

**Faculty of Humanities  
University of Amsterdam**

**Regulations for PhD candidates<sup>i</sup>**

*Established on 7 July 2008  
As amended in 2011, 2015*

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<sup>i</sup> Disclaimer: in case of any difference between the English text and the Dutch text, the Dutch text is valid.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The regulations as given in this document in principle apply to all types of PhD candidates within the Faculty of Humanities. Although there are different types of PhD-candidates (directlyfunded, externally funded, self-funded), the Faculty of Humanities holds the philosophy that there should be as little as possible to distinguish between these different types. After all, each PhD candidate works towards the same examination, and that makes all PhD tracks equivalent. Still, there are differences, especially from employment law perspective. Therefore, in this document it will be emphasized when different rules apply to different types of candidates.

Since 1 September 2008, the default option for directly funded PhD candidates (candidates funded through *eerste geldstroom* and who thus receive direct funding from the Faculty of Humanities for their PhD project) is a part-time appointment for 4 years 0.8 fte, with the possibility of a teaching appointment of 0.2 fte for a year at most.<sup>2</sup> A possible alternative is a full-time appointment of 3.2 years.

Deviations from the above-mentioned situations can occur when external funders demand different terms within the subsidy offered by them.<sup>3</sup> The research school director will always check whether it is feasible and realistic to complete the PhD project within the required period of time.

This amended version of the Regulations for PhD candidates covers the following aspects: the PhD candidate's position in the organization, the Training and Supervision plan (*Opleidings- en begeleidingsplan*: OBP), progress reports and assessment, completion, extension, facilities available for PhD candidates, participation in decision-making, and dispute settlement. A model for the Training and Supervision plan is included as an attachment, as well as an overview of the duties and responsibilities of the Graduate School for Humanities director, the research school's director, the Faculty research director, the principle supervisor of the PhD candidate, the PhD candidate, the *Afdelingsvoorzitter*, the personnel advisors (*P&O*) and the officer for Academic Affairs respectively.

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<sup>2</sup> In 2011, the PhD regulations were amended because of the reference of the Graduate School in the Management and Administration Regulations (*Universiteitsreglement*) of 19 January 2011. The director of the Graduate School has the ultimate responsibility for the educational and training aspects of the PhD programs. The revised Governance Model as set in October 2014 made new amendments necessary.

<sup>3</sup> These include for example four-year full-time appointments subsidized by NWO, or three-year appointments subsidized by European programs.

## 2. THE PHD CANDIDATE'S POSITION IN THE ORGANIZATION

### *Recruitment and selection of direct funded PhD candidates*

The recruitment of candidates typically takes place through advertisements of the vacancy in the (national) written media, through advertisements on the websites of the University of Amsterdam and through relevant email discussion lists. The candidate should apply with a research proposal that fits the program of the research school.<sup>4</sup> It is strongly recommended that the candidate writes the proposal with the help of possible future supervisors. Guidelines for writing a research proposal are made available by The Amsterdam Institute for Humanities Research (AIHR).

The overall selection process is carried out in close consultation with the research schools, under the final responsibility of the faculty research director or the director of the interfaculty research institute ILLC.

In case of *eerste geldstroom* PhD positions, the director of AIHR decides on the procedure after consultation with the Faculty Research council (*onderzoeksraad*) and the PhD council. One of the considerations for choosing a procedure at faculty level or at the level of the research school is the number of available PhD positions. In case of a faculty-wide procedure, the faculty research institute establishes a selection committee, chaired by the faculty research director. In case of a procedure at the level of the research school, the research school establishes a selection committee chaired by the research school's director.

The selection committee prepares a nomination and ascertains the project's feasibility and the willingness of a professor to act as supervisor. In case of a procedure at the level of the research school, the director of the research school proposes the nomination for further assessment to the faculty's research director. The Faculty's research director will then put the nomination (provided with the CV of the candidate) forward through the head of the research department, to the Personnel & Organisation (P&O) division of the Faculty Office. The appointment decision will be signed by the Dean.

The selection committee should have a balanced composition between men and women: it is preferred to have equal numbers of male and female members, but it is required that the committee consists of at least 30% women or men. Also, the selection committee must always include a PhD candidate.

Note that the Faculty of Humanities only wants to attract excellent candidates - regardless of where they obtained their (research) master's or equivalent qualification. If no such candidates can be selected for a specific position, the PhD position must remain vacant.

