



GRADUATE SCHOOL  
OF LIFE SCIENCES



Utrecht  
University



UMC Utrecht



2025

PhD

Guide



# PhD Guide

## 2025



**EDITOR**

Anke Hammerschlag, PhD | Coordinator of doctoral education, GSLS

**DESIGN**

Iliana Boshoven-Gkini | AgileColor.com

**COVER PHOTOGRAPHY**

Dick Boetekees (Photo: University Hall)

**INFOGRAPHICS**

Barbara Hagoort | Marketing & Communicatie, UMC Utrecht

Vincent van der Vliet | Bakabaka Design (infographics annual PhD progress meeting and mentor)

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**CONTACT**

Graduate School of Life Sciences

<https://www.uu.nl/lifesciences>

[gs.lifesciences@uu.nl](mailto:gs.lifesciences@uu.nl)

**PHD COURSE CENTRE**

[bit.ly/PhDCourseCentre](https://bit.ly/PhDCourseCentre)

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

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This PhD Guide is composed by the Graduate School of Life Sciences of Utrecht University. It is compiled with the utmost care. However, it is for information purposes only and no rights can be derived from its contents. Suggestions regarding the content can be e-mailed to [pcc@uu.nl](mailto:pcc@uu.nl).

In this guide's version, we used ChatGPT-4o to improve previous version's content. The following prompt was used: Make this text correct British English and shorten it.

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 mentors, 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

# Contents

## **1** Your PhD Journey **6**

- 1.1 Welcome to the GSLS 7
- 1.2 Categories of PhD Candidates 11
- 1.3 MyPhD 13
- 1.4 Annual PhD Progress Meeting 14
- 1.5 Go/No-Go Meeting 16
- 1.6 Completion Plan 17
- 1.7 Your PhD Journey - Checklist 17

## **2** Supervision **20**

- 2.1 Supervisory Team 21
- 2.2 Mentors 22

## **3** Research Community **25**

- 3.1 PhD Programmes 26
- 3.2 PhD Council 27
- 3.3 PhD Course Centre 28
- 3.4 PhD Team GSLS 28

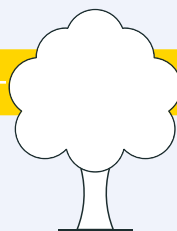
## **4** Being a Researcher at Utrecht University **30**

- 4.1 Responsibilities of PhD Candidates 31
- 4.2 Responsible Conduct of Research 39
- 4.3 Open Science 39
- 4.4 Research Data Management 40
- 4.5 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion 40



## 5 PhD Training Programme

- 5.1 PhD Competence Model 43
- 5.2 Training and Supervision Agreement (TSA) 45
- 5.3 PhD Training Portfolio and GSLS Training Certificate 45
- 5.4 Compulsory Trainings 46



## 6 Doctoral Thesis

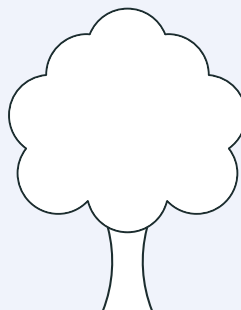
- 6.1 Thesis Requirements 48
- 6.2 Assessment Committee 50
- 6.3 From Completion to Graduation: What You Need to Arrange 51

## 7 Support During your PhD

- 7.1 Supervisory Team 54
- 7.2 Mentors 54
- 7.3 PhD Programme Coordinator and Director 55
- 7.4 Confidential PhD Advisor (*PhD Vertrouwenspersoon*) 55
- 7.5 Confidential Advisor Inappropriate Behaviour 56
- 7.6 Confidential Advisor Research Integrity 56
- 7.7 Staff Welfare Service (*Bedrijfsmaatschappelijk Werk*) 56
- 7.8 PhD Psychologist 57
- 7.9 Training Offered by your Institution 57

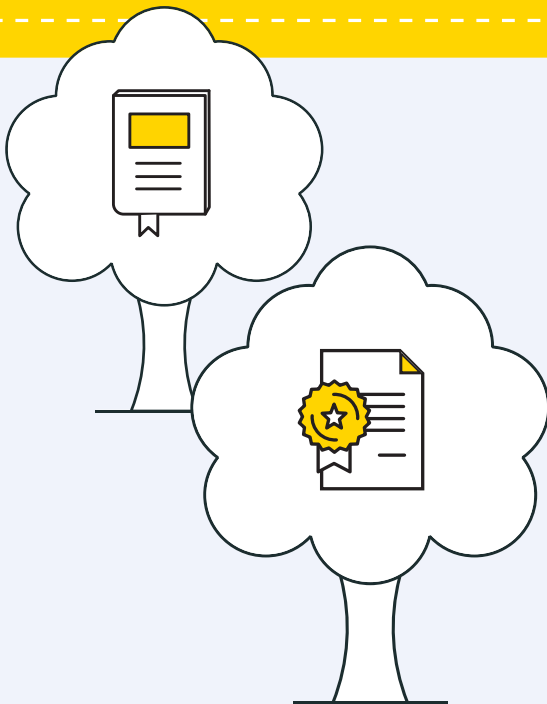
## 8 After your PhD

- 8.1 Career Services 59
- 8.2 PhACE (PhD Activating Career Event) 59
- 8.3 Work2Work 60



# 1

## Your PhD Journey





## 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 covers essential aspects of your path ahead.



The GSLS is the collective responsibility of the deans of the Faculty of Medicine (UMC Utrecht), Faculty of Veterinary Medicine (Utrecht University), and Faculty of Science (Utrecht University), collectively known as the Life Sciences Deans. There is close collaboration with research institutes at Utrecht Science Park: among others Hubrecht Institute, Princess Máxima Center, and Westerdijk Institute. You are automatically a GSLS PhD candidate if your first supervisor (*promotor*) is a professor, or associate professor granted *ius promovendi*, from one of these three faculties (Faculty of Science only the departments of Biology, Pharmaceutical Sciences and Chemistry [Bijvoet Centre for Biomedical Research]).

As part of the Bologna Process, doctoral education is defined as the third cycle in higher education after Bachelor's and Master's. Doctoral education aims to develop you into an independent scientist through research, training, and often teaching. We strive to provide an optimal environment for developing research skills and other relevant competencies. As a future Life Sciences academic, you need expertise in your field and a critical academic attitude, along with interdisciplinary insight and experience. By the end of your PhD, you will not only deliver a doctoral thesis, but you will graduate as a person with specific academic skills and competencies. You will enhance your research skills, knowledge, and other transferable competencies. Science is teamwork and you will be part of a research team and the broader research community in your thematic area.

The GSLS is a large, multidisciplinary organisation that brings together education for Master's and PhD research programmes, as well as education for professionals in life sciences at Utrecht University. We host a vibrant academic community with 1,800 active Master's students and over 2,000 PhD candidates across 16 Master's and 15 PhD programmes, plus a new programme for professionals. Most PhD programmes are linked to Master's programmes and are rooted in the Utrecht University's Life Sciences research theme and UMC Utrecht's thematic research programme.

**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

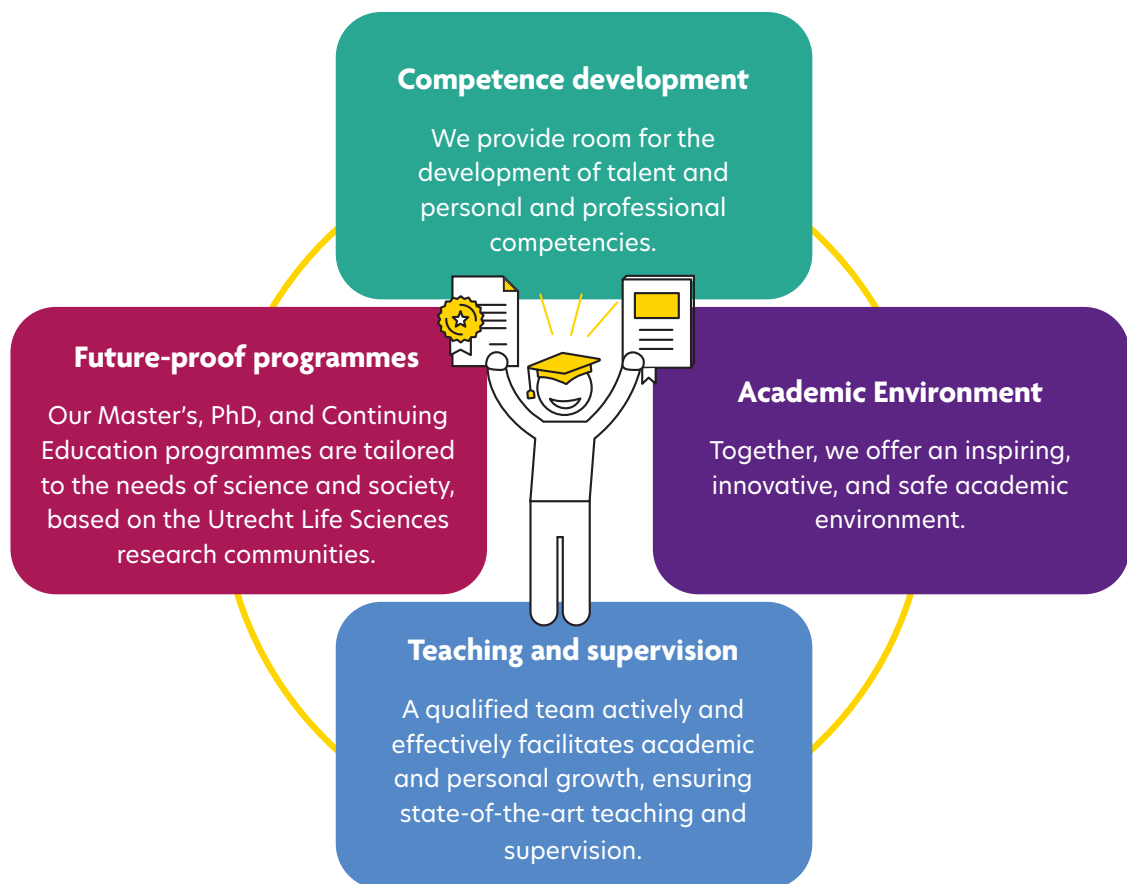
Bio Inspired Innovation

Science & Business Management

Life Sciences Education Research

Overview of Master's and PhD programmes of the GSLS (fall 2024)

# MISSION GRADUATE SCHOOL OF LIFE SCIENCES



Our mission is to improve life. By providing an inspiring and innovative academic environment, we enable our graduates to contribute to and thrive in the dynamics of life sciences and society.



