

CENTRAL REGULATIONS CONCERNING THE CONFERRING OF THE ACADEMIC PhD DEGREE

Dutch version approved by the Board of Governors on January 27th 2009

Translation note: Only the Dutch version is considered legally binding.

Supplementary Faculty PhD Regulations *Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences*

Preamble

These regulations are complemented by the *Doctoral Schools Regulations of the VUB* and the *Decision concerning the establishment of the PhD programme at the VUB* (Besluit inzake het inrichten van de Doctoraatsopleiding van de VUB).

The following terms as used in these regulations are defined as follows:

- Dean (decaan): the dean of the faculty in which the PhD student registers;
- Doctoral Training Programme (doctoraatsopleiding): the educational framework organised within every faculty by the Doctoral Schools, as stated in the *Decision concerning the establishment of the PhD course* at the VUB;
- PhD students within the joint PhD framework (doctorandi in het kader van een gezamenlijk doctoraat): incoming and outgoing PhD students;
- Joint PhD (gezamenlijk doctoraat): a PhD thesis written and defended under the joint responsibility of the VUB and one or more partner institution(s). This method leads to a “double” PhD degree or “joint” PhD degree, in which the requirements of art. 94 §4 of the decree of April 4th 2003 concerning the restructuring of higher education in Flanders, are met;
- Incoming PhD student (inkomende doctorandus): a PhD student preparing a joint PhD for which the VUB is the host institution;
- Interdisciplinary PhD (interdisciplinair doctoraat): a PhD thesis that exceeds various fields of expertise, which means the PhD student can be linked to several faculties;
- Outgoing PhD student (uitgaande doctorandus): a PhD student preparing a joint PhD for which the VUB is the home institution;
- VUB: Vrije Universiteit Brussel

References to persons and functions in these regulations can refer to either men or women.

I. Purpose and Scope

Article 1

These regulations establish the general requirements and the procedure governing the acquisition of an academic PhD degree at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB). The Faculty Council may supplement the general stipulations contained in this document by supplementary faculty regulations which, following advice by the Educational Board (Onderwijsraad), are subject to approval by the Board of Governors (Raad van Bestuur).

Article 2

The VUB awards academic PhD degrees in disciplines mentioned in Appendix I of these regulations.

The Faculty Council may modify and supplement Appendix I of these regulations following advice by the Educational Board (Onderwijsraad). These modifications and supplements are subject to approval by the Board of Governors (Raad van Bestuur). Appendix I can be subject to change at all times.

An academic PhD degree can only be awarded by the VUB in the fields of expertise, or parts of the fields of expertise in which the University has the authority to offer training programmes leading to a master's degree, by virtue of art. 31 of the decree of April 4th 2003 concerning the restructuring of higher education in Flanders (decreet van 4 april 2003 betreffende de herstructurering van het hoger onderwijs in Vlaanderen). Where the VUB can offer only bachelor programmes in certain fields of expertise or parts of fields of expertise, the PhD degree in or about these fields of expertise can be awarded only on condition that the public defence of the PhD thesis takes place before a inter-University jury composed in consultation with a university that has the authority to offer master programmes in these specific fields of expertise as provided by the decree of April 4th 2003 concerning the restructuring of higher education in Flanders (decreet van 4 april 2003 betreffende de herstructurering van het hoger onderwijs in Vlaanderen).

II. Conditions of Admission

Article 3

Once the PhD student has received official permission to prepare the academic PhD examination in accordance with article 17 of these regulations, the candidate must register as a PhD student at the VUB without delay. In the case of a joint PhD the same rule applies; the PhD candidate must register as a PhD student at the VUB.

Registration as a PhD student is possible at any time during the academic year. The tuition fee that is due is mentioned on the WebPages of the VUB Registrar's Office (Dienst Inschrijvingen): <http://www.vub.ac.be/downloads/studiegelden.pdf>

Registration needs to be repeated every academic year in which the PhD is being prepared, including the academic year in which the PhD examination takes place.

Upon first registration the PhD student will automatically be assigned to one of the Doctoral Schools as stipulated in art. 9 of the *Doctoral School Regulations of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel* (Doctoral Schools reglement Vrije Universiteit Brussel). This gives the PhD student the right to follow the Doctoral Training Programme to the tune of 60 ECTS study points, in accordance with art. 3 of the "*Decision concerning the establishment of the PhD course*" (Besluit inzake het inrichten van de Doctoraatsopleiding Vrije Universiteit Brussel). The supplementary faculty regulations stipulate when and in which cases participation in the Doctoral Training Programme (or parts of it) is compulsory and possibly within which period of time this programme (or parts of it) needs to be successfully completed.

Article 4

To be admitted to the preparation of the PhD thesis, candidates must:

1. Hold one of the following qualifications:
 - 1.1 A master's degree or, as stipulated in of the decree of April 4th 2003 concerning the restructuring of higher education in Flanders, a degree of equal value, including a Polytechnic Civil Engineering degree or a master's degree awarded by the Royal Military School in Brussels (Koninklijke Militaire School).