### *Recruitment and selection of externally funded PhD candidates*

In case of externally funded projects that include PhD positions (NWO and EU), an advertisement will be written on the basis of the application and the description of the project

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<sup>4</sup> In principle, no more than 5 years may have expired between the time of graduation and the start of the appointment of the PhD candidate. Candidates should have received the diploma of their research master or equivalent qualification prior to the start of the appointment.

proposal. Analogous to direct funded PhD candidates, the recruitment of candidates typically takes place through advertisements of the vacancy in the (national) written media, through advertisements on the websites of the University of Amsterdam and through relevant email discussion lists. The selection must be made through an open recruitment, in which both the research school and the department are involved.

An open recruitment is also preferred in the case of Matching PhD candidates (*Matchingpromovendi*), for whom an external organization covers part of the costs. Both for the recruitment of externally funded candidates, and for finishing grants for more advanced researchers in their doctoral research, more tailor-made selection criteria might have to be used.

#### *Selection of self-funded PhD candidates*

Self-funded PhD candidates can approach the research school directly with a research proposal related to the research school's objectives, a letter of recommendation from the supervisor ('promotor'), and a CV. The director of the research school assesses the quality and feasibility of the proposal and accepts or rejects the proposal.<sup>5</sup>

#### *Appointment*

The appointment (in the case of direct or externally funded PhD candidates) is based on the current Collective Labour Agreement (CAO) 2015 for Dutch Universities, initially for a period of sixteen months, assuming an employment of 30.4 hours per week (80% of a full-time appointment).<sup>6</sup>

PhD candidates are subject to salary grades P0, P1, P2 and P3 (see CAO). On inception of the employment contract, the PhD candidate is placed in the first salary grade P0 for a period of 12 months. Within twelve months after the start of the employment, an assessment will take place (see section 4 in this document on Progress reports and assessment), and at the end of this period a go/no-go decision will be made. If positive, the appointment will be extended for another two years and eight months. The PhD candidate gets an upgrade from grade P0 to grade P1 in the second year of appointment, to P2 in the third year, and to P3 in the fourth year. For an appointment of a different size than 30.4 hours per week for four years, the periods shall be adjusted accordingly.<sup>7</sup>

Directly funded PhD candidates with a 0,8 fte appointment also have – besides the appointment mentioned in the previous paragraph – the possibility to be appointed as a lecturer for a period of one year (or the equivalent in shorter periods of 7.6 hours per week) or as research staff member. *Afdelingen* are responsible for ensuring that candidates may be employed as a lecturer for 0,2fte for a period of one year. If more resources for education are available, the candidate may be appointed for a longer period than a year. An additional teaching appointment will take place by increasing the PhD appointment. The salary grading of the teaching part of the position will be based on experience.

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<sup>5</sup> See also: <http://aihr.uva.nl/phds-in-the-humanities/externally--or-self-funded-phd-candidates/externally--or-self-funded-phd-candidates.html>

<sup>6</sup> Full-time: for a period of 12 months 38 hours per week. In case of a new CAO, the Regulations for PhD candidates will be adjusted accordingly.

<sup>7</sup> In case of three-year appointments upgrading could, for example, follow a P0-P1-P3 structure.

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The P&O division is responsible for regulating the appointment, dismissal and terms of employment of the candidates, and is in charge of the administrative side of appointments such as updating personnel files, and inserting and mutating information in SAP-HR. P&O notifies both the director of the research school and the research department when employment contracts end. At the very start of the appointment, the P&O division also refers the PhD candidates to the Academic Affairs officer to ensure their registration with the Doctorate Board of the University.<sup>8</sup>

The prospective directly and externally funded PhD candidate will (as a rule) be appointed a staff position in the department of the principal supervisor. The department chair is responsible for providing a suitable workplace and infrastructure (equipment, computer, etc.). The director of the research school is responsible for drawing up the Training and Supervision plan and arranging appropriate supervision in accordance with the Doctorate Regulations of the University of Amsterdam (2014).<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the director of the research school has to monitor the progress of the doctoral research, and can intervene when necessary. The director of the Graduate School for Humanities has the ultimate responsibility for the training part of the PhD programs.

The candidate is junior member of the research school of which the supervisor or principal supervisor is a member. The Graduate School for Humanities is responsible for the education of PhD candidates, and offers courses on project management, advanced academic writing, Presentation skills and the like ('transferable skills'). Moreover, the Graduate School sees to the courses as offered by national research schools with which the Deans made agreements in the context of *Disciplineoverleg Letteren en Geschiedenis, DLG*.