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 outlines key aspects of your PhD journey. You can find more information in these formal documents on principles, procedures, and regulations:



UU Doctoral Degree Regulations

### UTRECHT UNIVERSITY DOCTORAL DEGREE REGULATIONS

This document includes legal stipulations from the Dutch Higher Education and Research Act and conditions set by the Utrecht University Board for the Conferral of Doctoral Degrees. It covers, among other things, access to the PhD defence, appointment of the supervisory team, process for your doctoral thesis, and the formation of the Assessment Committee.

The document refers to the **instructions to the PhD candidate**, which provides information on the submission of the doctoral thesis and the defence ceremony, as well as to the **minimum requirements of the quality assurance system for doctoral programmes**.



UU PhD Manual

### UTRECHT UNIVERSITY PHD MANUAL

This manual provides practical information for prospective and current PhD candidates across all Utrecht University faculties.



Quality Assurance Plan

### QUALITY ASSURANCE PLAN OF THE GSLS

This plan details doctoral education at the GSLS, including training, research, supervision, thesis content, responsibilities, monitoring, and evaluation. It elaborates on the Doctoral Degree Regulations specific to GSLS PhD candidates.



## The GSLS PhD team

**Prof. Toine Egberts, PhD**  
Director of Doctoral Education

**Saskia Ebeling, PhD**  
Managing Director Doctoral Education & PhD Course Centre

**Anke Hammerschlag, PhD**  
Coordinator Doctoral Education

**Bianca Zomer & Inge Kuurman**  
Course Coordinators PhD Course Centre

“

***For the latest information, visit the GSLS website, which is updated regularly.  
This guide includes QR codes that direct you to relevant webpages.  
Enjoy your time at the GSLS!***

”

## 1.2 Categories of PhD Candidates

In the Netherlands, most PhD positions are considered employment, granting associated rights and duties according to the type of contract. However, other types of PhD candidates exist as well. PhD candidates are categorised in four types, per the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU). At the GSLS, the PhD track is generally 4 years full-time, but must be at least 3 years full-time. This is determined by the Life Sciences Deans and applies to all four PhD types. In case of part-time track, the duration is proportionally extended.

Check your status with your supervisors if unsure. It needs to be correctly registered in MyPhD. Employee PhD candidates have rights and duties per their institution's Collective Labour Agreement (CAO), including annual assessments and often teaching obligations. Non-employee PhD candidates are not required to teach or have annual assessments. However, all PhD candidates have an Annual PhD Progress Meeting using the GSLS report form.

“

***This guide applies to all  
GSLS PhD candidates,  
regardless of their category.***

”

**1**

## **PhD candidate with employee status**

### **1a. Employed PhD candidate**

*(werknemer-promovendus)*

Has 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.

### **1b. 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*)**

### **2a. Scholarship PhD candidate own university/UMC**

*(beurspromovendus eigen universiteit of UMC)*

Receives funding for doctoral research from Utrecht University or UMC Utrecht, but is not employed by either institution. In addition to the requirements of the scholarship programme, admission by Utrecht University is required. This means the candidate must meet the entrance requirements and must have a prospective supervisor affiliated with Utrecht University.

### **2b. Scholarship PhD candidate other provider**

*(beurspromovendus andere beursgever)*

Similar to 2a, but receives funding for doctoral research from an external scholarship provider, and is not employed by Utrecht University or UMC Utrecht.

**3**

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

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*)**

Conduct research under the guidance of a supervisor at Utrecht University, but receive no funding for their doctoral research in the form of a salary or scholarship. They obtain their doctorates in their own time, supported by their own resources. Often on a part-time basis and without a dedicated workspace at the university, meaning that they 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.

## 1.3 MyPhD

At the start of your PhD journey, you must register in MyPhD, the official tracking system of Utrecht University. Your registration should be completed at least 3 years before the end of your PhD. This applies to all PhD candidate categories described in Chapter 1.2. MyPhD records all formal stages of your PhD in line with the rules of the Board for the Conferral of Doctoral Degrees.



MyPhD

“

**Register in MyPhD as soon as possible, but at least 3 months after the start of your PhD.**

”

When registering in MyPhD, you need the following:

- ✓ An electronic copy of your most relevant diploma, including the institution name, degree type, diploma type, and diploma date. A Dutch Master's degree or its equivalent is required for admission. For questions about the validity of foreign or other diplomas, contact the Admissions Office ([admissionsoffice@uu.nl](mailto:admissionsoffice@uu.nl)).
- ✓ An electronic copy of a valid ID. You may obscure your Citizens Service Number (BSN) on the copy. Instructions for making a secure copy are available on [Rijksoverheid.nl](https://rijksoverheid.nl) (in Dutch).
- ✓ The working title of your doctoral thesis, which can be adjusted at any time.
- ✓ Information about your supervisory team (see Chapter 2.1). MyPhD auto-fills details for Utrecht University supervisors. For external supervisors, enter full name, initials, title, institution name, institution address, and email.
- ✓ Information about your mentors (see Chapter 2.2). GSLs PhD candidates must have one or two mentors. MyPhD auto-fills details for Utrecht University mentors. For external mentors, enter full name, initials, title, institution name, institution address, and email.
- ✓ The PhD programme you will join (see Chapter 3.2). In MyPhD, select the Graduate School of Life Sciences and your PhD programme (field 'PhD program').

“

**For more information about registering in MyPhD, contact your FACULTY CONTACT, listed on the MyPhD website and the GSLS website.**

**For technical issues, please contact the IT SERVICE CENTRE  
[ict-servicedesk@uu.nl](mailto:ict-servicedesk@uu.nl)  
+31 (0)30 253 45 00**

”

If you decide not to complete your PhD and end early, ensure you deregister in MyPhD. Notify the MyPhD faculty contact (Faculties of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine) or the Head of Department and administrative secretariat (Faculty of Science) by email, stating your reason for withdrawal. CC all members of your supervisory team. Your request will be forwarded to your faculty dean for approval, after which the Board for the Conferral of Doctoral Degrees will stop your PhD track.

## 1.4 Annual PhD Progress Meeting

All types of PhD candidates must have an Annual PhD Progress Meeting with their supervisory team and mentors to monitor their progress. Employee PhD candidates are encouraged to combine this meeting with the annual assessment interview as defined by their institution. Report form and explanatory notes for the Annual PhD Progress Meeting are available on our website; this form differs from the annual assessment interview forms of your institution, but can often be uploaded in the institution's system.



Annual PhD Progress Report

### How do I arrange the annual PhD progress meeting?



PhD candidate

Plans meeting (attendees: PhD candidate, supervisory team, mentors).

Prepares meeting by completing parts 1-6 of form. For part 3, use the self-assessment tool.

Sends form to supervisory team and mentor(s).





**The Annual PhD Progress Meeting can vary in format. This are the two most common. Check with your PhD programme for any specific requirements.**



## 1.5 Go/No-Go Meeting

The go/no-go meeting and decision vary across institutions and among different types of PhD candidates (see Chapter 1.2). A no go should never be a surprise, meaning that progress should be discussed regularly so PhD candidates have time to improve. If you are employed and have any questions about the go/no-go meeting or decision, please contact your institution's HR department.

### **EMPLOYED UTRECHT UNIVERSITY PHD CANDIDATES**

The initial contract is for 18 months, followed by an extension for the remaining part of the PhD track if progress is satisfactory. The go/no-go meeting should occur well before the initial contract ends, allowing time for improvement if necessary. We recommend that you initiate an informal meeting at six months to discuss progress and document any agreements made. In most cases, the go/no-go meeting is held during the first Annual PhD Progress Meeting (after 12 months). If needed, this can be a provisional decision with a final decision at 15 months.

### **EMPLOYED UMC UTRECHT PHD CANDIDATES**

The go/no-go moment should take place during the first annual PhD progress meeting. The initial UMC contract covers the entire PhD period. Therefore, a no-go decision is a strong advice to the PhD candidate that successfully completing the PhD is not considered feasible. It is equivalent to an insufficient assessment under the assessment policy, which should not come as a surprise since progress and performance discussions are held throughout the year. If agreed upon, a settlement agreement can be arranged with the assistance of HR, outlining terms for (financial) support in finding other employment and recording that contract termination is non-culpable for unemployment benefits. If you disagree with a no-go decision, it is equivalent to receiving a failing grade as an employee of UMC Utrecht. You must develop a plan with your supervisor outlining the required improvements, what is needed (e.g., training, coaching), the timeframe, and plan regular evaluations. The goal is to get back on track to complete the PhD. If subsequent evaluations remain unsatisfactory, you can choose to stop and draw up a settlement agreement, or the supervisor may seek contract termination through the court.

### **PHD CANDIDATES WITH SCHOLARSHIP, EXTERNALLY FUNDED OR EXTERNAL PHD CANDIDATES**

Incorporate the go/no-go meeting into the first annual PhD Progress Meeting. We recommend that you initiate an informal meeting at six months to discuss progress and document any agreements made. This allows time for improvement if necessary. If needed, the go/no-go during the first Annual PhD Progress Meeting can be a provisional decision with a final decision at 15 months.

## 1.6 Completion Plan

During the final PhD Progress Meeting, scheduled about 12 months before the end of the PhD contract (or the intended end date for PhD candidates without a contract), the Completion Plan should be filled out. The plan is designed to assist you and the supervisory team in completing the PhD research and doctoral thesis on time. The thesis should be submitted to the assessment committee via MyPhD before the contract ends.



Completion Plan

## 1.7 Your PhD Journey – Checklist

And off you go on the adventure of your PhD journey! This list summarises your PhD journey. Refer to the different chapters of this PhD Guide for more details.

