Dear researcher

A PhD Research Day is an appropriate moment to reflect on the doctoral process in itself, the relationship between the doctoral candidate and his/her supervisor, and the career beyond. The support by the Doctoral Schools and Central PhD Office – recently renamed to Researcher Training and Development Office (RTDO) – facilitates each of these aspects, and, when all goes well, they remain in the background. Therefore, it was a deliberate choice of this year’s anniversary edition, celebrating the 10 years of Doctoral Schools, to put the doctoral candidates and their supervisors in the spotlight. Through their active participation, we want to underscore our interactive, dynamic research culture across disciplinary boundaries and faculties.

When I started my role as Vice Rector two years ago, I was enthused by the work of the well-lubricated machine of the team of Doctoral School directors and staff members of RTDO. In close collaboration, they had already installed a high-quality training offer ranging from specialist workshops, to interdisciplinary events, and courses on transferable skills. The challenges back then included elaborating specific training for postdoctoral researchers, giving an appropriate response to the alarming figures regarding the wellbeing of doctoral candidates, and offering more perspective on various careers after obtaining a PhD. By now, there is a postdoctoral training track including various training sessions on transferable skills needed for their tasks, a yearly PhD survey was rolled out to detect and act upon problems in an early stage and to receive continuous input for doctoral policies, and a career coordinator was engaged to help doctoral candidates uncover their potential and corresponding career paths. While more challenges lie ahead, I am confident we will keep on responding with an appropriate response.

I invite you all to keep the discussion alive on how we can continue supporting you in the best possible way. We will be watching, listening and acting upon your suggestions as we strongly believe in this bottom-up approach. Enjoy this day and keep up the good work.

Prof. dr. Karin Vanderkerken
Vice Rector Research Policy
One decade

Time flies like an arrow, fruit flies like bananas
(Anthony G. Oettinger, s.d.)

Doctoral Schools, Doctoral Education, Doctoral Training, Doctoral Program, Ph.D., Young Researcher, Early Stage Researcher (ESR), Post-doc, Senior Researcher, … Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose (Gertrude Stein, 1913); What’s in a name? That which we call a rose. By any other name would smell as sweet (William Shakespeare, 1597).

As the directors of your doctoral school, for the next ten years, we plan to support you in your doctoral trajectory -as we did the past ten years. We’ll invest in extending and improving your capabilities, first and foremost in succeeding to obtain the highest academic degree, a PhD. Education and research is key to progression, emancipation, equality and wellbeing. You as a PhD holder will have a huge responsibility to enhance these processes.

Therefore, we strongly support PhD candidates in many ways: setting up seminars and activities, interact with all stakeholders of the doctoral process via Board meetings and PhD networks, offer grants for setting up events and for internationalization, giving attention to transferable skills in collaboration with the Researcher Training & Development Office and the Career Centre. And, we take care of your wellbeing since we know that doing a PhD is highly demanding, competitive and requires hard work and perseverance. But realize that you are not alone in this process. You are surrounded by many people that can give you the right help at the right time.

Doctoral Schools, Doctoral Education, Doctoral Training, Doctoral Program, What’s in a name? One thing we are sure about is that whatever the name is, it will support you in obtaining your PhD and prepares you for what comes after.

Prof. dr. Karen François
Prof. dr. Leo van Grunsven
Prof. dr. ir. Gerd Vandersteen
VUB DOCTORAL SCHOOLS CELEBRATE 10TH ANNIVERSARY
student.vub.be/en/doing-a-phd

WHAT?
Doctoral schools help PhD students and researchers develop skills that will support their research and teaching abilities and prove valuable outside their discipline and the academic environment.

3 DOCTORAL SCHOOLS

HUMAN SCIENCES
DSH

NATURAL SCIENCE & (BIO-SCIENCE) ENGINEERING
NSE

LIFE SCIENCES & MEDICINE
LSM

The doctoral schools work closely with a centralised office, the RESEARCHER TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT OFFICE with 5 ADMINISTRATIVE EMPLOYEES helping with scientific professionalisation, career coaching and communication.

PHD NETWORK
FOR EACH DOCTORAL SCHOOL
where peers can meet and share their experiences.

EVA DESMEDT, PHD
STUDENT IN MEDICAL SCIENCES:
"The support of your fellow PhD students is really important for keeping you motivated.”

WORKSHOPS
in 2017/2018

125 WORKSHOPS
MORE THAN 3,000 PARTICIPANTS

SPECIAL PHD
10 years ago.

