a PhD. All services are free and available to all PhD candidates at Utrecht University, including candidates who have recently finished their PhD. At Career Services, you can take a test to identify areas of improvement, ask for career coaching and take workshops to develop your transferable skills. Detailed information can be found on their website.



## 8.2 PhACE (PhD Activating Career Event)

Utrecht University organises the two-day PhACE event for PhD candidates in their 3rd or 4th year. The event helps you to think about your future career and to explore your career options. Would you like to stay in academia or not? What are alternatives and how do your skills and competences fit in these new career choices?



During the event, professionals with a PhD who now work in different career fields talk about their careers during 2 discussion sessions. They share their experiences and talk about the skills needed to transfer to areas outside academia. In addition, 2 workshop sessions are offered to help you explore and improve your personal strengths and skills.

PhACE is organised 3 times a year. More information can be found on their website.