### STARTING your PhD

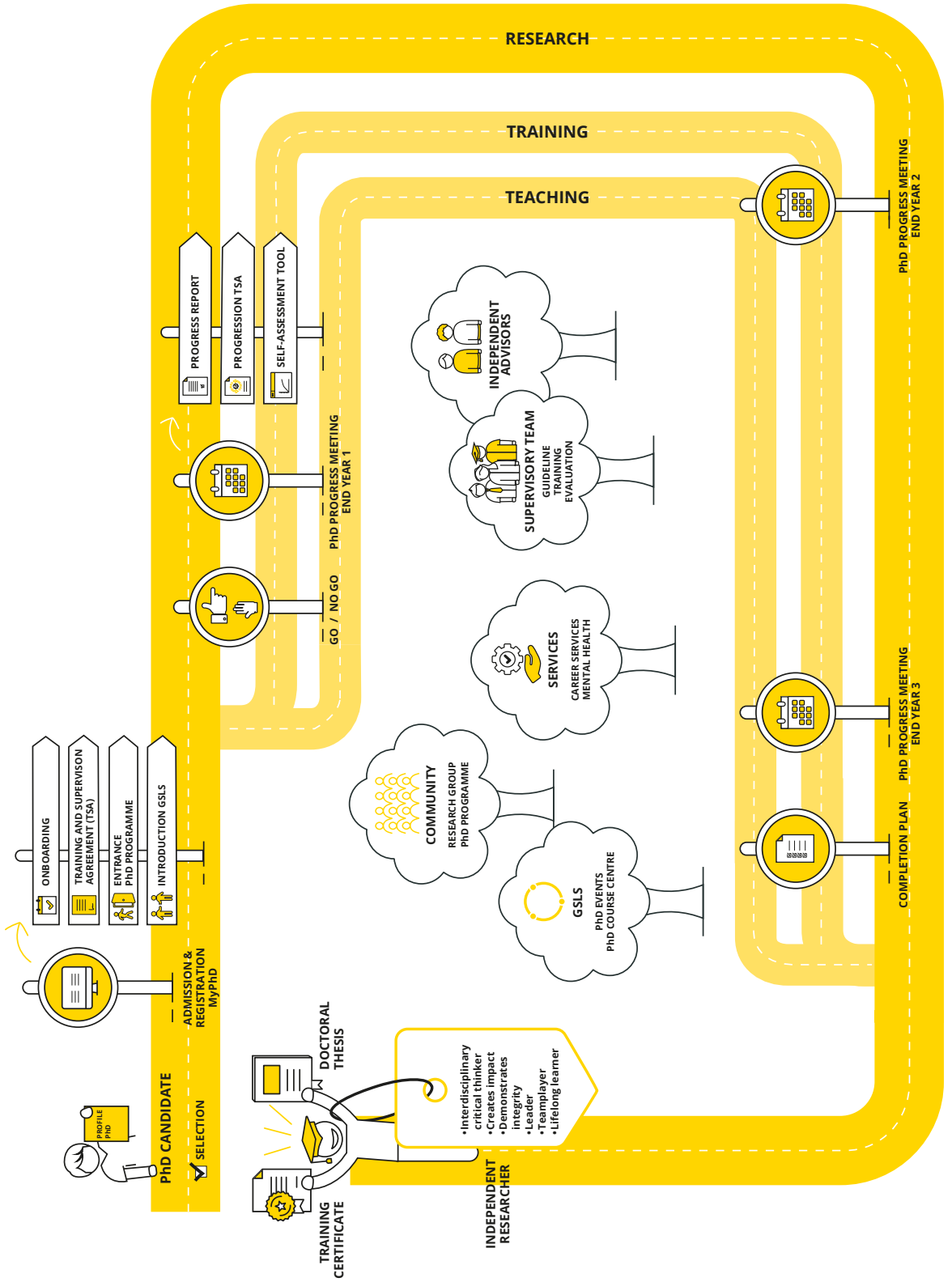
- ✓ **Your supervisory team is complete.** This must be arranged before you start and the constitution should comply with the Utrecht University Doctoral Degree Regulations. **Chapter 2.1**
- ✓ **Attend the one-hour introduction meeting for GSLS PhD candidates** organised once a month.
- ✓ **Choose a GSLS PhD programme.** Do this in consultation with your supervisory team. **Chapter 3.1**
- ✓ **Contact your PhD programme coordinator.** Arrange an onboarding meeting.
- ✓ **Select one or - preferably - two mentors.** Do this in consultation with your supervisory team. **Chapter 2.2**
- ✓ **Register in MyPhD,** the official tracking system of Utrecht University. Do this once you have arranged the above points, and within 3 months after the start of your PhD. **Chapter 1.3**
- ✓ **Complete the Training and Supervision Agreement (TSA).** Fill out the TSA form (available on the GSLS website) with your supervisory team and upload it to MyPhD within 3 months after the start of your PhD. Your TSA must be approved by your supervisory team and PhD programme coordinator in MyPhD. **Chapter 5.2**
- ✓ Register for the compulsory training **Responsible Conduct of Research - Year 1.** **Chapter 5.4**
- ✓ **Non-UU employees: request a Solis-id.** This is needed for online courses via Ulearning (including the compulsory courses Responsible Conduct of Research - Year 2 and 3) and courses in the UU Development Guide.
- ✓ **Know your rights and responsibilities.** **Chapter 4**
- ✓ **Know where to seek support** during your PhD journey. **Chapter 7**

## DURING your PhD

- ✓ **Attend compulsory training** for PhD candidates of Utrecht University. **Chapter 5.4**
- ✓ **Arrange your first Annual PhD Progress Meeting** at the end of the first year. This includes the **go/no-go meeting**. **Chapter 1.5**
- ✓ **Arrange an Annual PhD Progress Meeting** at the end of each consecutive year. You discuss the progress of your research and your academic and transferable skill development. Complete the PhD Progress Report Form, review your competencies and goals from the TSA, and consult your mentor(s). **Chapter 1.4**
- ✓ **One year before the end of your PhD track, fill out the Completion Plan** with your supervisors. This is part of your last Annual PhD Progress Meeting. **Chapter 1.6**
- ✓ **Review the doctoral thesis requirements** to be ready for finishing your PhD. **Chapter 6.1**

## FINISHING your PhD

- ✓ **Write your doctoral thesis.** Ensure it meets the doctoral thesis requirements. **Chapter 6.1**
- ✓ **Upload your doctoral thesis to MyPhD** after your supervisory team has assessed and approved your manuscript. Your supervisor will form an Assessment Committee. **Chapter 6.2**
- ✓ **Schedule your defence.** Once the Assessment Committee is registered in MyPhD, contact the Beadle's Office to set a preliminary defence date.
- ✓ **Finalise your defence date.** After the Assessment Committee approves your doctoral thesis, the preliminary date becomes definitive.
- ✓ **Prepare for the ceremony.** Follow the Beadle's Office instructions for arranging your defence ceremony. **Chapter 6.3**
- ✓ **Request a GSLS Training Certificate** with your PhD programme coordinator. **Chapter 5.3**
- ✓ **Complete the GSLS Post Graduation PhD Survey** to share your experiences. This enables the GSLS to improve the quality of the PhD track.
- ✓ **Defend your doctoral thesis.** Congratulations! You have developed into an independent researcher.



# 2

## Supervision



## 2.1 Supervisory Team

A formal supervisory team, as defined by the Utrecht University Doctoral Degree Regulations (*promotiereglement*), is compulsory. It must consist of 2 to 4 supervisors (*promotors* and *copromotors*). For more information, see the Doctoral Degree Regulations on the Utrecht University website. The QR code in Chapter 1.1 guides you to the site.

“  
**Discuss the division of supervisory tasks and the frequency of meetings with your supervisory team to align expectations.**  
”

You are part of the GSLS if your first promotor is a professor (or associate professor with *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

You are eligible for registration as a PhD candidate at the GSLS - which includes access to our courses - only if your first promotor is associated with one of the three GSLS faculties. This includes candidates at the Hubrecht Institute, Princess Máxima Center, or other external institutes.

Discuss the division of supervisory tasks and the frequency of meetings with your supervisory team to align expectations. A PhD project is a joint effort, with shared responsibilities for the quality of your research, doctoral thesis, and development of your skills and competencies. Refer to Chapter 4.1, section 'Effective Supervisor-PhD interaction' for our vision on good supervision practices and interactions with your supervisory team including responsibilities for both sides.

Your supervisory team is responsible for ensuring the availability of resources, including budget, throughout your PhD journey. The budget of your entire PhD track should be available before you start.

### PHD SUPERVISOR GUIDE

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



## 2.2 Mentors

At the start of your PhD, you must select one or, preferably, two mentors (previously known as independent advisors, supervisory committee, or *AIO begeleidingscommissie*) and register them in MyPhD. The role of mentors should be understood within a broader perspective on PhD supervision, where different actors – such as the supervisory team, institution, and the institution’s available services – each play important but distinct and complementary roles in supporting PhD candidates. Collectively, these actors must foster a stimulating and safe environment that is beneficial to the development of the PhD candidate.

### ROLE OF MENTORS

Mentors:

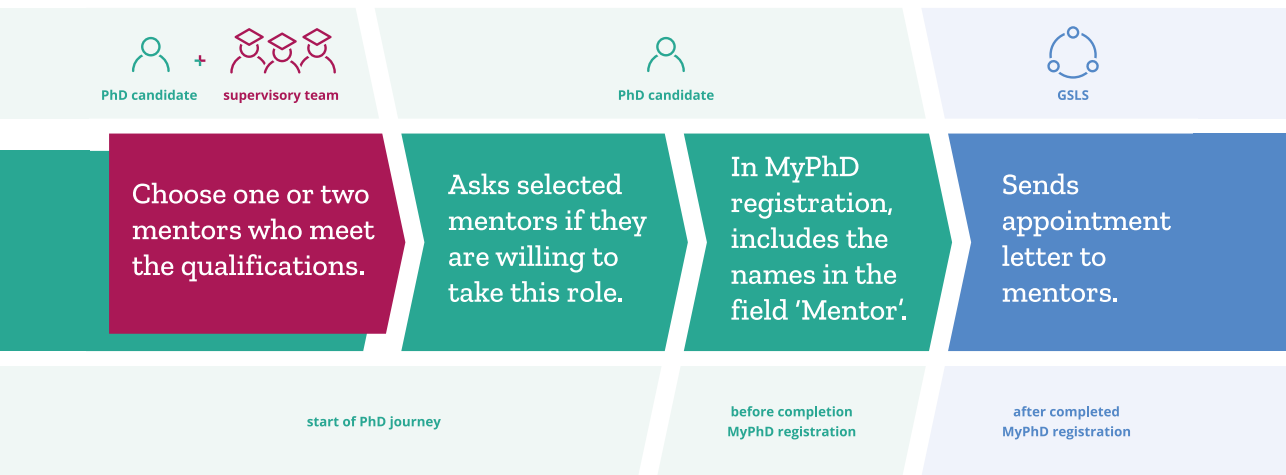
- ✓ Provide independent advice to both the PhD candidate and supervisory team regarding the progress of the PhD track.
  - Support and guide the progress and balance between research, teaching (if applicable), and training.
  - Encourage the PhD candidate to critically reflect on their learning objectives and progress thereof.
  - The Individual Training Plan from the TSA and the PhD Competence Model self-assessment tool as part of the Annual PhD Progress Report can be useful to discuss followed training, and personal and scientific development.
- ✓ Do not need to advise on the content of the research, but can offer suggestions where appropriate.
- ✓ Offer advice to the PhD candidate on issues that cannot be discussed or resolved with the supervisory team, and direct the candidate to appropriate support if needed.
- ✓ Advise the PhD candidate on decisions in the context of their ambitions and future career.
- ✓ Monitor the quality of supervision.