THE DOCTORATE OF THE ARTS
In 2008, BARTHOLOM EW KUIJKEN was the first musician ever in Flanders to hold a PhD of the Arts

TODAY

46 PhD of the arts students

17 PhDs delivered

54 workshops in TRANSFERABLE SKILLS
PRESENTATION, MEDIA TRAINING, MEETING SKILLS, COACHING, LEADERSHIP...

17 workshops on career development and coaching

10 workshops for postdocs
Since 2017 yearly PhD survey:

- **Self-evaluate PhD trajectory**
- **Signal problems**
- **Give feedback**

**INTERNATIONALISATION**

- **102** nationalities
- **160 Grants for international visits, workshops and conferences in 2017/2018**

**JIMMY NZALLY FROM GAMBIA, PhD student in political science:** “VUB is such a diverse campus, which makes it especially appealing to international students. As a student who did his master’s and is now doing his PhD here at VUB, I can attest to this fact.”

**SUCCESSFUL PHDS**

Since 2017/2018 year:

- **129** PhDs delivered
- **213** in 2017/2018

**PHD LAW STUDENT KRISTOF GOMBEER:** “Instead of scrolling through that trashy online newspaper for new gossip over your coffee break, check out the website of your doctoral school. They always have interesting activities going on.”

**PHD STUDENT PATRICK TJOK JOE:** “Scientific work is a lot like finding treasures at the bottom of the ocean. A lot of rocks, very little gold, but an exciting journey by itself.”

**GENDER BALANCE**

In 2017/2018 PhD students in total: **1,718**

- **DSH** 300 (53% male, 47% female)
- **NSE** 461 (69% male, 31% female)
- **LSM** 152 (45% male, 55% female)

**SUCCESSFUL PHDS BY DOCTORAL SCHOOL**

- **DSH** 44% (56% male, 44% female)
- **NSE** 69% (31% male, 69% female)
- **LSM** 43% (57% male, 43% female)

**INFOGRAPHIC**

Presents the distribution of successful PhDs by gender across DSH, NSE, and LSM departments.

**102 nationalities**

**160 Grants for international visits, workshops and conferences in 2017/2018**

**129 PhDs delivered**

**213 PhDs in 2017/2018**

**300 (53% male, 47% female) DSH**

**461 (69% male, 31% female) NSE**

**152 (45% male, 55% female) LSM**

**44% (56% male, 44% female) DSH**

**69% (31% male, 69% female) NSE**

**43% (57% male, 43% female) LSM**
PROGRAMME

Moderator: Xavier Taveirne

11:30 – 13:15  Welcome & interactive light lunch
13:15 – 13:30  Introduction by the Vicerector of Research Policy
                Prof. dr. Karin Vanderkerken
13:30 – 14:30  VUB PhD Cup final
14:30 – 15:00  Good practices in supervision: Laureates of Excellent
                Supervision Award 2018
15:00 – 15:30  Break
15:30 – 15:40  Animation video 10 years Doctoral Schools at VUB
15:40 – 16:45  Debate: the challenges of tomorrow
16:45 – 17:00  Presentation of the winner of the VUB PhD Cup
17:00 – 19:00  Reception with Karaoke
VUB PhD CUP

Jury members:

Prof. dr. Karen François
Prof. dr. Leo van Grunsven
Prof. dr. ir. Gerd Vandersteen
em. Prof. dr. Chris Van Schravendijk
dr. Hannelore De Grande
Jozefien De Marrée
What you do is who you are – the dynamic approach to personality
Joanna Sosnowska (DSH, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences)

In-ambulance telemedicine for stroke patients
Alexis Valenzuela (LSM, Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy)

Avoiding blackouts with advanced, flexible, distributed energy systems
Marina Montero Carrero (NSE, Faculty of Engineering)

A Masquerade? A Critical Legal Study of the ideology behind Solvency II
Kristina Loguinova (DSH, Faculty of Law and Criminology)

Dog’s nose in your smart phones – next generation gas sensors
Alexander Cruz (NSE, Faculty of Engineering)

Growing old. A universal concern, then and now
Anke Verbeke (DSH, Faculty of Arts and Philosophy)

Could a cure for cancer lie within cancer?
Aleks Murgaski (NSE, Faculty of Science and Bio-Engineering Sciences)

Generation of human stem cell-derived liver cells for drug testing
Alessandra Natale (LSM, Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy)
People at work differ from each other in many different ways. Some are organized, some are not. Some are very social and outgoing, some are not. To make sense out of those differences, we label them as personality traits, which are often linked with work behaviours. For example, we expect organized people to perform well, or those who are very social to thrive in group projects. Yet, our behaviour changes (depending on the situation, context, people we are surrounded by) and looking at general tendencies (such as being organized or outgoing) is not sufficient to understand the complexity of work life. Even if someone is highly organized on average, it does not mean they are very organized all the time. You may also meet two people who, on average, are equally outgoing, yet, one of them finds social events tiring after a while and needs time to re-charge. Acknowledging those dynamic changes is essential to understand people at work and capture the complexity of our lives.