- 1.2 A degree obtained outside the Flemish Community (Vlaamse Gemeenschap), which is considered equivalent to a master's degree in accordance with the stipulations of the decree of April 4th 2003 concerning the restructuring of higher education in Flanders.
 - 1.3 A master's degree obtained from the French Community (Franse Gemeenschap) or a degree considered equivalent in accordance with the decree of the French Community and which is equivalent to a master's degree obtained within the Flemish Community.
 - 1.4 A foreign degree obtained upon successful completion of a course of study of minimum 240 ECTS study points and which is equivalent to a master's degree in accordance with a decree or the application of the European Directive 89/48 of the Council of December 21st 1988 concerning a general scheme of recognition of higher-education degrees that complete vocational training courses of at least three years which is considered equivalent under a bilateral agreement.
2. Have a supervisor (promoter) and have finalised their choice of subject.
 3. Have obtained permission to prepare the PhD thesis in accordance with art. 17 of these regulations.

The supplementary faculty regulations determine which degree gives access to which academic PhD degree as determined in Appendix I.

Will be admitted to the exam for the academic degree of Doctor in

- *Psychological sciences*
- *Educational sciences*
- *Educational sciences (Adult Education Science)*

each person who holds the degree of

- *Master in Psychology*
- *Master in Educational sciences*
- *Master in Social and Cultural Adult Education Sciences*

The faculty council can grant derogations to these requirements.

These same conditions apply for admission to the PhD examination, a supplementary condition being that the degree that grants admission to the PhD examination must have been obtained at least two years prior to admission. Moreover, before PhD students are allowed to participate in the PhD examination, they will need to show they are able to conduct independent academic research.

Article 5

The Faculty Council may, if they consider it necessary, insist on an additional review of the candidate's file in order to assess the candidate's suitability to carry out academic research in the discipline concerned and to express the research results in a PhD thesis, even if the candidate has obtained the necessary master's degree or a degree equivalent to the master's degree.

The Faculty Council may choose to grant permission to the candidate to prepare a PhD thesis if they find the candidate suitable, even though the candidate does not hold the necessary master's degree or a degree equivalent to the master's degree. This permission may however be made dependent on an investigation concerning the suitability of the PhD candidate to perform academic research in the concerned discipline and to express the research results in a PhD thesis. Admission can also be made dependent on the successful participation in an examination set up by the faculty. The supplementary faculty PhD regulations further describe the organisation of this examination.

In the case of absence of the diplomas indicated in article 4 and after an assessment of the candidate's file, the faculty council can motivate to organize a preparatory programme.

The faculty council determines upon proposal of the PhD Progress Monitoring Commission the criteria and the composition of the examination jury.

Article 6

Holders of a diploma awarded by a foreign university or foreign academic institution may be exempted from the entry requirements as specified under article 4, 1.2 & 1.4 and can therefore be granted admission to the preparation of a PhD thesis and/or examination.

When the Faculty Council considers that the foreign qualification cannot be deemed equivalent to a master's degree, admission can be made dependent on the investigation concerning the suitability of the PhD candidate to perform scientific research in the concerned discipline and to express the research results in a PhD thesis. Admission can also be made dependent on the successful participation in an examination set up by the faculty. The supplementary faculty PhD regulations contain the further organisation of this examination.

The faculty council determines based upon the individual file of the candidate and upon proposal of the PhD Progress Monitoring Commission the criteria and the composition of the examination jury.

Article 7

Every faculty sets up one PhD Progress Monitoring Commission (Commissie voor de Doctoraatsopleiding or CDO), including a minimum of five professors (members of the Senior Academic Staff - “*Zelfstandig Academisch Personeel*” or ZAP), supplemented by at least one teaching assistant (“*Assisterend Academisch Personeel*” or AAP) acting as an observer. The supplementary faculty PhD regulations precisely stipulate the composition and working of the Commission.

If the PhD is of an interdisciplinary nature and exceeds the competence of the faculty, monitoring will be guaranteed by an Interdisciplinary PhD Progress Monitoring Commission (Interdisciplinaire Commissie voor de Doctoraatsopvolging or ICDO), including the three Doctoral School Directors, the Vice-Rector for Education and the Vice-Rector for Research, supplemented by a minimum of one teaching assistant (AAP) as an observer. The authority to judge whether or not PhD research work is interdisciplinary lies with the Interdisciplinary PhD Progress Monitoring Commission.

It is the task of each PhD Progress Monitoring Commission to monitor the progress of all PhD research conducted in the faculty. It is the task of the Interdisciplinary PhD Progress Monitoring Commission to monitor the progress of all interdisciplinary PhDs that exceed the competence of the faculty. PhD students who work within the framework of a joint PhD also need to be monitored by the relevant Commissions. In their monitoring activities the Commissions will use the principles laid down in the “Profile of a good supervisor (promotor)”, which is annexed to these regulations in Appendix II. The Commissions evaluate the annual progress made by all PhD students in their faculties, as stipulated in articles 24 and 25 of these regulations. The same evaluation procedure is used by the Interdisciplinary PhD Progress Monitoring Commission to evaluate the progress made by PhD students who are working on an interdisciplinary PhD that exceeds the competence of the faculty.

During the first session of the academic year, the faculty council appoints the PhD Progress Monitoring Commission for a period of two years. The commission comprises the Dean, four ZAP members and three AAP-members. The faculty council chooses a chairman amongst the ZAP members. The council aims at a representation of all the research fields.