### MENTOR SELECTION

You and your supervisory team will jointly select one or two mentors. You have the possibility to choose mentors if you know suitable researchers, e.g., a former supervisor from a Master’s internship. If you do not know, discuss with your supervisory team who might be suitable for this role. The PhD programme coordinator can also provide advice if needed. Note that the Clinical & Experimental Neuroscience programme selects a mentor for their PhD candidates.



## How to select and register a mentor?



### MENTOR QUALIFICATIONS

When selecting mentors, ensure they meet the following qualifications.

- ✓ **A researcher with doctoral degree who has successfully directly (co-) supervised at least one graduated PhD.** This includes assistant/associate/full professors, PIs, or comparable levels with a permanent position at a Dutch academic or research institute. In exceptional cases, a mentor may be from a non-Dutch institute (in such cases, annual evaluations may need to be conducted online). It is advisable to avoid choosing highly senior scientists with limited availability, because the mentor needs to be approachable.
- ✓ **Works preferably, but not necessarily, in a research field related to that of the PhD candidate.** It is important that the mentor can evaluate the progress of the PhD candidate and feasibility of the project.
- ✓ **Maintains a critical distance from the members of the supervisory team.** This means
  - not part of the same research group, depending on its size and structure;
  - not involved in the PhD candidate's research project, i.e., no co-authorship;
  - no hierarchical relationship with any member of the supervisory team;
  - no close personal ties with any member of the supervisory team, i.e., no family, partner or friend.
- ✓ **Can be affiliated with UU/UMCU but may also be affiliated with another research institute** (e.g., a KNAW institute, other UMC or university).

## MEETINGS WITH MENTORS

After an introductory meeting with your mentors at the start of your PhD, you should meet with them at least once a year during your Annual PhD Progress Meetings. You are responsible for inviting the mentors to all meetings. Your mentors can also serve as confidential support or as a sounding board if you need to talk to someone outside your supervisory team.

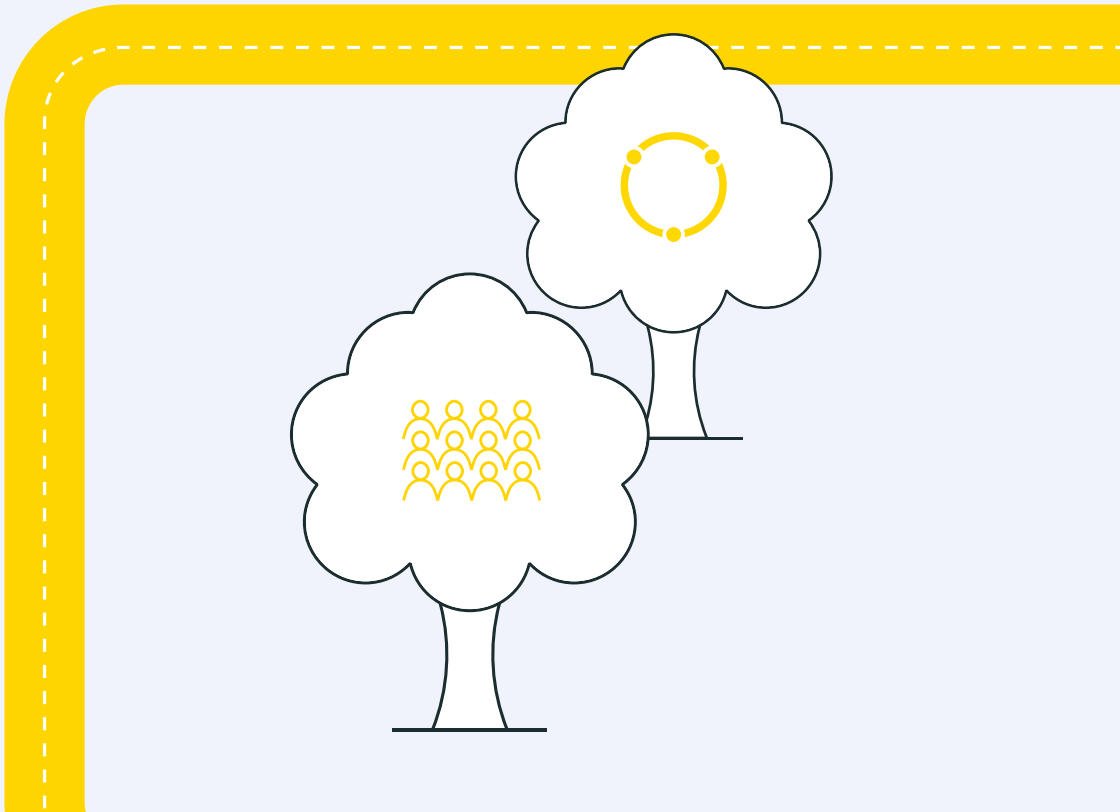
“  
**A list of example questions is available on the GSLS website to guide discussions with your mentor.**  
”

### When do I meet with my mentors?

	 introductory meeting	 annual PhD progress meetings	 informal meetings
 when	after selecting the mentor	yearly	whenever needed
 what	planning of PhD track	progress of both research and training (evaluation of last year and timeline for next year) personal and scientific development quality of supervision career plans well-being	advice on matters that cannot be discussed or resolved with supervisory team
 documents	TSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Annual PhD Progress Report form &amp; instructions</li><li>• Self-assessment tool</li><li>• List of example questions mentor</li></ul>	

# 3

## Research Community



Throughout your PhD journey, you will interact with various individuals and entities beyond your supervisory team and research group. Below is an overview of the key entities in this network and their roles. Additionally, you will form other networks, such as within your research group or through international collaborations.

### 3.1 PhD Programmes

The GSLS offers 15 thematic PhD programmes (see Figure 1.1 in Chapter 1), each focusing on a specific domain within the Life Sciences. In consultation with your supervisory team, you will choose one to join. What benefits do these programmes offer?

- ✓ High-quality, in-depth thematic training through courses, seminars, conference presentations, PhD retreats, and journal clubs.
- ✓ Enhanced knowledge of your research topic and other intriguing topics.
- ✓ Advice on valuable courses for your field from the programme coordinator.
- ✓ Last but not least, an active, inspirational PhD community, connecting you with fellow candidates, principal investigators, other researchers, and alumni.

Each PhD programme is organised by a PhD programme team: the PhD programme director, the PhD programme coordinator and support staff. The director is a professor from Utrecht University or UMC Utrecht, responsible for maintaining a high-quality programme and community. The programme coordinator assists the director and serves as your main contact. A PhD programme committee, comprising representative research leaders participating in the research focus areas and at least one PhD candidate, supports the director and coordinator. The PhD representatives from all programmes form the GSLS PhD Council.



For details and contact information for each programme, visit our website.

We strongly recommend joining a PhD programme community. If your research project really does not fit any programme, select 'not in a GSLS programme' when registering in MyPhD. In this case, the GSLS Managing Director Doctoral Education will be your programme coordinator, and the Director of Doctoral Education will act as your programme director.

## 3.2 PhD Council

The GSLS PhD Council is made up of representatives from all GSLS PhD programmes and the three Life Sciences faculties and main institutes. The PhD Council advises the GSLS management team and the Board of Studies on the quality of doctoral education. Activities include evaluating the PhD research environment and PhD programmes through an annual survey, organising an annual PhD Day, the Supervisor of the Year Awards, and other PhD events. The Council meets monthly with the GSLS coordinator of doctoral education.



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

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You can contact the PhD Council with questions, suggestions, or advice about your PhD journey. They are fellow PhD candidates here to support you. Together, you can decide if your representative should raise any issues at the PhD Council meeting. Visit our website to find your PhD programme representative and their contact details. You can email all PhD Council members via [phd-council-ugsls@googlegroups.com](mailto:phd-council-ugsls@googlegroups.com). In addition to the GSLS PhD Council, several other PhD Councils represent you. Check 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>
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 training on general skills and competencies for GSLS PhD candidates. Developing transferable skills is increasingly important for careers both inside and 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. More information is available in Chapter 4 of this guide and in the **GSLS PhD Course Guide**, which can be downloaded on the PhD Course Centre Website (see QR code).

The PhD Course Centre also sends out the PhD Update, a newsletter with important information, events, and courses for PhD candidates. You can subscribe via the QR code.



PhD  
Course Centre



PhD  
Update



PhD  
Team GSLS

### 3.4 PhD Team GSLS

#### COURSE COORDINATORS OF PHD COURSE CENTRE



**Bianca Zomer**  
pcc@uu.nl

Bianca organises part of the courses offered by the PhD Course Centre, ensuring everything runs smoothly and communicating with participants and trainers. She also organises events. Contact Bianca for questions about courses.



**Inge Kuurman**  
pcc@uu.nl

Inge organises part of the courses offered by the PhD Course Centre. She also handles communication tasks, including sending the biweekly PhD Update and managing the website to ensure it is up to date, well-structured, and accessible. Contact Inge for questions about courses or the website.

## COORDINATOR OF DOCTORAL EDUCATION



### **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 and can answer any questions about your PhD journey. Anke joined the GSLS after completing a PhD and postdoc, during which she co-supervised two PhD candidates. She works on quality assurance and is committed to improving your PhD journey. She maintains close contact with the PhD Council and is well-informed about the PhD community.

## MANAGING DIRECTOR OF DOCTORAL EDUCATION & PHD COURSE CENTRE



### **Saskia Ebeling, PhD**

[s.ebeling@uu.nl](mailto:s.ebeling@uu.nl)

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

After a research career, Saskia joined the GSLS to improve support for PhD candidates and supervisors. She believes a professional relationship between candidates and supervisors is vital for a successful PhD journey. Saskia is the first point of contact for PhD supervisors.