Therefore, in my work, I focus on changes in our behaviours. Instead of boxing people according to their personality traits (i.e., extroverts vs. introverts), I look into the patterns of their behaviours, which can tell us more than simply looking at their general tendencies. In my research, I use several ways to describe those dynamic patterns: I look at the extent of the changes in behaviours, seeing that there are people who tend to behave very consistently, but there are also people who display wide range of different behaviours. For example, someone who is moderately organized, yet consistent in their behaviour, might perform better than someone who is also moderately organized on average, but acts either very organized or very disorganized, depending on the situation. I also look at how fast the changes in behaviour occur – for example, if a person tends to act very emotionally stable, but due to external circumstances they snap at their colleague, how long will it take them to return to their typical, emotionally stable behaviour.

This is particularly important in work psychology, where we tend to focus on a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach. Yet, work life is more complex than that, and a more individualistic approach is essential to create a working environment where employees can thrive and fulfill their potential. My research on the dynamics of personality aims to shed a new perspective on our personality at work and discover all the features that we have not looked at before.
In-ambulance telemedicine for stroke patients
Alexis Valenzuela (Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy)

Stroke is commonly caused by an obstruction of blood flow into the brain and has a devastating human and economic impact. In Europe alone, each year more than 1.1 million people suffer from a stroke. The faster you treat a stroke patient the higher his chances of a good outcome (like heart attacks). This concept is known as ‘time is brain’.

With our research we try to speed up the treatment of stroke patients. We do this by virtually bringing a stroke specialist into the ambulance while the patient is emergently transported to the hospital. This way the stroke specialist can already start the diagnosis of the patient and support the ambulance staff during the transportation to the hospital. He can also notify the emergency department about the arrival of the patient.

How do we do this? We use telemedicine technology combined with 4G-technology. This means we use audio, video and the transfer of vital parameters to communicate between the ambulance and the remote physicians. We developed patented tailor made hard-and software solutions. New medical algorithms were validated by our team for the diagnosis of patients in a moving ambulance. After a successful trial on 43 general emergency patients, we performed the first ever in-ambulance telemedicine trial on 16 stroke patients. This confirmed the technical and organizational feasibility of our telemedicine solution.

For my PhD I additionally investigated the cost-effectiveness of in-ambulance telemedicine and developed a health economic model. With this model we show that in-ambulance telemedicine can be cost-effective starting from a realized time gain of 6 minutes and becomes a dominant strategy after approximately 15 minutes. This shows the potential of the solution to not only save lives but also save money for society. More (clinical) research is needed to further validate these findings.
Avoiding blackouts with advanced, flexible, distributed energy systems
Marina Montero Carrero (Faculty of Engineering)

We all take for granted that if we press the switch the lights turn on, that our computers work if the charger is simply plugged in and that food is always safely stored in our fridge. But what would happen in the event of a blackout? Are we really conscious of how much we rely on electricity?

Current electricity systems are mostly centralised: electricity is mainly generated in big power plants and distributed through the transmission network to the final consumer. Due to their stiff design, centralised networks have problems accommodating renewable energy and coping with increasing electricity demand. In extreme circumstances, the system could collapse, leading to a blackout with disastrous consequences.

As opposed to centralised networks, small, distributed electricity systems can be placed close to the final consumers, avoiding in this way distribution losses and adding operational flexibility. Furthermore, decentralised cogeneration units simultaneously generate electricity and heat, fulfilling both our heating and electricity requirements with a high energy efficiency. A critical problem of cogeneration units is what to do with the generated heat during the summer, when our heating needs are minimum. My PhD focuses on re-using this heat by injecting it back into the cycle so that the engines can run all year long, resulting in a more attractive, profitable investment. A more widespread adoption of distributed generators can contribute to further decentralising our electricity network, which ensures a more secure electricity supply and thus avoids future blackouts.
A Masquerade? A Critical Legal Study of the ideology behind Solvency II
Kristina Loguinova (Faculty of Law and Criminology)