Article 8

The PhD examination comprises the submission and public defence of an original thesis which meets the requirements specified in article 9.

Article 9

The PhD examination demonstrates the PhD student's capacity to independently contribute to the development and growth of academic knowledge, as well as his/her ability to report about their contribution both orally and in writing. The PhD thesis has to reflect the ability to create new academic knowledge in a certain field of expertise or across fields of expertise based on independent academic research, including the arts, and has to be able to lead to academic publications. The thesis needs to be shaped in the form allowed by the supplementary faculty PhD regulations (for example a completely unpublished text, or a body of publications).

A PhD thesis can have following formats:

- *A separate and new work (traditional format)*
- *A collection of manuscripts with an additional general introduction and discussion. These manuscripts contain scientific articles who have been submitted for publication in scientific journals with a referee system. The PhD student is in principle the first author. (Although this is not a requirement, it is evident that a manuscript which was already accepted in a high-impact journal, will have an added value for the PhD.)*
- *A variation between the above mentioned formats.*

III. Ombudsperson for PhD students

Article 10

Every year the VUB appoints an Ombudsperson for PhD students in order to ensure high-quality support. Details concerning the functions of the Ombudsperson can be found in article 11 of these regulations.

Article 11

The Board of Governors appoints, at the proposal of the Rector and before the beginning of each academic year, an Ombudsperson for PhD students. The Ombudsperson for PhD students is a full-time Senior Academic Staff member (Zelfstandig Academisch Personeel or ZAP) with the title of Full Professor (Hoogleraar). At the same time and as part of the same procedure, a substitute Ombudsperson is appointed from a different faculty. The mandate of the Ombudsperson for PhD students and of the substitute Ombudsperson can in principle not be combined with another function in a central or faculty body.

The name of the Ombudsperson for PhD students and his/her substitute as well as information on how they can be reached will also be made available to PhD students in print and on a yearly basis.

Article 12

PhD students' remarks and complaints relating to difficulties involving the supervisor(s) or (Interdisciplinary) PhD Monitoring Commission during the preparation and the execution of their PhD research can be addressed to the Ombudsperson for PhD students.

At the request of the PhD student, the Ombudsperson for PhD students may operate as a mediator between the PhD student and the supervisor(s), chair person of the (Interdisciplinary) PhD Progress Monitoring Commission, the Dean and members of the academic staff. The goal of the Ombudsperson is to arrive at a friendly settlement of complaints.

Article 13

All remarks and complaints are recorded by the Ombudsperson for PhD students in a confidential file.

The Ombudsperson for PhD students decides, in consultation with the PhD student, how they will proceed after the first meeting initiated by the student. After the first meeting, the necessity of a further procedure will be considered. When a complaint is confirmed in writing, there will always be a written follow-up.

In the case of a written complaint concerning article 12, §1, the ombudsperson for PhD students will, within three weeks, propose a friendly settlement to the Dean, notwithstanding the possible application of article 26 of these regulations. The PhD student and the Ombudsperson are informed immediately, and in writing, of the solution proposed by the Dean.

Article 14

The Ombudsperson for PhD students has the following rights that enable him/her to carry out his/her function:

- The right to participate in the meetings of the (Interdisciplinary) PhD Progress Monitoring Commission;

- The right to consult all documents concerning the stipulations of article 12, §1;

The ombudsperson for PhD students is bound to secrecy and discretion.

Article 15

Every year the Ombudsperson for PhD students is required to report to the Rector on the previous year's occurrences. This report consists of a statistical overview of all contacts and of all cases in which actual mediation took place; care should be taken not to breach confidentiality.

The report of the Ombudsperson for PhD students will be discussed by the Research Council (Onderzoeksraad) in their upcoming meeting.

The Rector reports to the Board of Governors on the activities of the Ombudsperson for PhD students and the subsequent discussion in the Research Council (Onderzoeksraad) before the beginning of the second semester.

Article 16

If the Ombudsperson for PhD students is a member of the same faculty as the PhD student who has made a remark or filed a complaint or if there is too close a tie between the Ombudsperson and the PhD student, it is the substitute Ombudsperson for PhD students who will take action.

IV. Procedure for the Preparation of a Doctoral (PhD) Thesis

Article 17

Those who wish to obtain a PhD degree at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (including incoming and outgoing PhD students), are required to get permission to prepare the PhD Thesis. The PhD candidate with a degree awarded by a recognised Belgian institution is required to send a written request for admission to the Dean of the relevant faculty. PhD candidates with a degree awarded by a recognised foreign institution are required to send the same written admission request to the Vice-Rector for Student Policy. The Vice-Rector forwards the request to the Dean of the relevant faculty after confirming the documents are complete. The written request specifies the subject of the thesis, the name(s) of the supervisor(s) and

the discipline(s) to which the proposed PhD project belongs, a curriculum vitae, a research plan, a description of the material means and framework available for the intended research (written by the supervisor) and the choice of Doctoral School. The application must include a sworn copy of the degree, except for PhD candidates who have a degree awarded by a recognised Belgian institution. These students present, upon registering, the original version of their degree when they have been accepted for the preparation of the PhD Thesis.