## DIRECTOR OF DOCTORAL EDUCATION



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

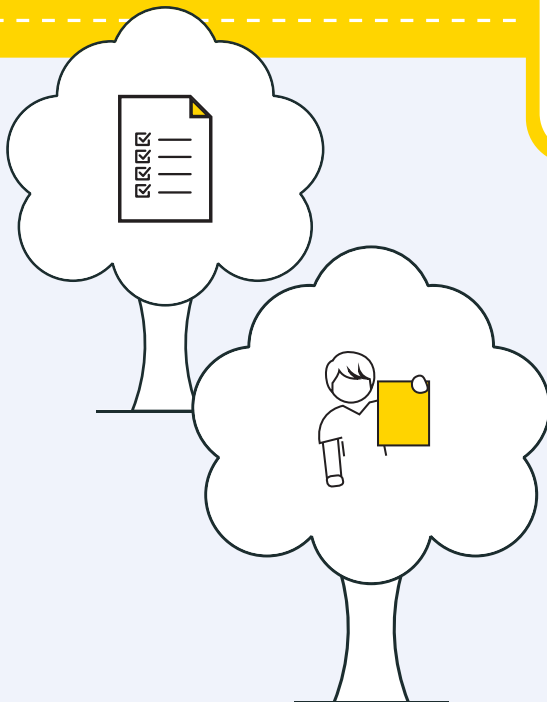
[a.c.g.egberts@umcutrecht.nl](mailto:a.c.g.egberts@umcutrecht.nl)

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

Toine is the Director of Doctoral Education at the GSLS in addition to his work as a hospital pharmacist and a Professor of Clinical Pharmacy. He finds coaching PhD candidates energising, as it balances research with the personal development of young academics.

# 4

## Being a Researcher at Utrecht University



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**The PhD candidate is  
the driver of their own  
development.**

*League of European Research  
Universities (LERU)*

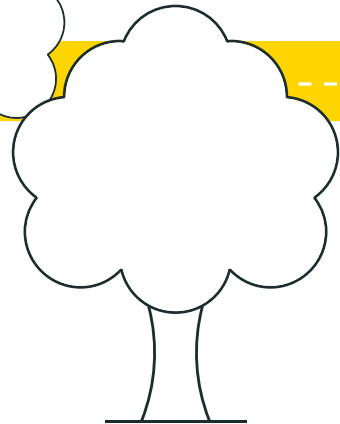
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## 4.1 Responsibilities of PhD Candidates

How can you excel during your PhD and make it a success? Firstly, 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 develop and refine the qualities needed to become an independent researcher. Cultivating your talents will prepare you for a future career. You are also responsible for meeting the commitments associated with 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', outlines our expectations of your academic responsibilities as a junior researcher. The second part, 'Effective supervisor-PhD interaction: a two-way process', describes your responsibilities within the research community and your interaction with your supervisory team, as well as your individual growth. The latter is based on the 'Golden Rules for PhD supervision' from Leiden University and encourages you to take initiative and seek support, while it helps your supervisors focus on their responsibilities. The guidelines balance the responsibilities of you and your supervisory team. This balance is founded on the understanding that you and your supervisors enter into a professional work relationship, with the joint effort and the shared goal of you obtaining your doctorate and being prepared for your future career.



## PROFILE AND RESEARCH RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PHD CANDIDATE

- ✓ You are responsible for the quality of your research, alongside your supervisory team.
- ✓ You are proactive and make the necessary efforts to ensure good progress in your doctoral research project.
- ✓ You actively contribute to the formulation of the research questions in your doctoral research project.
- ✓ You share responsibility for developing the research methodology that will be used to address your research questions.
- ✓ You are responsible for planning, conducting, and, where necessary, modifying your research.
- ✓ You are responsible for interpreting and analysing your research results, placing your research within a broader context, and critically reflecting 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 research conduct (see Chapter 4.2).
- ✓ You ensure that data generated during your research are always available upon request. In this regard, you adhere to the principles of research data management according to the current methods of your research unit and the policies of Utrecht University, UMC Utrecht, or other relevant institutions concerning research data management (check the QR code on this page).
- ✓ You respect the intellectual property rights related to the concepts and findings of Utrecht University, UMC Utrecht, or other relevant institutions, and take proper care of materials and equipment.
- ✓ Together with your supervisory team, you create a plan for your doctoral programme (i.e., the Training and Supervision Agreement, see Chapter 5.2) and maintain a Training Portfolio (see Chapter 5.3). Your plan will include research-related training and activities, as well as the development of transferable competencies you may need. These will help improve the quality and efficiency of your research and prepare you for a professional career. You ensure that the activities within the doctoral programme are completed within the proposed deadlines.
- ✓ You are responsible for monitoring your progress and organising your Annual PhD Progress Meetings.
- ✓ You share responsibility for ensuring the efficient progress of your PhD journey and endeavour to complete your doctoral thesis within a reasonable timeframe. If you have funding, the doctoral thesis must be completed before the funding period ends.



Research Data  
Management  
Support

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

This table summarises our vision for a productive working relationship between you and your supervisory team. It reflects both sides, as you are a team. It highlights the importance of managing expectations and providing feedback to ensure the success of your PhD journey. The different parts describe your responsibilities as a research community member, your interaction with your supervisory team, and your personal growth.

### PhD candidate

### Be professional

### Supervisory team

***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 mentors 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 mentors 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.

**PhD candidate**

**Be available**

**Supervisory team**

***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.

**PhD candidate**

**Be consistent and clear**

**Supervisory team**

***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.

**PhD candidate**

**Be time aware**

**Supervisory team**

***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 with the PhD candidate.

PhD candidate

“  
**Be willing to  
give feedback**

Supervisory team

***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.

**PhD candidate**

**Be future-oriented**

**Supervisory team**

***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 must 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.

Utrecht University's Code of Conduct complements these national guidelines and provides a framework for behaviour and reflection for employees and students at the university. The university also has a 'Code of Conduct for Inappropriate Behaviour' and a webpage on social safety, detailing regulations and support structures to prevent and address inappropriate behaviour.



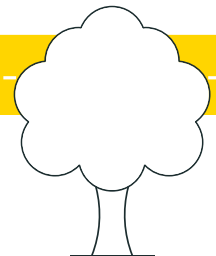
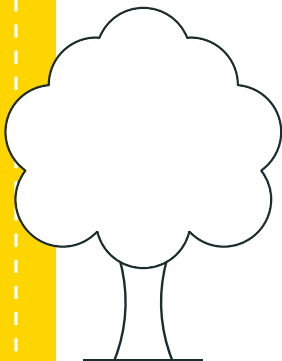
Codes of  
Conduct

## 4.3 Open Science

Utrecht University aims to lead in open science through its Open Science Programme, which stimulates researchers to put open science into practice. Open Science promotes accountability, replicability, integrity, and openness. It emphasises 'team science', reducing individual competition and fostering an open academic culture that will affect how we recognise and reward. The programme focuses on five tracks: open access, FAIR data and software, public engagement, recognition and rewards, and open education. More information is available on the Open Science Programme website.



Open Science  
Programme



## 4.4 Research Data Management

Effective data management enhances efficiency and maximises the value of your research data, both for yourself and others, during and after your project. By aiming for FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) data, you contribute to Open Science. Planning data management from the start of your project ensures you are well-prepared.



Research Data  
Management  
Support

At the start of your research project, you should create a Data Management Plan (DMP). This formal document outlines how you will manage your data during and after the project. It covers, among others:

- ✓ The type and size of data to be collected
- ✓ Storage locations, access rights, and access regulation
- ✓ Backup frequency
- ✓ Data documentation methods
- ✓ Versioning strategy and folder structure
- ✓ Privacy and ownership considerations
- ✓ Plans for archiving and sharing data

Utrecht University's Research Data Management Support, available centrally and within each faculty, can provide advice and assistance with your DMP and any other queries regarding data management, analysis, research software, and coding. Training is also available.

## 4.5 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

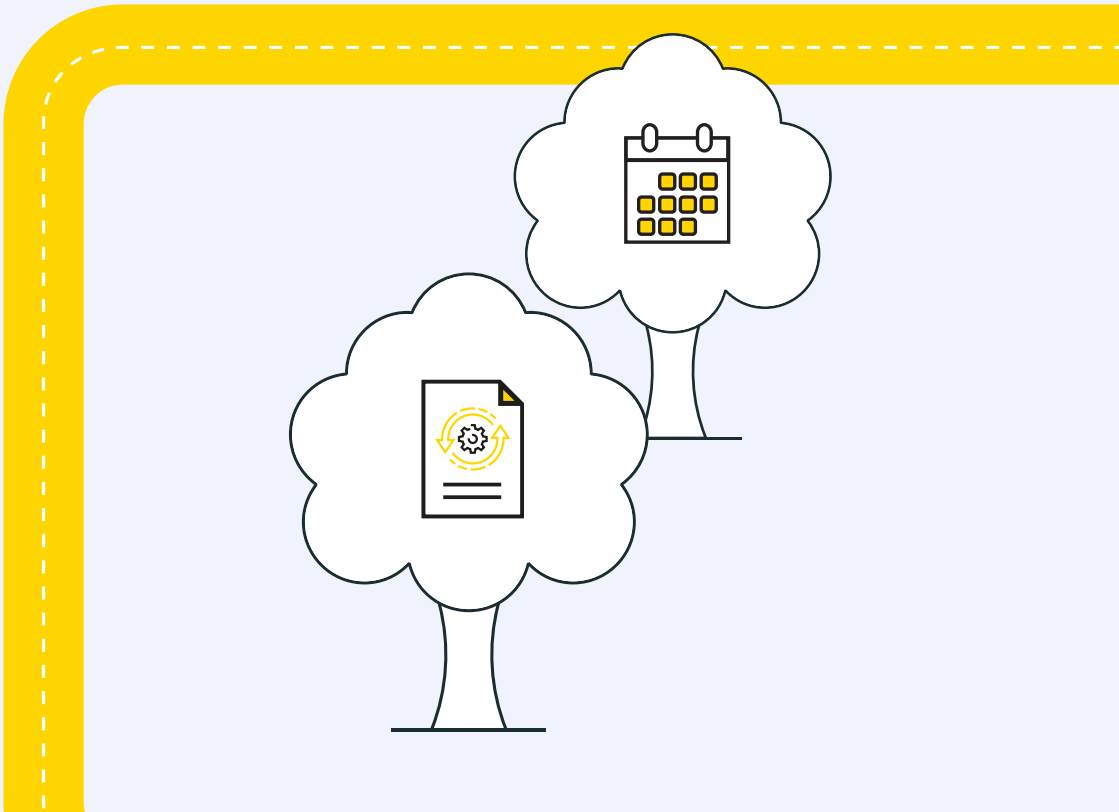
A diverse community of students and staff creates an inspiring and challenging learning environment at Utrecht University. You are part of a pluralistic society where diversity and inclusion enrich academic debate and collaboration with civil society organisations. Utrecht University aims to bridge divides and create equal opportunities for all. The university supports equality, diversity and inclusion through various initiatives, activities, and training. More information is available on the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion webpage.