Regrettably, the worst global financial and economic crisis of the last 70 years (2007-2009) has shown that financial law was not sufficiently developed to maintain the overall health, vigour and integrity of the financial system. It also showed that financial was not able to safeguard the society from economic degradation. Global protest movements like Occupy Wall Street have made it more than clear that change in our financial-economic-and legal system is indispensable in the near future since a lot of people no longer believe the system listens or responds to their needs. This belief is only encouraged by the existing income disparity. The EU legislator has been busy trying to reform financial legislation, supervision and regulation since the height of that financial and economic crisis. This crisis namely raised questions about the proper ideological foundations and objectives of financial legal rules, which supposed to cause a shift in ideology. Whether such an ideological shift indeed took place or whether the EU legislator simply engaged in another technocratic exercise was researched in this doctoral dissertation. The research is conducted from a Critical Legal Studies (CLS) perspective and specifically focuses on Solvency II, the latest EU legal framework for the largest EU institutional investors, i.e. insurance undertakings. The research method is predominantly inspired by one of the latest monographs of BYTEBIER (Towards a New International Monetary Order) and, as such, comes down to legal reform design. After all, what is the purpose of criticism if no alternatives can be proposed?
Microporous materials, such as metal-organic frameworks (MOFs), are very tiny, porous sponges in the nanoscale—a dimension of about 100,000 times smaller than a diameter of a human hair. Being ‘sponge-like’, they have properties suitable for high-value applications such as integration to microelectronic devices. For example, when used as gas sensors, they can detect specific types of toxic gases and nerve agents at very small concentrations. To realize their industry-scale integration, the deposition of MOFs needs to comply with two minimum requirements:

1. can be deposited as very thin coatings; and
2. can be processed without any liquids

These conditions are key technological bottlenecks for materials that have been tested so far in this context. In this project, we employ the creation of these microporous coatings through chemical vapor deposition—a recently developed solvent-free technique in our lab, for processing MOFs. My task is to scale-up this technology which can be readily adapted by microfabrication facilities bringing this dog’s nose to a wider scale of technological implementation, for instance, integration in your smartphones. This marks a significant milestone in opening doors for cutting-edge applications in toxic gas sensing or for early diagnosis of certain types through detection in breath.
Growing old. A universal concern, then and now
Anke Verbeke (Faculty of Arts and Philosophy)

Growing older is a universal experience and it has been through the ages. However, the ways in which we are able to cope with old age, vary according to time, place and social class. I investigate how the elderly living in Ghent, Brussels and Antwerp between 1750 and 1850 were able to cope with their high age. 1750-1850 was a transformation period in which industrialization changed the labour market and high rates of poverty afflicted society. My research examines how the urban elderly were able to survive during their final life stage and during this specific period by looking at who cared for them and to what extent they were able to care for themselves by means of labour, poor relief and family care. Subsequently, I want to explain the role of these three factors and how it changed over time. More specifically, I want to understand what role the cities’ local economy, social policy and household structures played in determining their elderly’s ability to face the challenges of their high age. How can the local context impact the survival of socially and economically vulnerable groups, such as the elderly?
Could a cure for cancer lie within cancer?
Aleks Murgaski (Faculty of Science and Bio-Engineering Sciences)

90% of all cancer-related deaths occur when cancer spreads to other locations in the body (metastasis), or when cancer-free patients relapse. Currently, effective therapies against metastasis and relapse are lacking, and the treatments in use have very harsh side-effects and little success. My goal is to develop a vaccine that stops cancer from spreading or returning, which could significantly increase the life expectancy of cancer patients.

Tumours are complex structures, which not only contain cancer cells, but also cells from our immune system. These are very specialised cells that protect our body from disease by specifically killing harmful invaders. Every immune cell has a specific job to do. For my project, the immune cell of interest is called a dendritic cell. These cells create an immune memory, so if the same invader comes back, our immune system is much better and faster at getting rid of it. Dendritic cells also exist inside of tumours, and we hope to use their special function to create an immune memory response against cancer. By isolating the right type of dendritic cell from tumours, and using them to vaccinate tumour-bearing mice, tumour growth is slowed down and the mice are protected against cancer. These dendritic cells can create an immune memory against the tumour, so that when the tumour tries to come back, our immune system can react quickly and stop it.