Within three months after the date of receipt, the Faculty Council decides on the application. Once the Faculty Council has decided positively on an application, the Council ratifies the candidate's choice of Doctoral School. Following the decision of the Faculty Council, the file will be sent to the Vice-Rector for Student Policy for approval. The latter does not apply to PhD candidates with a degree awarded by a recognised Belgian institution; in this case the file only needs to be approved by the Faculty Council.

A positive decision by the Faculty Council and possibly by the Vice-Rector for Student Policy may only count as admission to the preparation of the PhD thesis providing the PhD student registers in accordance with article 3, §1, §2, §3 of these regulations.

Article 18

The registered PhD student can rely on the guidance arrangements described under articles 19 to 21 and article 27 of these regulations.

Article 19

The PhD thesis is written under the guidance and responsibility of at least one member of the Senior Academic Staff (ZAP), the ZAP-supervisor, who may be assisted by:

- An external supervisor who is a member of the Senior Academic Staff (ZAP) not affiliated with the Vrije Universiteit Brussel
- A supervisor who is an emeritus member of the Senior Academic Staff (ZAP) of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel
- A supervisor who, is not a member of the Senior Academic Staff (ZAP) and holds a PhD title.

In the case of a joint PhD, the PhD thesis may also be written under the additional guidance and responsibility of a member of the Senior Academic Staff (ZAP) of the partner institution, who may be assisted.

Article 20

Each PhD student may be supported by an Advisory Commission consisting of the ZAP-supervisor and at least two other members (possibly not affiliated with the VUB or external) who in principle are PhD degree holders.

Article 21

The supervisor(s) is (are) obliged to counsel and stimulate the PhD student as he/she prepares the PhD thesis. In doing so, the supervisor(s) need(s) to observe the principles described in the "Profile of a good supervisor (promotor)", which are annexed to these regulations in Appendix II.

The PhD student is required to inform his/her supervisor regularly of the progress made on his/her PhD thesis.

Article 22

Should either the PhD student or the supervisor(s) neglect their respective obligations as stipulated under article 21 then either party may notify the Dean and/or the Ombudsperson for PhD students.

Article 23

The PhD student needs to refrain from committing any form of academic misbehaviour, including plagiarism, as it is defined below:

Plagiarism can be defined as the use of the formulations of others, whether or not literally, without precise source indication. It is a form of fraud and a violation of academic integrity.

Established academic misbehaviour by the PhD student in his/her filed thesis needs to be reported to the Dean immediately and in writing.

Established scientific misbehaviour by the PhD student in his/her filed thesis can lead to sanctioning. The sanction may include the effective termination of the PhD project.

Within five calendar days following the establishment of academic misbehaviour, all persons involved are heard by the Dean. It is the Dean who judges whether or not the claim of academic misbehaviour is founded. The Dean also decides on the sanction that needs to be applied. After hearing all the parties involved, the Dean makes a decision without delay and communicates the decision to the PhD student through means of a registered letter; the student may also retrieve notification of the decision from the faculty secretariat where he/she will have to sign a receipt form in return. The Dean also communicates his/her decision to the chairperson of the (Interdisciplinary) PhD Progress Monitoring Commission.

The PhD student may file an appeal with the chairperson of the (Interdisciplinary) PhD Progress Monitoring Commission, within five calendar days (starting the day after the PhD student has officially been informed of the decision). When the (Interdisciplinary) PhD Progress Monitoring Commission acts as the body of appeal, it also includes in an advisory capacity: the Ombudsperson for PhD students and a representative of the Rector with thorough knowledge of the course and examination regulations. The PhD student will be heard by the Commission. The internal appeal procedure can lead to:

- A motivated rejection of the appeal by the chairperson of the (Interdisciplinary) PhD Progress Monitoring Commission on the basis of it being ungrounded;
- A motivated decision by the (Interdisciplinary) PhD Progress Monitoring Commission, taken in a special session, which confirms or reconsiders the original decision.

In the case of an appeal, the decision by the Dean, as stipulated in §4 of this article, is suspended until the (Interdisciplinary) PhD Progress Monitoring Commission gathering in appeal arrives at a decision on the established academic misbehaviour.

The decision, as established in §5 of this article, must be announced to the PhD student within 15 calendar days, starting on the day after the appeal is filed. The decision will be communicated to the Rector and the Ombudsperson for PhD students.

The PhD student may be legally assisted during this procedure.

If academic misbehaviour is established after the public defence of a PhD thesis, the granted PhD title may be suspended.

In the case of established academic misbehaviour, the Order and Discipline Regulations (Orde- en Tuchtreglement) will be applied. If the PhD student is also a member of the VUB staff, the Academic Staff (AP)-Regulations will be applied.