Equality,  
Diversity  
& Inclusion

# 5

## PhD Training Programme



Completing a PhD involves more than conducting research; it is also a time to develop academic and transferable skills. The combination of research abilities and personal skills will prepare you for a successful career beyond Utrecht University. More details can be found in the sections on 'Objectives of the PhD Training Programme' and 'Learning Outcomes for PhD Candidates'.

## **OBJECTIVES** of the PhD training programme

The PhD training programme aims to equip you with:

- ✓ Practical and methodological skills for collecting, analysing, presenting, and discussing research data, enabling you to produce independent and original scientific work;
- ✓ Discipline-specific knowledge to read, discuss and contribute to scientific literature in your field;
- ✓ Transferable skills (e.g., teaching, management, writing, presenting, teamwork, applying for grants) for pursuing an academic career or roles in other sectors;
- ✓ An understanding of open science principles and the responsibilities of scientists towards society, particularly the obligation to conduct research with integrity.

## **LEARNING OUTCOMES** for PhD candidates

According to Utrecht University's Doctoral Degree Regulations, by the end of your PhD you should:

- ✓ Have made an original contribution to research of a quality that withstands peer review;
- ✓ Demonstrate the ability to independently apply academic methods in your discipline for developing, interpreting and implementing new knowledge;
- ✓ Possess substantial knowledge of principles and methods of international academic practice, theorisation, methodology, and study in your field;
- ✓ Be capable of designing and executing significant research projects to develop new knowledge;
- ✓ Be able to effectively pass on and communicate knowledge from your discipline;
- ✓ Exercise social responsibility in conducting and applying your research.

## 5.1 PhD Competence Model

To support your academic and transferable skills development, the GSLS offers a range of courses organised according to the PhD Competence Model, which outlines key competencies for PhD candidates. In addition to academic skills, the model focuses on personal development and career orientation. We recommend completing the self-assessment tool to help identify the skills you wish to develop and to track your progress throughout your PhD. Doing this annually is advised, especially in preparation for your PhD Progress Meetings.

The PhD programme provides training in research skills and discipline-specific knowledge. Please contact the programme for more information about what they offer. Your PhD programme coordinator can advise on available training.

In addition to the PhD programme training, the GSLS runs a PhD Course Centre that organises training on general skills and competencies. The development of transferable skills becomes increasingly important in pursuing a career inside or outside academia. The **GSLs PhD Course Guide** provides a clear overview of the available training, organised by competence. Check the PhD Course Centre website for the most up-to-date offerings.



Self-assessment tool



PhD Course Centre GSLS



PhD Programmes



## COMPETENCE AREAS OF THE PhD COMPETENCE MODEL



### RESEARCH SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

Researchers can formulate clear research questions and hypotheses, and design robust protocols. They demonstrate both in-depth knowledge of their field and challenges that lie ahead, and a broad interest in science beyond their specific area.



### RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT OF SCIENCE

Researchers make ethical and legal decisions based on knowledge of accepted professional research practices, relevant policies and guidelines. They should be aware of resources for addressing ethical or integrity concerns.



### COMMUNICATION

Researchers are skilled in interpersonal, written, verbal, listening, and non-verbal communication, allowing them to convey facts, ideas or opinions effectively to colleagues, the public, and the media.



### TEACHING

Researchers define learning outcomes for the target group and present material in an engaging and appropriate manner.



### PERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Researchers adapt their behaviour and qualities to achieve better outcomes.



### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Researchers enhance transferable skills to advance their career prospects.



### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Researchers manage and develop projects, foster effective teamwork, solve problems, and mentor others (e.g., students).

## 5.2 Training and Supervision Agreement (TSA)

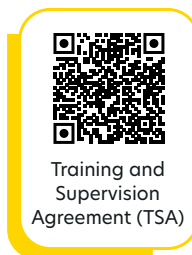
The Training and Supervision Agreement (TSA) is a standard contract between the PhD candidate and the supervisory team. It must be approved by the relevant PhD programme coordinator. It ensures your right to proper supervision and training throughout your PhD.

The TSA includes:

- ✓ The name of your PhD programme.
- ✓ The names of your supervisory team and mentor(s).
- ✓ The division of supervisory tasks and meeting frequency.
- ✓ Your individual training plan, outlining planned thematic and general training, and research-related meetings (see 'PhD Training Portfolio Requirements' for details).

The TSA form provides more detailed information. According to Utrecht University regulations, you must upload the completed TSA to MyPhD within three months of starting your PhD. Approval from all members of your supervisory team, PhD programme coordinator, and a faculty representative is required via the system. They will be notified by email once the form is uploaded. Ensure the form is completed in consultation with your supervisory team and PhD programme coordinator before submission.

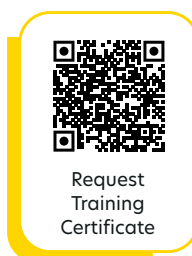
Your Individual Training Plan is a dynamic document. It may be adjusted as your PhD progresses, for example, after your Annual PhD Progress Meetings. You can update the TSA as needed and store it in a convenient place for you, without resubmitting it to MyPhD.



## 5.3 PhD Training Portfolio and GSLS Training Certificate

In addition to your doctoral diploma and thesis, you may apply for the GSLS Training Certificate, which recognises your active participation in doctoral education and personal competency development. If you plan to continue your career outside the Netherlands, the Training Certificate is required as proof of your doctoral training programme.

As a PhD candidate, you are responsible for collecting documentation of training activities (attendance certificates) undertaken during your PhD. These activities will form your PhD Training Portfolio. The requirements are outlined in the 'PhD Training Portfolio Requirements' section. Discipline-specific training is provided by your PhD programme, although you may attend courses from other programmes if space allows (priority is given to candidates within that programme). Please contact the relevant PhD programme



for details. External training is also permitted but must be funded through your supervisor or research group, as the GSLS does not cover costs.

Your portfolio will be reviewed by your PhD programme coordinator on behalf of the GSLS Board of Studies to determine eligibility for the GSLS Training Certificate. Your portfolio must meet the criteria listed in the 'PhD Training Portfolio Requirements'. The certificate is typically awarded at your PhD defence alongside your doctoral diploma. Please submit your certificate application at least 2 months before your defence date using the form available on our website.

### **REQUIREMENTS PhD Training Portfolio**

- ✓ Accumulate at least 5 European Credits (ECs) per full-time equivalent year of research appointment, totalling at least 15 ECs for a 3-year appointment or 20 ECs for a 4-year appointment. If your PhD is part-time or of a different duration, you can calculate the credits proportionally. However, a minimum of 15 ECs is required for the GSLS Training Certificate.
- ✓ A minimum of 40% of the total credits must be from discipline-specific educational activities within your PhD programme or other relevant programmes or institutions.
- ✓ A minimum of 20% of the total credits must be from general educational activities.
- ✓ A maximum of 20% of the total credits may come from symposia/conferences where you are an oral or poster presenter.

## **5.4 Compulsory Trainings**

For PhD candidates that have started after 1 September 2020, training in education (if applicable) and research integrity is compulsory. This holds for all PhD candidates at Utrecht University and is based on PhD candidates' advice to get better educated on these subjects. Include this training in your individual training plan of the TSA.

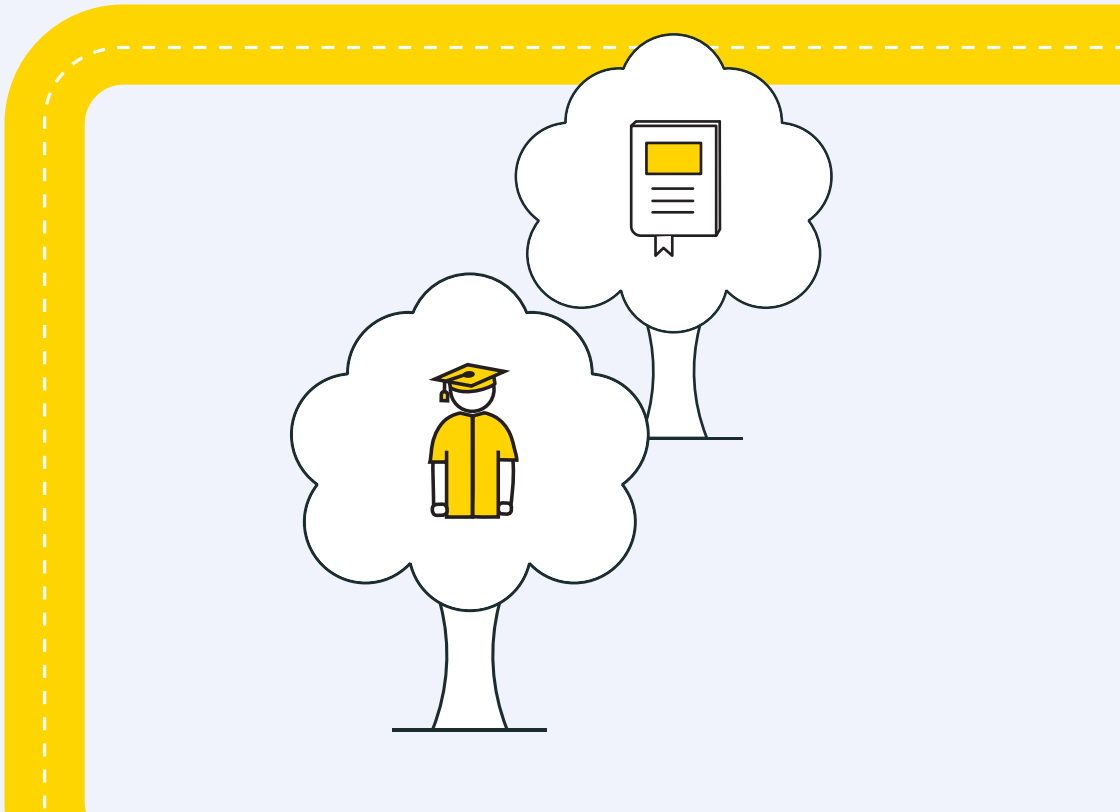
The GSLS organises the "Responsible Conduct of Research" training, which includes a half-day training session every year of your PhD journey (4 in total). This training covers various aspects of research integrity, using case studies and discussing your experiences with peers.

The GSLS also offers training for various types of education, including supervision of students. Refer to the PhD Course Centre's website for details.



# 6

## Doctoral Thesis



## 6.1 Thesis Requirements

At the conclusion of your PhD journey, you will write a doctoral thesis and defend it publicly. The thesis must be submitted to the Assessment Committee before the end of your contract (for employed PhD candidates, see Chapter 1.2). The Doctoral Degree Regulations of Utrecht University (*promotiereglement*) provide the requirements, procedures, responsibilities and rules; they are available on the university's website in English and Dutch (see Chapter 1.1 for the QR code). Both the supervisory team and the PhD candidate share responsibility for ensuring the research in the doctoral thesis meets prevailing quality standards.