Currently, our new anti-cancer vaccine showed positive results in mice. The next step is to translate these findings to the clinic. My PhD project is focusing on optimising dendritic cell vaccination strategies and on understanding whether the effects we see in mice can be mimicked in patients. Hopefully, within some years our dendritic cell vaccination will improve and lengthen lots of lives.
Generation of human stem cell-derived liver cells for drug testing

Alessandra Natale (Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy)

Alessandra Natale1, Koen Vanmol2, Aysu Arslan3, Sandra Van Vlierberghe2,3, Peter Dubruel3, Jurgen Van Erps2, Hugo Thienpont2, Joost Boeckmans1, Joery De Kock1, Vera Rogiers1, Robim M. Rodrigues1 and Tamara Vanhaecke1
1Department of In Vitro Toxicology and Dermato-Cosmetology (IVTD), Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Brussels, Belgium; 2Brussels Photonics (B-PHOT), Vrije Universiteit Brussel and Flanders Make, Brussels, Belgium; 3Polymer Chemistry and Biomaterials Group (PBM), Centre of Macromolecular Chemistry, Ghent University.

The liver is the main organ responsible for the detoxification and elimination of drugs, but also a target of toxicity induced by these compounds. Human stem cells represent a valuable cell source to study liver toxicity. These cells are distributed in various locations of the human body and they have the potential to grow nearly indefinitely.

Our lab showed that human skin stem cells (hSKP) can mature towards liver cells (hepatocytes) in a flat 2D-setup, exposing them to liver-specific substances. Yet, the obtained hepatocyte-like cells (hSKP-HPC) grow flat and poorly interact within each other in this unnatural microenvironment. As a result, these cells exhibit mixed characteristics of immature and mature hepatocytes.

Hence, the aim of this study is to better mimic the environment of the human liver and to improve the functionality of hSKP-HPC. To achieve that, cells are cultured on a 3D-structure that resembles the architecture of the human liver, allowing to the cells to grow in 3D. Cells integrate in the hexagonal backbone of the 3D-structure, acquiring a polygonal shape similarly to human hepatocytes. Furthermore, to mimic the liver blood flow, circulating culture medium containing nutrients for the cells is supplied through a microfluidic device. Further perspectives include the integration of the 3D-structure inside the microfluidic chip to replicate the micro-physiology of the liver more accurately and to improve the hepatic maturation of hSKP-HPC.
SUPERVISOR AWARD
“Laureates of Excellent Supervision Award”

**Christophe Vanroelen** is Associate professor Sociology at Vrije Universiteit Brussel and Chair of the research group ‘Interface Demography’. He has a PhD in Social Health Sciences and a Master in Sociology. His research focuses on the relation between employment quality and health and health inequalities among the working population.

**Eric Jespers** Eric Jespers is full professor at the department of Mathematics and Dean of the Faculty of Sciences and Bio-Science Engineering at VUB. He obtained his master and doctorate in Mathematics at KULeuven, worked at the University of Stellenbosch as lecturer, Cape Town as associate professor and Memoral University of Newfoundland, Canada as full professor and University Research professor and has been appointed as professor at VUB since 1998. He has successfully supervised 12 PhD holders so far and has currently three PhD candidates under his wings. His research group ALGB (Algebra) investigates fundamental structural problems of several algebraic and geometric objects.

**Lieve Van den Block** is Professor of Communication and Education at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) and chair of the Ageing and Palliative Care Research Programme at the End-of-Life Care Research Group of the VUB and Ghent University in Belgium. She holds a PhD in Medical Social Sciences and a Master’s degree in Clinical Psychology. Her research work focuses on national and international public health and interventional research aimed at monitoring and improving palliative and end-of-life care for older people and people with dementia. 

Christophe Vanroelen

1. Bottomless well of expertise
2. Far too modest
3. A man with a plan and a vision
4. Constructive, critical and endless patience
5. Genuinely involved in, and concerned with, the team

...From the very start Christophe demonstrated an open attitude towards us and our work. An example of this is the yearly evaluation talk with his PhD students. In these talks, he does not only pay attention to evaluating us in a constructive way, but he also asks for our feedback on how he can improve in his role of supervisor, in addition to wanting to ensure that we ourselves are still happy with the progress of our research...

...Next to our main task, research, Christophe regularly stimulates us to step outside our comfort zone. Giving a guest lecture in aula Q, reaching out to the press with our research, engaging in a conversation with a top researcher in the field, guiding master students with their thesis, presenting at conferences, doing a research stay at the other end of the world,… With a number of well-chosen arguments, Christophe succeeds time and again to move aside our doubts and slight nagging. In this way, we get the chance to grow – not only as a researcher, but as a person...