Article 24

Before the end of each academic year, every PhD student will compile a progress report outlining the progress made on his/her PhD research project. Before May 1st at the latest, he/she will provide his/her supervisor(s), the Dean and the Chairperson of the (Interdisciplinary) PhD Progress Monitoring Commission with a copy of the progress report, and the Chairperson of the (Interdisciplinary) PhD Progress Monitoring Commission will ensure that all Commission members receive a copy. The annual progress report will comprise a minimum of four sections:

- The PhD student's activities over the previous year (including a list of publications)
- The PhD student's plans for the year ahead
- An overview of the problems encountered
- A report by the supervisor assessing the PhD student's achievements

The required and concrete content of the progress report can be further determined by the supplementary faculty regulations. Also, the faculties may decide, in the supplementary faculty regulations, to further extend the four sections mentioned above. Such an extension will also count for the progress report of an outgoing PhD student. The progress report of an incoming PhD student only needs to comprise the original four sections.

The PhD Progress Monitoring Commission sees to it that a PhD of high quality will be delivered within the determined period. To make this possible, it is important that the PhD student can verify and discuss the research hypotheses, research questions and results on regular basis with his supervisor, colleagues and experts.

Therefore it is essential that in the report a priority mention will be made of the following three activities, as of the first complete year:

- A) *At least a yearly thorough report and discussion about the research results and problems for an audience of colleagues on faculty level, departments or a panel of experts (who are specialized in the research area of the PhD)*
- B) *At least yearly one or more presentations of the research results during national and international congresses on the PhD domain (for PhD students active at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel).*
- C) *At least yearly an evaluation meeting ("functioneringsgesprek") between the PhD student and the supervisor, during which the supervision by the supervisor, (cfr. profile of a good supervisor) and the research activities, planning and progress of the PhD student will be discussed, problems can be indicated, and the areas for improvement can be presented. During this conversation the PhD student himself, or by mediation of the AAP representative of the faculty, can ask for the presence of one or more ZAP members of the PhD Progress Monitoring Commission, or of an external person who is (in)directly connected with the PhD research. The report will show the conclusions of this meeting in regards to the status of the PhD thesis, the proposed planning for the next year and the feasibility of this planning and the PhD thesis.*

Additional important indications for the quality of the PhD can be delivered by scientific publications of the already delivered research work in:

- D) *National and international scientific journals with or without peer review*
- E) *(a chapter of) a scientific book*

The period covered by the report is situated between 1 May and 30 April, prior to the report. If the start of the PhD concurs with the first employment as academic staff, the activities starting as of the date of employment can be considered. The last year the proven activities after 1 May will also be admitted. The progress report will be submitted by using the form approved by the faculty (available on the website of the Faculty).

Article 25

Every year, before June 30th, the (Interdisciplinary) PhD Progress Monitoring Commission will discuss the progress made on PhD thesis projects.

Should the (Interdisciplinary) PhD Progress monitoring Commission note lack of progress, the PhD student and the supervisor(s) will be heard at a subsequent Commission meeting. The PhD student can ask the Ombudsperson for PhD students to attend this hearing.

The (Interdisciplinary) PhD Progress Monitoring Commission will report its findings to the Council of Rectors (Rectorencollege) before September 1st. In its report, the Commission may give the Rector motivated advice to deny a PhD student further registration for the PhD programme.

Article 26

Should a dispute arise during the preparation of a PhD thesis between the supervisor(s) and the PhD student or between the supervisor(s)/PhD student and the (Interdisciplinary) PhD Progress Monitoring Commission, the following actions will be taken:

- The Dean and /or the Ombudsperson for PhD students will intervene to mediate.
- If their mediation fails to produce results, the Council of Rectors (Rectorencollege) – acting at the request of the supervisor or the PhD student and having heard both sides – will decide whether and under which conditions work on the thesis is to be continued.

Article 27

The Vrije Universiteit Brussel has taken the following steps to support the PhD student:

- a) The setting up of a personal online documentation system for the research process:

The University provides the PhD student with an access to an electronic portfolio system (personal documentation system for the research process) allowing him/her:

- to gather all necessary data online for the annual progress report that will be submitted to the PhD Progress Monitoring Commission;
 - to record optional data online regarding personal achievements in the margin of the student's research project, which benefit the University and academia in general;
 - to create a dossier of the PhD process, which may be used in presentations for future employers.
- b) The organisation of discipline-dependent and discipline-independent workshops, seminars, etc. which support the research process and train generic skills, bringing these to the attention of the PhD student, both within the framework of the Doctoral Schools as well as outside this framework.
- c) The identification and announcement of a selection of workshops, seminars, etc. which support the research process and train generic skills.
- d) The issuing of certificates and the "Certificate of the Doctoral Training Programme":
- With the "Certificate of the Doctoral Training Programme", the successful completion of the 60-credit VUB Doctoral Training Programme, is established, in accordance with article 4 of the *Decision regarding the Organisation of the Doctoral Training Programme at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel*. This document is signed by the Rector of the VUB. The certificate includes an overview of the PhD student's activities carried out as part of the research or in the margin of the research, within the framework of the Doctoral Training Programme. This overview will be based on the personal documentation system of which the inserted activities are approved yearly by the supervisor via the progress report.
 - PhD students who did not complete the entire Doctoral Training Programme of 60 credits, receive, at their request and after (early) termination of the PhD process, an attestation including an overview of the PhD student's activities carried out as part of the research or in the margin of the research. This overview will be based on the personal documentation system of which the inserted activities are approved yearly by the supervisor via the progress report.
 - Participation in the central VUB-activities, which support the research process and train generic skills, will be ratified through means of a certificate that can be used for the yearly progress report for the (Interdisciplinary) PhD Progress Monitoring Commission. The organisers of the activity will award the corresponding certificate to anyone who meets the previously stipulated and publicised criteria.