The GSLS specifies additional guidelines for doctoral thesis content of GSLS PhD candidates. A PhD journey aims to train you as an independent scientist, preparing you for a career within or outside academia. Your thesis should reflect your scientific development.



### THESIS CONTENT

Your doctoral thesis must include, at a minimum, a general introduction, publishable research chapters, and a general discussion. The chapters in a thesis form a cohesive unit, with a thread running through them that is reflected upon in the general discussion.

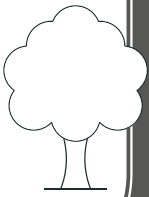
### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

In the general introduction, you present your perspective on the current state-of-the-art in your discipline. You identify gaps in scientific knowledge and provide an overview of your thesis. The general introduction contains essential information to help readers understand the context of your research chapters. A review article may be used as part of the general introduction. In such cases, a brief general introduction and an overview of the thesis must also be included. There is no minimum length for the introduction; quality is the sole criterion.

### RESEARCH CHAPTERS

Each research chapter must demonstrate that you have followed the scientific research cycle by:

- ✓ Identifying a gap in scientific knowledge,
- ✓ Outlining an approach,
- ✓ Describing the collection and analysis of appropriate data, or the use of relevant existing databases,
- ✓ Reflecting on the results within the context of the specific field.



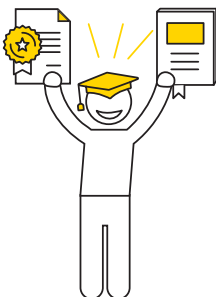
The length and format of each chapter, as well as the scientific depth and the quality of data collection and analysis, should meet the standards customary to your discipline. For further details, please refer to the section 'When can a manuscript be part of my doctoral thesis?'. There is no prescribed number of research chapters required in a thesis; quality, coherence, and your individual contributions take precedence over quantity. As a guideline, three or more publishable chapters are recommended, though fewer may be justified by the depth or extensiveness of the work. A publishable research chapter is defined as a (future) publication or a substantial component of a larger study.

### GENERAL DISCUSSION

While the research chapters and, in some cases, the general introduction may be collaborative efforts, the general discussion should be your own work. In this final chapter, you take a broader perspective, reflecting on your research chapters and notable findings. You identify future research opportunities and discuss the impact of your work on the research field and society. There is no minimum length for the discussion; again, quality is the sole criterion.

### PERSONAL & SCIENTIFIC DEVELOPMENT

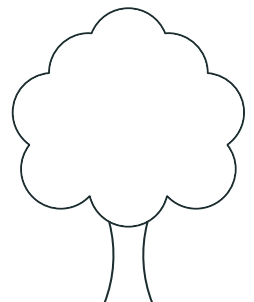
Your development as a researcher is typically broader than the scientific content of your research chapters. You may choose to reflect on your broader personal and scientific development in an attachment to your thesis. This is optional and may help the Assessment Committee form a complete picture of you as an academic in training. However, this reflection lies outside the official content of your thesis and will not be evaluated by the Assessment Committee. You may refer to the GSLS PhD Competence Model (see Chapter 5.1) as a guide when drafting this attachment. Examples of PhD portfolios can be found on our website.



Examples  
PhD  
portfolio



Examples author  
contribution  
statement

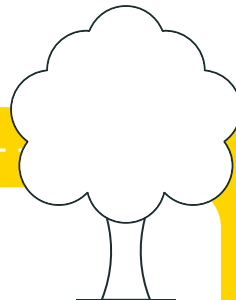


## WHEN CAN A MANUSCRIPT BE PART OF MY DOCTORAL THESIS?

- ✓ **Scientific Contribution:** The extent of your scientific contribution determines whether a manuscript can be included in your thesis, not your position in the list of authors. Therefore, each chapter of your thesis must clearly specify your contributions to the work. If relevant, this applies to the general introduction and discussion as well. Please refer to the QR code for examples of author contribution statements on our website.
- ✓ **Scientific Research Cycle:** The collection of data by you alone is not sufficient for inclusion of a chapter. You must have followed the scientific research cycle (see the section 'Research Chapters').
- ✓ **Team Contributions:** If, as part of a team, you played a crucial role in a larger study but are not the first, second, or last author, the work may still be included in your thesis, provided you explain your role in the study. If your contribution is not enough for a standalone chapter, you may supplement the material with your own related work.
- ✓ **Publication Status:** A (publishable) research chapter does not need to have been submitted to or accepted by a peer-reviewed journal to be included in the thesis. However, you and your supervisors should aim 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 a (co-)author of the respective thesis chapters in recognition of your scientific contribution.

## 6.2 Assessment Committee

The Assessment Committee evaluates the doctoral thesis using an assessment form based on the guidelines and the Doctoral Degree Regulations of Utrecht University. Upon accepting their role as committee member, they must submit their decision in MyPhD within one month. The thesis is assessed on four aspects: originality, scientific level, written presentation, and an overall assessment. Additionally, the committee considers whether the thesis merits a *cum laude* (with distinction) designation, indicating the thesis quality is among the top 3-5% in its relevant field globally.



## 6.3 From Completion to Graduation: What You Need to Arrange

Completing your PhD is a moment to celebrate! At Utrecht University, the PhD defence ceremonies are held in the University Hall in central Utrecht. During the ceremony, you will defend your thesis before a Doctoral Examination Committee and pledge to uphold academic and research integrity. At the end, you will receive a diploma in Latin, an English translation, and a legally valid confirmation of your Doctoral Degree in English. Only one original degree certificate is issued. If you applied for the GSLS Training Certificate (see Chapter 5.3), you will receive that as well.



Doctoral Degree  
Regulations &  
Instructions for  
PhD Candidates

For detailed requirements for the defence ceremony, including what needs to be arranged when, refer to the document 'Instructions for PhD Candidates'. Below is a summary of the most important steps.

At least four months before the intended date of your doctoral thesis defence, your supervisory team must approve your thesis. To do this, you will need to upload your thesis to MyPhD. Your primary supervisor will then receive an email from MyPhD requesting them to assemble an Assessment Committee. Once the Assessment Committee has been approved in MyPhD, each member will receive a request via MyPhD to carry out the assessment within four weeks, along with a link to the uploaded manuscript and an explanation of the GSLS doctoral thesis guidelines.

Once all members of the Assessment Committee have been added to MyPhD, you will automatically receive a message instructing you to contact the Beadle's Office to set a provisional date for your PhD defence. Once your thesis has been approved by all members of the Assessment Committee, you can contact the Beadle's Office to confirm this provisional date as final.

You will receive information from the Beadle's Office about all arrangements related to your PhD defence, including the registration of your title page and its reverse in MyPhD, the printing of your thesis, the submission of documents to the Communications and Marketing Office, publication by the University Library, and all necessary details regarding the day itself.



Beadle's  
Office

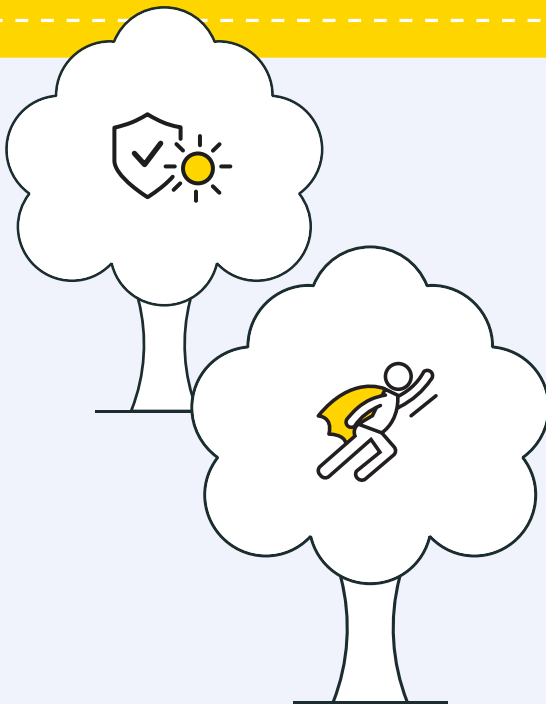
It is important to note that PhD candidates at Utrecht University are required to submit a digital version of their thesis to the University Library. The thesis will be included in the Utrecht University Repository, the university's publicly accessible digital scientific archive. You also have the option to place an embargo on certain chapters of your thesis.



Actions to  
complete  
your PhD

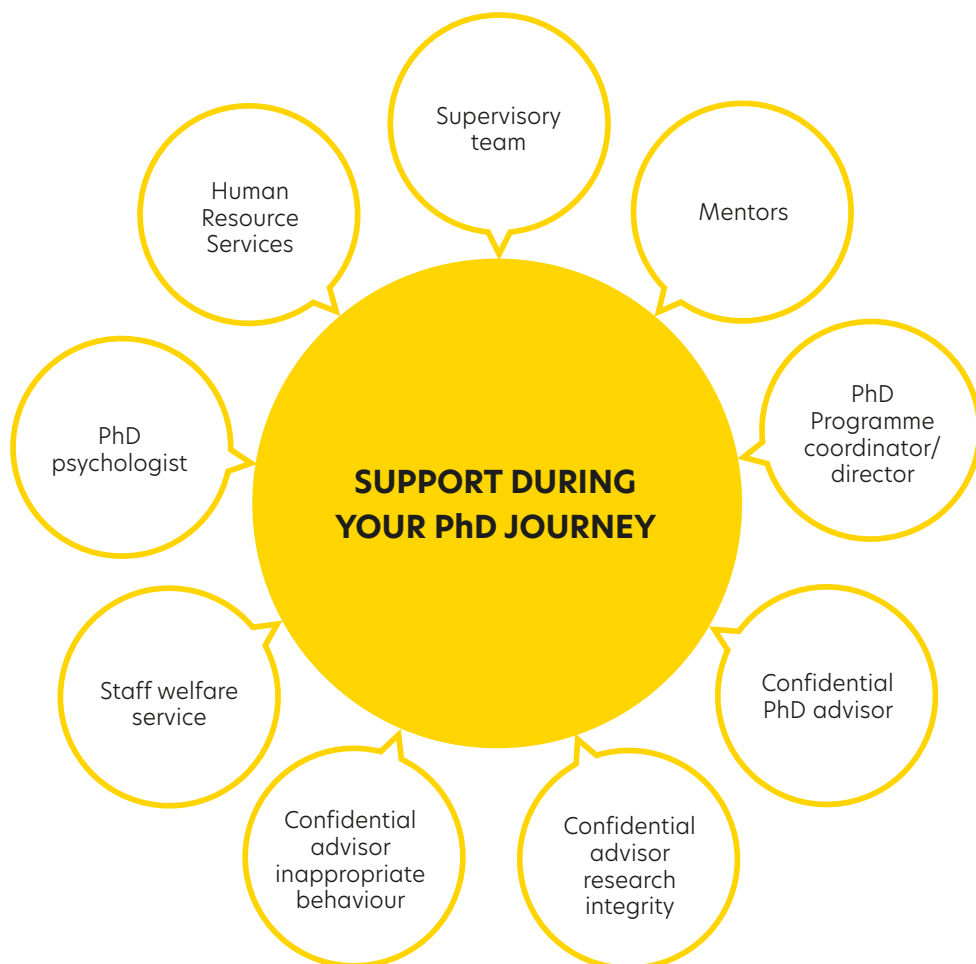
# 7

## Support During your PhD



Every PhD journey is unique, and while it can be demanding, you are not alone. Your mental health is our priority, and it's normal to experience a mix of success and challenges. Being part of a research group and a PhD programme community can help by allowing you to share your experiences and daily struggles with fellow PhD candidates.