...We’re grateful to Christophe for sharing his expertise, for his brilliant way of supervising us and for stimulating our growth as a researcher and as a person! This award would be a fantastic motivator for a man who is a great motivator himself...
Eric Jespers

1. Contageously passionate
2. Cares about his students, not only as researchers but also as people
3. Always a listening ear
4. Stimulates his students to join the scientific community
5. Leaves room for personal creativity

...Last year, one of us was writing his first scientific article. Even though Eric advised him greatly, both on the introduction and the correct academic formulation of the article, Eric refused co-authorship. To put it in his own words: “It are your ideas and results. So I don’t have the right to assume any co-authorship on this article. Even more so, I am glad that you can work independently. It is only natural that I help you with the formulation and submission process.”...

...This interactive way of working, at first coordinated but then becoming one’s own natural way of doing, is also strengthened by his ‘open-door’ policy. Despite the fact that since three years he is very busy as Dean of the faculty of sciences and bioengineering sciences, his door is always open for questions or advice, even between two meetings. After a meeting, he often knocks on our door and asks how it is going. It is not rare that then a sudden boost of energy pops up, leading to more collaborative hours and new ideas. The main limit being a call of his wife…

...Admittedly, being a PhD advisor is fundamentally difficult. It is, in spirit, a little like parenting: while not much can be expected from too close a guidance, fostering a student’s talent requires the senior’s maturity to lighten up the path ahead. Allowing one to stumble, fail and become frustrated while at the same time providing a most intelligently balanced helping hand, is what Eric seems to be able to do so brilliantly and so easily. At the end of the hard path which represents a PhD program, Eric’s students own three most crucial things: their work, the researcher’s maturity and, in an indescribable but palpable way, his friendship. ...
Lieve Van den Block

1. The best researcher we know
2. Problem-solver
3. Inspiring
4. Stimulates critical thinking
5. Compassionate

...Lieve is a very direct person and works hard. She sets the bar high, and expects the same from her students. Yet there is still room to make mistakes and to learn from them; Lieve hands out compliments, not only when things are going well, but also when she notices that you are putting in hard work and giving it your best shot. In this way, she creates a safe learning environment that contributes to the fact that I go to work with pleasure...

...As a young researcher, it’s truly an added value to be able to work amongst people who are genuinely happy about each other’s accomplishments and who help each other to put ‘failures’ into perspective. In my opinion, Prof. Van den Block deserves praise for the way in which she stimulates collegiality...

...The guidance given by my PhD supervisor brings out the best in me. With a critical gaze, Prof. Lieve Van den Block follows my work progress; her perfectionism brings out the best in me. This teaches me to apply that critical gaze myself, to view a problem from different perspectives, and to not immediately take everything for an absolute truth. This motivates me immensely and brings me so much; not just for now, but for the rest of my PhD track and further academic career...

...I don’t actually feel as a PhD candidate all the time but more or less like a ‘colleague in training’. The relationship we have on a professional basis, is a relationship in which my individuality and work is held in respect and in which my supervisors recognize their role to guide me through the morass of research and its specific requirements, offer suggestions and do some teaching around issues such as methodology, research practice and process, and be sensitive to the life-cycle of my PhD and the process that goes with it...
Also nominated…

Many supervisors were nominated for the Excellent Supervisor Award. All nominations were praiseworthy: it is demonstrated that each of the supervisor does a good and passionate job in supervising, inspiring and coordinating. Therefore, we mention them all with the five characteristics the doctoral candidates described them.

In the Natural Sciences en (bio-science) Engineering

Bart De Boer: always has his door open – always interested – gives great feedback – caring – flexible

Sebastiaan Eeltinck: motivates to take you to the next level – plans ahead and keeps track of your progress - creates opportunities to build on your CV – always available to listen to issues – values your work

Marijke Huysmans: inspiring – helpful – scholastic – perceptive – simply the best researcher/supervisor

Filip Meysmans: the ideal scientific mentor – accessible – thoughtful towards its doctoral candidates (even after defending) – stimulating – time-keeper

In the Medical Sciences


Alain Dupont: innovative – honorable – closely involved – dedicated – entrepreneurial

Guy Nagels: accessible - compassionate – enthusiastic – interested – marvelous sense of humor

Ilse Rooman: good listener – disciplined, persistent & creative – humble – ambitious, engaged & encouraging – smart
In the Human Sciences

Patrick Deboosere: inspiring, driven by passion about his domain – practical & problem-solving – an expert in his field – patient – structured and systematic

Paul De Hert: privacy guru – compassionate – inspiring – generous – always there for his doctoral candidates

Liesbeth De Donder: enthusiastic jack-of-all-trades – versatile source of inspiration – positive vital factor – offers opportunities without having to calculate them yourself – considerate gannet (Jan-van-Gent)