V. Procedure for the Doctoral (PhD) Examination

Article 28

When the PhD student wishes to take the PhD examination, he/she will send a written request to the Dean co-signed by the supervisor(s). This request will state the title of the PhD thesis.

The PhD student will enclose, together with the request, a number of copies of his/her thesis equal to the number of members of the doctoral jury plus three additional copies to be handed in at the faculty secretariat. The PhD student will also deliver an electronic version of his/her PhD thesis, as further explained in article 29 below.

The obligations mentioned above are equally binding for PhD students with a joint PhD who wish to publicly defend their PhD at the VUB. To submit the PhD thesis in electronic form is however mandatory for all PhD students with a joint PhD, irrespective of where the public defence takes place.

When the supplementary faculty regulations make it compulsory to follow the Doctoral Training Programme (or parts of the Doctoral Training Programme), PhD students need to have successfully completed the (parts of the) Doctoral Training Programme before he/she can publicly defend his/her PhD thesis.

The PhD student is only granted permission to publicly defend his/her PhD thesis when he/she has signed a declaration form in accordance with previous paragraphs of which a prototype is included in appendix III of these regulations. Under the terms of article 29, the PhD student grants user rights to the University over the doctoral thesis which he/she has been granted permission to defend publicly.

Article 29

The PhD student preserves all copyrights of his/her doctoral thesis.

The PhD student grants irrevocable and non-exclusive permission to the VUB to reproduce and publish the PhD thesis, as it was submitted, in accordance with aforementioned article 28, in its whole and unaltered form, unless explicitly stipulated otherwise. According to this permission, the PhD thesis can be reproduced and published as follows:

- On paper:

The thesis may be made available at the VUB university library for possible consultation by visitors;

- In electronic form:

- o For preservation in the electronic archives of the VUB university library;
- o For consultation through special terminals at the VUB university library;

The VUB pledges to take all necessary and reasonable measures to provide the PhD thesis with adequate technological protection against downloading, printing and/or sending the thesis to third parties. The PhD thesis may be reproduced in order to index the full text and facilitate searching the text, even when the complete text is not made available.

- o Availability to the online public;

The PhD student has the choice, upon handing in the PhD thesis, to immediately make the thesis available, in its whole or partly, through a publicly accessible network (internet). The modalities of this availability will be indicated by the PhD student on the form referred to in article 28. The bibliographical description of the thesis (title, author, year, abstract, etc.) will always immediately be included in the (online) library catalogue of the university library of the VUB. The PhD student has two years to exploit the PhD thesis, commercially or otherwise, and to reproduce and publish it in its original or reworked form at the time of the public defence. If the thesis is not (commercially) published within this two-year term, the VUB has the right to reproduce and publish the thesis in full (without profit purpose) by making it available to the public via an open network (for example the internet). This two-year term can be extended if the PhD student can offer a founded reason for the extension (for example the negotiations concerning a signed publishing contract in which a reasonable term is provided to produce and distribute the agreed number of copies of the thesis, even though publishing has not yet been achieved).

The use of the PhD thesis in electronic form, in accordance with this article, implies that it can be reproduced on all possible digital carriers so it can be used in accordance with best practices. In the context of current technological evolutions, the PhD thesis may be reproduced and technically altered in any way, in order to ensure the most suitable techniques are used as provided for in this article.

This non-exclusive licence has worldwide authority for the whole protection term of the copyright and all other intellectual and commercial owner rights inherent to the PhD thesis.

The PhD student will receive no compensation for any of the aforementioned user rights granted to the VUB.

The PhD student guarantees that he/she will not (or has not) grant(ed) any exploitation rights to third parties which are irreconcilable with the user right he/she has granted the VUB.

The PhD student guarantees that he/she is the author of the PhD thesis and that he/she has received the authorization to use protected third-party material (for example text, graphics, illustrations, recordings, etc) in his/her PhD thesis and to grant the VUB the aforementioned user rights over these materials.

The PhD student will protect the VUB without any restrictions against all possible third-party claims (for example for breaches of intellectual owner rights, personality rights, etc.).

Article 30

One copy of the PhD thesis will remain at the secretariat of the faculty concerned; it will be available for the benefit of the Senior Academic Staff (ZAP-Zelfstandig Academisch Personeel). Following the public defence, and provided the PhD student has been awarded the degree of Doctor, one copy of the PhD thesis will be put on file in the university library and a further copy in the department where the research was conducted. If the PhD student is not awarded the degree of Doctor, the copy of the PhD thesis intended for the library will be filed in the Faculty archives.

The aforementioned is also applicable in the case of a joint PhD, irrespective of where the public defence takes place.

Article 31

The PhD thesis will be written and defended in Dutch or in English. If the thesis has another language as its subject, it may be written in the language concerned.

The defence of the thesis will be in Dutch or in English.

The PhD student can ask for the PhD thesis to be written and defended in another language than Dutch or English. This can only be done after due permission has been granted by the Faculty Council.

The joint PhD will be written and defended in the language stipulated in the contract concerning the joint PhD and signed by all parties.