If issues persist, it's important to address them promptly rather than letting them escalate. The thought of calling in sick may cross your mind. Remember, you do not have to face these feelings alone. We encourage you to talk to your supervisory team, reintegration officer, staff welfare service, occupational health physician, confidential PhD advisor, or a trusted colleague. Sharing your concerns helps us support you better. Speaking up will take you a step forward feeling better and contributes to a caring and supportive workplace. Please feel free to reach out whenever needed. Early intervention can prevent problems from escalating, so if you need help or just want to talk, we encourage you to do so.



Utrecht University offers multiple layers of support and supervision tailored to your needs. The figure on the previous page outlines the available resources, and further details can be found below or on our website, including institution-specific support structures as this is differently arranged.

If you are uncertain about the support you need, please consult your supervisory team or the Confidential PhD Advisor (see Chapter 7.4). We are here to help. For more on attitudes and behaviours expected from both PhD candidates and supervisors, see Chapter 4.1.



Support during  
your PhD

## 7.1 Supervisory Team

Your primary point of contact is your supervisory team. Regular interaction is recommended, typically weekly with your co-supervisor (*copromotor*) and monthly with your supervisor (*promotor*). For more details on forming your supervisory team and their responsibilities, see Chapter 2 of this guide. Additionally, refer to the PhD Supervisor Guide at the back of this booklet for insights into our vision on effective supervision at GSLS.

Your supervisors are there to support you throughout your PhD, including discussions about your project, workload, development, supervision, and personal issues affecting your performance. These matters may sometimes overlap. If you find it difficult to address certain issues, especially if they concern the supervision itself, consider taking a training on addressing difficult topics and giving/receiving feedback (see Chapter 7.9). It can also be helpful to consult your mentor before discussing sensitive matters with your supervisor. Ensure that one or two mentors are assigned to you at the start of your PhD journey.

## 7.2 Mentors

Mentors support you during your PhD journey by monitoring your progress and interactions with your supervisory team. You should meet with your mentor(s) at least once a year, before or during your Annual PhD Progress Meeting. Mentors can also provide confidential support or be a sparring partner. If necessary, they can act as a mediator if you have disagreements with your supervisors. We encourage you to contact them if you encounter unresolved issues. Mentors offer a confidential, informal space to discuss concerns. Take advantage of their expertise in academia and meet casually over coffee or tea.

If a mentor wasn't assigned at the start of your PhD, you can add one later. Your supervisors, PhD programme coordinator, or another staff member can assist in finding a suitable mentor. For more details on mentors, see Chapter 2.2.



## 7.3 PhD Programme Coordinator and Director

The coordinator and director of your PhD programme are available to assist you throughout your PhD journey. They can help you find resources, answer questions, and provide support with your training plan (such as course recommendations) or issues with your supervisory team. If you're uncomfortable consulting your mentors, you can also seek advice from your programme coordinator or director, who have a good understanding of your research environment. For confidential or private matters, you may consult the confidential PhD advisor.

More information about the roles of the PhD programme coordinator and director, including contact details, can be found in Chapter 3.1.

## 7.4 Confidential PhD Advisor (*PhD Vertrouwenspersoon*)

You may encounter situations that are difficult to discuss with those involved in your PhD project. In such cases, you can consult your institution's confidential advisor (*vertrouwenspersoon*). Each faculty - Science, Veterinary Medicine, and Medicine/UMC Utrecht - has confidential advisors specifically for PhD candidates.

The confidential PhD advisor can assist with issues such as inappropriate behaviour, complex work relationships (such as dependency of PhD candidates on their supervisory team), lack of timely feedback, false expectations, workplace atmosphere, (sexual) harassment, discrimination, bullying, aggression and violence. At Utrecht University, you can also address broader concerns that affect more people than yourself, like abuse of power, fraud or data manipulation.

“

***If you are unsure whom to turn to, the confidential PhD advisor is a good starting point. They will guide you based on the nature of your concern and act as a central support figure.***

”

At UMC Utrecht, the confidential PhD advisor is part of the Office Ombuds and Confidential Affairs (Bureau Ombuds- en Vertrouwenszaken). They can be approached for inappropriate behaviour issues, while matters regarding working conditions and employment law can be directed to the ombuds. The office can refer you to the appropriate person based on your concern.

Confidential advisors do not disclose information without your consent. They can provide information, advice, and referrals. At your request, they can arrange mediation for personal or professional disputes between you and your supervisor(s) or other colleagues. Consulting a confidential advisor is not recorded in your personnel file.

If your institution other than the three Life Sciences faculties does not have a dedicated confidential PhD advisor, you may consult the general confidential advisor or the advisor from the faculty of your first promotor.

## **7.5 Confidential Advisor Inappropriate Behaviour**

Utrecht University has a confidential advisor especially for inappropriate behaviour. If you encounter inappropriate behaviour, including - but not limited to - (sexual) harassment, discrimination, aggression, violence, and bullying, you can consult this advisor.

For inappropriate behaviour at UMC Utrecht, consult the confidential PhD advisor.

## **7.6 Confidential Advisor Research Integrity**

Questions or complaints about research integrity can be discussed confidentially with Utrecht University's confidential advisor for research integrity. This includes suspicions or observations of injustices (violation of integrity) or scientific misconduct.

At UMC Utrecht, the ombuds serves as the confidential advisor for research integrity.

## **7.7 Staff Welfare Service (*Bedrijfsmaatschappelijk Werk*)**

If you cannot resolve problems on your own and they affect your work or health, contact the staff welfare service. The staff welfare officer will help identify and clarify your issues and discuss ways to manage and solve them, focusing on increasing your resilience and problem-solving skills. You may also be referred to a confidential advisor for further support.

## 7.8 PhD Psychologist

Utrecht University has a psychologist specialising in issues relevant to PhD candidates, offering short-term treatment for anxiety, mood complaints, concentration and motivation problems, fear of failure, and more.

***In cases of acute mental stress, consult the PhD psychologist or your general practitioner. They provide initial healthcare and can refer you to specialised help if needed.***

## 7.9 Training Offered by your Institution

Additionally, human resources departments at various institutions offer training for personal development, aiming to ensure you enjoy your work and continue to grow. Utrecht University offers training through the Development Guide, and UMC Utrecht through ULearn. Explore your institution's training programmes to further your professional development.

***Utrecht University provides additional information at their Social Safety website.***  
***<https://www.uu.nl/en/organisation/about-us/social-safety>***

***UMC Utrecht focuses on social safety through the programme 'This is us' (Dit zijn wij)***  
***<https://ditzijnwij.umcutrecht.nl/en/>***



PhD  
Psychologist



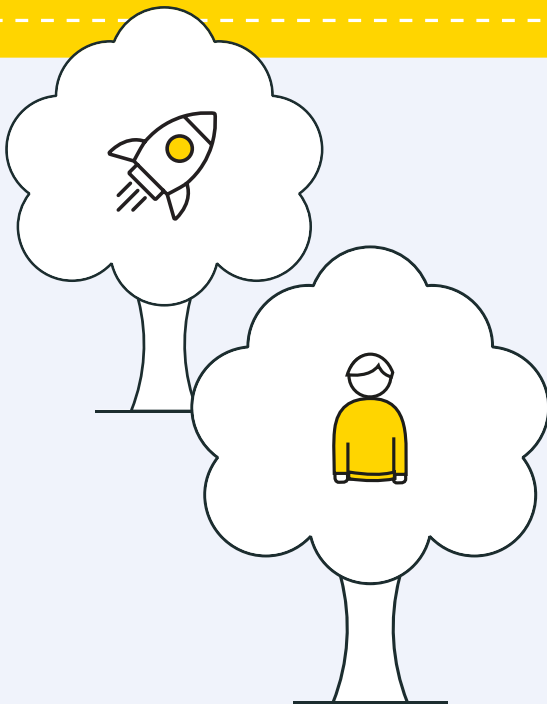
ULearn  
(UMCU intranet)



Development  
Guide  
(UU intranet)

# 8

## After your PhD



Many of you begin your PhD journey aiming to become academic researchers. As shown in the figure, some will remain in academia, but most will pursue careers outside it. Hence, we support your career preparation, be it as an academic researcher, industry leader, science educator, journal editor, or other career paths.

The Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (*Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen*, KNAW) studied careers of PhD graduates outside academia and found that employers value them highly. PhDs are often more advanced in development than those 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, we offer various training programmes to develop academic and transferable skills, detailed in Chapter 5. You can also participate in workshops, events, and coaching to explore career options after your PhD.

## 8.1 Career Services

Career Services at Utrecht University offers free support to all PhD candidates, including recent graduates, in preparing for their post-PhD careers. Services include skills assessments to identify areas of improvement, career coaching, and workshops to develop transferable skills. More information is available on their website.



Career Services

## 8.2 PhACE (PhD Activating Career Event)

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



PhACE

Professionals with PhDs working in various fields share their experiences and discuss the skills needed to transition outside academia in two discussion sessions. Additionally, two workshop sessions help you explore and enhance your personal strengths and skills.

PhACE is held three times a year. More information is available on their website.

## 8.3 Work2Work

If you are employed at Utrecht University, you will be invited for an introductory meeting with a coach of Work2Work four months prior to the termination of your employment. Work2Work is the centre for job-to-job coaching and provides support tailored to you in your search for a new job. They provide you with tools and insights in order to create opportunities and efficiently approach the job market. You can find more information on Utrecht University intranet.