Philippe Humblé: compassionate – very supportive – inspiring – disciplined – positive attitude

Marc Jegers: compassionate – inspirational and committed – excellent and immediate feedback – supportive – thoughtful towards international students

Jelle Mast: Believes in the unbelievable – he has high expectations, but also puts you in the right direction – appreciative – receptive – shrewd – creates space for autonomy and development

Gina Rossi: pays much attention to the well-being of all doctoral candidates – extreme fast and constructive feedback – trustworthy & stimulating – problem-solving – adaptive; gives individual supervision, tailored to the personality of the doctoral candidates
DEBATE

Panel members:

Gareth O’Neill
Sarah Dury
Arlind Cara
Annelies Colpin
Kris Pauwels
Marijke Huysmans
DEBATE

Challenges for the Doctoral Schools and young researchers now and in the future

5 statements will be discussed during this debate, dealing with 5 different themes

**Doctoral education**
Doctoral Education is a waste of time

**Combination Work-Family / Wellbeing**
It's hard to combine a PhD with family life.

**Postdoctoral researchers**
Doing a postdoc is an academic gamble.

**Career**
Having a PhD closes certain doors for you.

**Society**
Completing a doctorate is a good investment.

Give your opinion on each of the statements when projected on the screen.

Go to PollEv.com/rtdo or text RTDO to +32 460 20 00 56 to start answering
Who is who?
Prof. dr. Karen François is director of the Doctoral School of Human Sciences (DSh). She is philosopher and director of the Centre for Logic and Philosophy of Science. Her research is related to philosophy of mathematical practices, scientific cultures, mathematical, statistical and data literacy.

Prof. dr. ir. Gerd Vandersteen is director of the Doctoral School of Natural Sciences and (Bioscience) Engineering (NSE). He received a PhD in electrical engineering from the VUB and worked 7 years in the analog RF team of the microelectronics research center imec. His main research focus is on measurement, modeling, and simulation of micro-electronic and telecom systems.

Prof. dr. Leo van Grunsven is director of the Doctoral School of Life Sciences & Medicine (LSM). He is a biologist by training and principal investigator of the Liver Cell Biology research group. His research is focused on unravelling the mechanisms involved in liver fibrosis development in chronic liver diseases.
Karin Vanderkerken is Vice Rector Research Policy at VUB and chair of the research group Hematology & Immunology as well as chair of the research cluster Oncology at the Faculty of Medical Sciences and Pharmacy. She obtained her PhD in Sciences in 1994 at VUB and became professor in 2004. Her main strategic goals for Research Policy include optimal support and training for all researchers, enhance an international and interdisciplinary research culture and participative and community based research.

Xavier Taveirne is the host and moderator of the VUB PhD Day 2018. He is a radio and television presenter, currently hosting the morning show on Radio 1 (‘De Ochtend’) and news anchor of the late night news at Eén. He also presented the shows ‘De Wereld Morgen’ (Radio 1) and ‘De Zevende Dag’ (Eén).

Sarah Dury has a PhD in social gerontology focusing on participatory research methodology. Her main research topics are volunteering, civic engagement and participation, loneliness, social exclusion, New research project on the transition from work to retirement and the relations with civic participation and wellbeing. She is currently FWO postdoctoral fellow at VUB.
Gareth O’Neill is a doctoral candidate in linguistics at Leiden University and is president of the European Council of Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers (Eurodoc). He is interested in science policy for researchers and in improving the broad implementation and skills training of Open Science across Europe. Gareth was actively involved in the Dutch National Plan for Open Science, is an expert on Open Science for the European Commission, and is a member of the H2020 Advisory Group on Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions at the European Commission. He appreciates decent pints of Guinness and sailing in traditional Galway Hookers.

Marijke Huysmans is a Mining Engineer (2002) and has a PhD in Science (2006). She is assistant professor in the department of Hydrology and Hydraulic Engineering (HYDR) of VUB. She is currently (co-)supervising 15 PhD students that are investigating the many mysteries of groundwater. She is member of the Research Council of VUB since 2017. She was nominated for the first ‘Excellent PhD Supervision’ award in 2018.
Kris Pauwels studied bioengineering at the VUB and thanks to an IWT SB fellowship he received his PhD in Bio-Engineering Science in 2008 under supervision of Lode Wyns in the Structural Biology department. Next, he joined Annalisa Pastore’s group at the MRC National Institute for Medical Research in London (UK) as an EMBO long-term postdoctoral fellow. Supported by a Diabetes UK grant, he then joined the Chemistry Department of the Universitat de les Illes Balears (Spain). He returned to the VIB-VUB Centre for Structural Biology with an FWO Pegasus long-term postdoctoral fellowship (2012-2018). Since October 1st, 2018 he is formally appointed as the R&D Research and Grant officer for Life Science and Medicine at VUB.

