

Graduate School of Geosciences: Profile and Governance

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1. Graduate education at the Faculty of Geosciences

The Faculty of Geosciences of Utrecht University has the ambition to be a global trailblazer in education and research with regard to our Earth system and sustainability, from the local to the global scale. We study the Earth: from the Earth's core to its surface, including man's spatial and material utilisation of the Earth – always with a focus on sustainability and innovation. Our unique combination of expertise in both natural and social sciences in a single faculty will enable us to reach our ambitions to teach the next generation of geoscientists and to perform excellent research with academic and societal impact in Earth and sustainability.

Research, education, and societal impact within the Faculty of Geosciences have a strong international scope. We attract students and research staff from all over the world; we stimulate students and early career researchers to gain experiences abroad; we analyse processes and phenomena on all continents; we cooperate with many foreign universities and institutions; and we publish in international journals.

The Faculty of Geosciences offers a wide range of challenging Master's and PhD programmes in the fields of earth sciences, physical geography, human geography and spatial planning, and sustainable development. They are organised in the Graduate School of Geosciences (GSG). The GSG is responsible for [1]¹:

- the organisation and coordination of teaching in the Master's and PhD programmes;
- the quality assurance of Master's programmes and PhD programmes (training).

Please note that the quality assurance of the PhD research lies with the research directors of the four departments (Earth Sciences, Physical Geography, Human Geography and Spatial Planning, and Sustainable Development) [2].

The mission and strategic aims of the GSG are presented in Section 2. The governance is detailed in Section 3. Because the responsibilities related to the master's programs have been delegated to the directors of Education of the departments (see Section 3), the major part of Section 3 pertains to the responsibilities concerning the PhD programmes only.

2. Mission and strategic aims

The mission of the GSG is to deliver outstanding independent professionals in the field of Geosciences. These professionals will be familiar with the latest developments in their scientific field, and able to develop this field further, based on scientific and socially relevant knowledge and questions.

The GSG has the strategic aims to:

1. offer graduate programmes at Master's and PhD levels that are well embedded in the main scientific debates in the scientific fields that are covered by the Faculty of Geosciences; that encourage students and PhD candidates to go beyond the state-of-the-art; in which education and research go hand in hand; that are internationally oriented; that are flexible in stimulating disciplinary (depth) and interdisciplinary (breadth) orientation; that are related to the strategic

¹ The responsibilities related to the master's programs have been delegated to the directors of Education of the departments (see section 3).

themes of Utrecht University; and that are connected to societal challenges at global, national, regional and local levels;

2. provide a stimulating and safe academic environment for students and PhD candidates that fosters the development of professional competences with a distinct profile tailored to the student's or PhD candidate's needs and talents;
3. offer inspiring and state-of-the-art teaching and supervision by a qualified team that actively and effectively facilitates academic and personal growth;
4. tailor education and training in the doctoral and master phase to the needs of the labour market, both within academia and in professional organisations.

3. Governance

The **dean** of the Faculty of Geosciences is in charge of the GSG [1]. The dean has delegated the responsibilities related to the master programs to the directors of Education of the departments, who are organised in the Board of the Undergraduate School (UGB) [2].

The **Board of Studies** (BoS) assists the dean in their role as the leader of the Graduate School [1]. The BoS is appointed by the dean. The task of the BoS pertains to the quality assurance of PhD programmes (providing and evaluating frameworks, monitoring activities) and the organisation and coordination of PhD teaching (a.o. organising PhD courses). This is further elaborated upon in the GSG Quality Assurance Plan Doctoral Education.

The BoS consists of:

- the dean of the Faculty of Geosciences (chair)
- the vice dean for Research (co-chair)
- the vice dean for Education (co-chair)
- the directors of Research of the four departments
- the directors of Education of the associated three teaching institutes – also members of UGB.
- a representative of the Master students – the student assessor of the Faculty of Geosciences takes this role. The assessor is a representative of both undergraduate and graduate students and is a member of both the Undergraduate Board and the BoS of the Graduate School.
- a representative of the PhD candidates.

The BoS is assisted by a secretary.

The BoS meets at least twice a year and discusses strategic matters about the quality of the PhD programmes, the process of quality assurance and future developments in research and PhD training that are relevant to the PhD programmes.

The dean delegates most of its authority on daily and operational matters related to the PhD programmes to the **Research Directors Board** (RDB). The RDB consists of the directors of Research of the four departments and the vice-dean for Research (chair). When discussing PhD-related matters in an RDB meeting, the PhD representative will be invited for these topics. The RDB meets at least four times a year.

References

[1] Faculteitsreglement Geowetenschappen. Goedgekeurd door College van Bestuur Universiteit Utrecht 31 januari 2023.

[2] Mandaatregeling Faculteit Geowetenschappen. Goedgekeurd en vastgesteld door College van Bestuur Universiteit Utrecht 31 januari 2023.