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**Subject** Revision of the Doctoral Degree Regulations and Instructions for PhD candidate

Dear Deans,

Recently, we have revised the Doctoral Degree Regulations on a number of points in the Board for the Conferral of Doctoral Degrees. The document "Instructions for PhD candidates", referred to in Article 3 of the Doctoral Degree Regulations, has also been amended. In order for you to be able to inform your faculty community I have listed the main changes below. It also addresses some aspects of the dissertation process and the doctoral thesis defence ceremony, which are regularly the subject of questions to the Office of the Beadle and the Board for the Conferral of Doctoral Degrees. We hope to provide more clarity on these points.

### **Changes to the Doctoral Degree Regulations**

As from July 1, 2023, the revised Doctoral Degree Regulations will be in force. The regulations will be available in [Dutch](#) and [English](#) on the website.

The main changes concern:

- Reference to '[Minimum requirements for the quality assurance system for doctoral programmes](#)' (Article 3, paragraphs 1 and 2)

To ensure the quality of the doctoral programme, the Executive Board has adopted the "Minimum requirements for the quality assurance system for doctoral programmes". This version was last revised in 2019. By including reference to the minimum requirements in the Doctoral Degree Regulations, the duty of care of the supervisors is also emphasised.

- *Broadening the concept of Utrecht professors to include persons with a right to act as supervisor at UU (Article 6, Article 15 and Article 22).*

Article 6(1) of the Doctoral Degree Regulations includes a broadening and clarification of the right to act as a supervisor. 'UHD with Ius Promovendi' means an associate professor to whom Board for the Conferral of Doctoral Degrees of Utrecht University has granted the right to exercise this Ius Promovendi at Utrecht University. In addition, it is at the Dean's discretion to determine which professors from foreign institutions are also eligible to act as supervisor. A

full professorship at the relevant foreign university institution or an equivalent is a requirement in that case.

The requirements to be met by the assessment committee have been clarified through a step-by-step enumeration. A UHD with *Ius Promovendi* at Utrecht University is given a role similar to that of an Utrecht professor or an Utrecht emeritus professor who still has the right to act as a supervisor.

- *Confidentiality and secrecy (articles 16,17, and 25)*

In the manuscript assessment process, confidentiality and secrecy are important to ensure quality assurance. In the case of *cum laude*, the anonymity of the external referees ensures that they can give their assessment independently and 'without burden'. For the same reason, roll-call votes during deliberations are also anonymous.

- *The promise of scientific integrity (Article 26.2)*

Scientific integrity is an important part of good research and therefore is also an important part of the PhD track. Taking the promise of scientific integrity during the ceremony has been added to the doctoral regulations to raise awareness about this subject and make it explicit.

- *Possibility of withdrawal of degree (Article 34)*

This newly added article clarifies that the doctoral degree can be withdrawn if, after the degree has been awarded, it appears that there has been a serious violation of scientific integrity in the dissertation or around the time of the thesis defence ceremony.

#### **Modifications to the document instruction for PhD candidates.**

A number of clarifications and textual adjustments have been made in [the instructions for PhD candidates](#). The main clarifications and adjustments concern:

- *Postponing the final date of the thesis defence ceremony*

The rules around postponing a final date for the thesis defence ceremony have been clarified.

- *The addition of information on the Digital Object Identifier (DOI)*

A DOI is used to make dissertations easy to find on the internet. The instructions explain how to create this DOI via MyPhD.

- *Conditions for online thesis defence ceremonies*

The instructions detail the conditions under which a thesis defence ceremony can take place online or in hybrid form.

- *The more inclusive form of dress requirements*

The dress requirements for PhD candidates and paranympths during the thesis defence ceremony have been formulated in a gender-neutral manner.

- *Addition of changes of supervisors in the timetable of PhD tracks*

Annex 1 of the instructions to the PhD candidates contains the timetable for PhD tracks. According to this timetable, supervisors/co-supervisors are requested to notify any changes in the supervisory team no later than five months prior to the intended date of the thesis defence, so that there is no delay in the continuation of the process towards the defence.

Finally, a more comprehensive update of the document instructions to the PhD candidates will be prepared by the end of 2023. We aim to bring together all information in one place.

## **Thesis**

The Office of the Beadle and Office of the Board of Doctoral Degrees regularly receive questions about the requirements for dissertations. Although information on this is already available in the doctoral regulations and instruction for PhD candidates, we provide answers to the most frequently asked questions below.

- *Demarcation of responsibility of supervisor*

From the title page of the thesis to the acknowledgements, the thesis is the responsibility of the supervisor. The doctoral candidate is responsible for the content of the acknowledgements.

- *Logo*

No logos are allowed to be printed in or on theses. Sponsors may be thanked briefly in written form, on the back of the title page. In special cases, an exception may be made for existing series. These special cases should always be submitted to the rector through the Office of the Board of Doctoral Degrees.

Works of art may be reproduced in the thesis, especially on the cover, provided that the copyright/ownership rights are explicitly accounted for. When there is a commercial character, it is not allowed.

- *Proverbs and mottoes*

Placing proverbs and mottoes is allowed, provided they are not part of the academic discourse and provided they are not contrary to the norms and values of Utrecht University.

- *CV and summary*

Each thesis should include a CV. A summary in accordance with Article 18a of the PhD rules should also be included.

## **During the doctoral thesis defence ceremony**

The doctoral thesis defence ceremony has a number of customs and practical arrangements. These ensure that the ceremony runs smoothly and in line with the values of Utrecht University. These include, in particular:

- *Clothing*

Apart from the distinction between voting and advisory members, members of the doctoral examination committee have the same rights and obligations. To express this equality, all members of the committee are given the opportunity to wear a gown. These are the voting and advisory members of the doctoral examination committee as previously recorded in MyPhD. At all other academic ceremonies, the wearing of the gown remains reserved for full professors.

The dress code for committee members then becomes: gown, bands, beret, white shirt/blouse, black shoes. When seated, members can choose whether to wear or take off the beret during the ceremony.

Supervisors from Utrecht University wear a Utrecht toga, even if they have an appointment at another university in addition to their Utrecht appointment.

External members of the doctoral committee should be properly informed about the course of the ceremony, and the rules of opposition, including the intended duration of their intervention.

- *Decorations*

No decorations such as royal decorations or decorations of honorary doctorates are worn during thesis defence ceremonies.

- *Term of address of the rector*

During the ceremony the rector or deputy of the rector is addressed: Dear Rector.

- *Deliberation*

As a rule, the deliberation by the Doctoral Examination Committee lasts a maximum of seven minutes for an ordinary doctorate and nine minutes for a cum laude doctorate. Exceeding the deliberation will result in logistical problems for the beadle.

- *Presentation of the degree*

The awarding of the degree is done on the authority of Utrecht University. Therefore, the degree is always awarded by a Utrecht supervisor.

- *Laudatio*

The laudatio is given by one person, and lasts a maximum of six minutes. The laudatio focuses on the doctoral candidate and does not revisit the thesis. The laudation is not intended to thank the committee members. External members of the doctoral examination committee may be thanked by the supervisor in the committee room during the preliminary deliberation or during the deliberation. The laudation may be given by either one of the supervisors or one of the co-supervisors.

Please share this information with all professors within your faculty. This letter and an English translation of this letter will soon be available on the UU website. All other information regarding PhDs can also be found on the UU website. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Kind regards,  
The Executive Board,

Prof Henk Kummeling,  
Rector Magnificus