If the joint PhD is written and defended in another language than Dutch, an abstract in Dutch is required.

Article 32

The Faculty Council will set up an examination jury with at least three Senior Academic Staff members (ZAP – Zelfstandig Academisch Personeel) of the VUB and a minimum of two external members. In principle, all members will hold a PhD. The supervisor(s) is/are part of the examination jury, and when there is more than one supervisor, supervisors have one vote jointly. The votes cast by the VUB members of the doctoral jury need always to represent the majority of all votes cast.

External members need not be doctoral degree holders in the case of a PhD in the Arts. Their presence as members of the examination jury needs to be justified clearly and explicitly in accordance with the relevant stipulations of the supplementary faculty regulations of the faculty of Arts and Philosophy.

The examination jury cannot consist of more than eight members. The possible Advisory Commission will not represent the majority of the examination jury.

The chair of the examination jury appointed by the Faculty Council will under no circumstances be supervisor or co-supervisor of the PhD student.

If the PhD thesis under scrutiny has an interdisciplinary character, transgressing the borders of a faculty, each faculty needs to be represented on the examination jury by minimum one member of the Senior Academic Staff (ZAP - Zelfstandig Academisch Personeel).

The examination jury set up for a joint PhD will consist of the supervisors and a minimum of four other members. Each partner institution will be represented on the jury by a minimum of two members, including the supervisor. Additionally, two external members who are not connected to either of the partner institutions will have a seat on the jury. The members connected to the VUB will be appointed by the Faculty Council. The Chair and the external members of the examination jury will be appointed in accordance with the stipulations of the contract establishing the joint PhD.

Article 33

The examination jury has two full months to examine the submitted PhD thesis and reach a decision.

If unanimous, the board may reduce this period by a maximum of one month or – provided the PhD student agrees – extend the period by a maximum of one month. An extension will always be substantiated.

Article 34

When the term, as defined in the previous article, expires, the jury members will initiate a two-phase negotiation and assessment procedure:

- Phase 1: the jury members enter into closed (internal) negotiations, orally and/or in writing.
- Phase 2: the internal defence of the thesis. The jury members hear the PhD student, who may defend him/herself. The use of interactive electronic means of communication (chat, teleconferencing, etc.) is allowed.

Subsequently, the examination jury will reach a decision and announce its decision to the PhD student:

- Should the jury decide to allow the candidate to publicly defend his/her PhD thesis, the chair of the examination jury will determine when the public defence is to take place and he/she will take all necessary measures to publicize the date of the defence. The public defence will take place no later than one month following the decision to allow the PhD student to defend his/her thesis.
- Should the examination jury decide that the PhD thesis needs to be reworked, the procedure will be suspended. From the moment the revised thesis is submitted, the provisions of article 33 apply.
- Should the examination jury decide that the thesis may not be defended, the procedure will be terminated. In this case, the examination jury can request the (Interdisciplinary) PhD Progress Monitoring Commission to advise the Rector to refuse re-enrolment in accordance with the stipulations of article 25, §3 of these regulations.

In any case, the examination jury will inform the PhD student in writing of the evaluation by its members, of the report on its findings and of its decision.

Article 35

At least half the members of the examination jury need to be present in order to meet and deliberate validly. Members who have submitted their recommendations in writing will be taken into account for the required quorum.

Article 36

At the request of the Chair of the examination jury, the Rector will ensure that an announcement of the public defence is published on the VUB-website. Each faculty is free to provide additional methods to announce public defences in their supplementary faculty regulations.

The public defence, summary and supervisor will be announced (e.g. by electronic mailing) to all AAP and ZAP members of the faculty and to the scientific and professional associations within the field of expertise in Belgium.

The announcement, which will be made at least eight days before the public defence, will include the name of the PhD student, the title of his/her PhD thesis, the date, time and place of the public defence.

The public defence usually takes place on VUB premises. Exceptions need to be approved by the Faculty Council or the (Interdisciplinary) PhD Progress Monitoring Commission in case of an interdisciplinary PhD that crosses faculty borders.

The public defence of a joint PhD takes place on the premises of the home-institution of the PhD student, unless otherwise decided in the contract establishing the joint PhD.

Article 37

Following the announcement as specified in article 36, the PhD student will submit a brief written abstract of his/her doctoral thesis, meant for broad circulation, in Dutch and in English, approved by the supervisor, at the Rector's office, at the latest three weeks before the public defence. This text can be used for press or other announcements.

Article 38

A public defence will take no less than one hour and no more than two hours. It will include a brief summary of the PhD thesis intended for the examination jury and the lay audience, followed by a discussion.

Both the examination jury and the audience may question the PhD student, who will then proceed to defend his/her PhD thesis.

VI. Deliberation and proclamation

Article 39

The examination jury cannot validly consult on the possible awarding of the doctoral degree and the doctoral grade if not at least half the members of the jury are present. Only attending members are taken into account for the quorum.

Article 40

Immediately following a public PhD thesis defence, the examination jury will leave the room to deliberate on awarding the PhD in private and, if so stipulated by the supplementary faculty regulations, decide on awarding a doctoral grade.