Since 2010 Jozefien De Marrée is building bridges between science and society as a staff member of the VUB Science Outreach Office (R&D). She is coordinating the Brussels Science Shop and 2 European projects on community based research, EnRRICH (2015-2018) & ENtRANCE (2018-2020).
Chris van Schravendijk is Emeritus professor at the Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. His research was focused on cellular biology, prediction and prevention of type-1 diabetes. As faculty professor he was responsible for the Introductory course on Scientific Thought and Evidence Based Medicine in the first Medical Bachelor year and for the Bachelor course on Formulation and Development of a Scientific Hypothesis in the third Bachelor year of Medicine Biomedical Sciences. Between 2008 and 2016, he was the Director of the Doctoral School of Life Sciences and Medicine, with more than 200 PhD students. He has a long standing interest in international benchmarking and harmonization in the area of Higher Education (MEDINE, MEDINE-2, ORPHEUS) with focus on the place of the research component in the undergraduate medical curriculum as well as on career perspectives of academic graduates in the life sciences. As emeritus he is particularly interested in PhD workshops promoting better awareness of research integrity in the area of the life Sciences.

Arlind Cara
PhD researcher, SMIT
Project Coordinator at Global Minds Program, International Relations Office
Co-founder of VUB ISP (International Student Platform)
Member of DSh (Doctoral School of Human Sciences) PhD Network
Former Vice chair of National Youth Congress, a network of youth organizations in Albania
Co-founder of an Albanian youth organization, RIAS.
Hannelore De Grande is coordinator of the Researcher Training and Development Office at VUB. She obtained her Masters’ degree in Sociology at UGent and completed her doctoral dissertation at Interface Demography, VUB. In 2015 she started working as coordinator at the department of Research and Data-Management, where she is in charge of the further development of the Doctoral Training Programme, and the university’s policy on doctoral education and supervision. Currently, her scope broadened to training and development of researchers at various stages of their career.

After her studies in labor and organizational psychology at VUB, Annelies Colpin embarked on a fast-paced journey in HR and organizational consultancy which gave her a speed course in the specifics of different sectors and organization types. After a while she decided to shift gears and to follow her passion for people and what keeps them engaged and happy in their jobs, right into the world of career coaching. After a bite of the Big Apple, where she taught career related courses at a community college, she came back to where her story started, to put her experience at the service of VUB’s young researchers and to develop relevant career services for this community.
Mimi Deprez holds a Master degree in Contemporary History from UGent and a BA in Public Management from PHIBA Antwerp. She has been working in an international academic environment giving support for more than 20 years to biotech medical doctors, research teams from the VIB and to engineers at KU Leuven. She lived for 3 years in the US in Cambridge where she worked at Harvard. She has previous coordination experiences at the Corporate Communication at Baxter and was a technical writer at Ion Beam Applications. Lately, she worked as a Medical Communication Consultant at GlaxoSmithKline, Global Medical Affairs. Currently she is working in the RTDO giving support to Flanders OJO program funding.

Loren Pauwels is coordinating the ‘Research Professionalization Project’ at VUB, which is aimed at implementing new training and development programs tailored to the needs of postdoctoral researchers and professors at several career stages. She’s a fan of multi- and interdisciplinary research, which led her from Biology studies at KULeuven to doctoral research in Social Decision-making and Neuroeconomics at UAntwerpen. Grateful for her own personal development as a researcher, she is now excited to further support yours.
Since 2015 Nele Van Schelvergem is proud Professional in Doctoral Education at the Researcher Training & Development Office. Looking for solutions every day to support and improve the quality, communication and satisfaction of both colleagues, young researchers and promoters. She is responsible for the communication of our RTDO office. Through her experience as a graphic designer and photographer, she creates all our designs and makes occasional photographs of the training courses and events. Curious about her creative and critical view on things? www.aimforlene.com

Jane Verlinden obtained a master’s degree in Political Science at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel in 2009. At that time, she was already working for the Central PhD office where she helped build the Doctoral Schools and Doctoral training Programme for over 7 years. In need of a change she left her position in 2016 to become the VUB research departments’ first Event & Communications Officer. In this capacity she is still involved in the organization of this VUB PhD Day, an event she organized for the first time in 2010.