Article 41

The examination jury declares the PhD candidate has passed on the strength of a majority of the votes cast, taking into account the intrinsic academic value of the PhD thesis and the manner in which the candidate has conducted his/her defence. If there is no majority, the decision will always be made in favour of the PhD candidate.

Article 42

If the PhD candidate has been declared passed, no doctoral grade will be awarded unless otherwise provisioned in the supplementary faculty regulations. In this case the jury shall announce whether the candidate has passed with satisfaction, distinction, high distinction or the highest distinction.

Article 43

Immediately following the deliberation, the chair of the examination jury shall proceed to confer the degree of PhD. He/she shall publicly declare that all the relevant rules and regulations have been observed.

VI. Final and transitional provisions

Article 44

Upon his/her first enrolment for the preparation of the PhD thesis as specified in article 17, the PhD student will receive a copy of the Central Regulations regarding the conferment of PhD degrees as well as the supplementary faculty regulations and the “profile of a good supervisor”, included with these regulations as Appendix II.

Article 45

These regulations become effective as of September 1st 2009.

APPENDIX I

The Vrije Universiteit Brussel awards PhD degrees in the following disciplines:

Doctor in:

- Philosophy and Ethics
- Linguistics
- Literature
- Language and Literature (Roman Languages)
- Language and Literature (Germanic Languages)
- Language and Literature (Latin and Greek)
- History
- Archaeology and Art Sciences
- Law
- Notary Studies
- Criminology
- Psychological Sciences
- Educational Sciences
- Educational Sciences (Adult Education Science)
- Economic Sciences
- Applied Economic Sciences
- Applied Economic Sciences (Management Science)
- Political Sciences
- Social Sciences (Sociology)
- Media and Communication Studies
- Media and Communication Studies (Journalism Studies)
- Social Health Science
- Gerontology
- Physical Education and Movement Sciences
- Rehabilitation Sciences and Physiotherapy
- Sciences
- Engineering
- Bioscience Engineering
- Medical Sciences
- Biomedical sciences
- Nursing and Obstetrics
- Dentistry
- Pharmaceutical Sciences
- Arts
- Human Ecology
- Interdisciplinary Studies

APPENDIX II

PROFILE OF A GOOD SUPERVISOR

Constituent of the Research Council Regulations (Reglement Onderzoeksraad – OZR)

Based on “De goede promotor”, in: *Onderzoekscultuur & -deontologie*, Nadine Rons, 20.10.2000

Approved by the Board of Governors 28.01.2003 and revised by the Board of Governors 03.10.2006, 12.02.2008, 15.03.2011

A good supervisor:

A good researcher will only undertake to act as supervisor of a doctoral thesis if he or she is in a position to offer the PhD student the necessary expertise, infrastructure and guidance.

Expertise, infrastructure and guidance — The supervisor:

- has established a reputation in a field of study which is at least closely related to the field in which the PhD student is to conduct his or her research.
- is responsible for the material and intellectual climate in which the PhD student develops his or her research project. He/she ensures that the basic facilities are in place for the PhD student, such as easy access to computer infrastructure, including internet access, and office space.
- ensures that the number of PhD students is proportionate to the number of places available in order that adequate supervision may be guaranteed (partly by post-doctoral researchers).
- vouches for the quality of the PhD student’s research plan.
- provides the funds to support his or her PhD students in their work, by applying for external or internal research funds and by using the allocated grant funds for researchers. The supervisor notifies the PhD student of any grants that were made available for the PhD research project.

The supervisor’s role is one of encouragement, co-ordination and assessment for the duration of the PhD process:

Co-ordination — The supervisor:

- allows sufficient time to have regular contact with the PhD student and to monitor his or her research project closely.
- assists in developing and – if necessary – adjusting the research project.
- helps the PhD student place his or her research in a broader context.

Schedule of planned activities — the supervisor:

- works in conjunction with the PhD student to draw up a thorough schedule of planned activities for the PhD research and training programme.
- ensures that the PhD student's obligations, such as the teaching assignment, are organised in such a way as not to jeopardise completion of the PhD project within the set time.
- is responsible for the progress made during the PhD process, preferably leading to completion within the set time.

Encouragement — The supervisor:

- launches the PhD student in the world of science by introducing him or her to researchers who may be able to provide assistance, by encouraging him or her to take part in conferences and in the Doctoral Training Programme, by offering advice on the development of his or her scientific research project, by providing general encouragement and fostering enthusiasm.

Assessment — The supervisor:

- arranges to be present on a regular basis when the PhD student introduces his or her work to fellow scientists and provides the PhD student with feedback after the event.
- in conjunction with the PhD student regularly assesses the progress that is being made and makes adjustments if necessary in order to keep the project on track.
- is obliged to inform the PhD student of the recommendations that he or she has made in the progress report.

Publication — The supervisor:

- alerts the PhD student to opportunities for publication and helps him or her prepare publications.
- carries significant joint responsibility not only for the PhD student's thesis, but also for the articles and abstracts arising from the PhD research project.
- gives the PhD student who is the first author of a publication maximal opportunities to submit the results of his or her research for technology transfer procedures.
- ensures that mention is made, as required, of the funding source, as well as the PhD student's VUB-affiliation in accordance with internal guide-lines.