### **3. THE TRAINING AND SUPERVISION PLAN (OBP)**

The Training and Supervision Plan (*Opleidings- en begeleidingsplan*, OBP) refers to the individual plan for each PhD candidate, which includes the educational elements to be followed and the supervision received. The OBP must be completed within a month after the start of the appointment. For a model, please see Appendix 1.

The OBP will be drawn up by the PhD candidate in consultation with the (principal) supervisor on the basis of the research proposal of the PhD candidate or on the basis of the previously defined research project. The OBP needs to be signed by the PhD candidate, the principal supervisor, and the director of the research school, and must be approved by the Director of the Graduate school, who has final responsibility. Before signing the OBP, the official admission to the doctoral programme will be checked. The Graduate school puts forward the name of the candidate to the relevant national research school and will keep a portfolio with the courses attended by the candidate.

#### *Training*

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<sup>8</sup> Admission to the doctoral programme (art. 9), where necessary preceded by Exemption from the legal educational requirements (art. 7-8).

<sup>9</sup> For instance, two formal supervisors are required from the very start of the project (art. 10-11). Also, if the dissertation is to be written in a language other than Dutch or English, permission must be asked of the Doctorate Board (art. 15.4).

Doctoral candidates enrolled at the Faculty of Humanities take a package of courses determined within a month after their appointment, and which forms part of the OBP. The educational program is made up of two components: i) Skills development training at the Graduate School of Humanities, and ii) Courses in specific subject areas at national research schools (*Landelijke onderzoekscholen*).<sup>10</sup> The doctoral candidate selects a research school in consultation with his/her supervisor (s). Any possible exemptions from compulsory courses are the responsibility of the Graduate school.<sup>11</sup>

Management and executive tasks do not form part of the duties of the PhD candidate, except for the possible membership of the advisory council of the research school, the Faculty Works Council, the PhD council, or of the Graduate Studies Committee.

#### *Supervision of direct and externally funded PhD's*

The agreements regarding supervision formulated by the principle supervisor and the PhD candidate must also be included in the OBP. The principle supervisor should meet with the PhD candidate at least once a month to discuss the progress of the candidate's research.

#### *Supervision of self-funded candidates*

In case of *self-funded* candidates, the OBP should be adjusted according to the specific situation of the candidate (who often holds an additional employment position besides his/her doctoral research). Specific wishes with regard to the courses to follow need to be determined for every individual self-funded candidate separately.

## **4. PROGRESS REPORTS AND ASSESSMENT**

Frequent contact - at least monthly - between candidate and supervisor(s) is required. Self-funded PhD candidates can, depending on the time they spend on their doctoral research, agree to another frequency of contact as long as the principal supervisor and candidate meet regularly. How often the principal supervisor and the co-supervisor meet with the PhD candidate to discuss the progress of his/her research must be set down in the OBP. The department chair (*Afdelingsvoorzitter*) is responsible for monitoring the contact and will raise this issue in the annual discussions with the supervisors concerned.

At the end of the ninth month<sup>12</sup> of his/her appointment, the direct and externally funded PhD candidate<sup>13</sup> should submit a progress report (*voortgangsrapportage*) in the form of a pilot study of his/her doctoral research to the supervisor(s) and the director of the research school (or the authorized representative). The pilot study should fit within the overall doctoral research and should be a useful exercise for the PhD candidate; it may consist of for instance the first chapter of the dissertation, an article based on the doctoral research, a case study, or the theoretical background.

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<sup>10</sup> See <http://gsh.uva.nl/phd-students/education/education.html>

<sup>11</sup> Conform DLG-Logos agreement d.d. 23-10-2010.

<sup>12</sup> Full-time 3.2 years or 3 years: the sixth month.

<sup>13</sup> In case of a 1,0 fte appointment for four years, the end of the ninth month is also adopted as the standard deadline.

An advisory committee will be set up to assess the pilot study before the end of the tenth month<sup>14</sup> of the candidate's appointment. The committee consists of at least three people, including the supervisor(s) and a professor (≠principal supervisor) from the research school. The director of the research school will base his/her final assessment of the candidate's progress report on the advice offered by this committee.

No later than at the end of the tenth month of the candidate's appointment, a pilot meeting takes place in which the progress report is discussed by the principle and daily supervisors, the director of the research school and the PhD candidate. The following criteria must be taken into account during this meeting: the pilot study, the progress of the research undertaken, and the feasibility of completion within the given time frame – evidenced by the planned results as established in the OBP. Within two weeks of the pilot meeting, a report must have been written by the principle / daily supervisor. The candidate may respond to the report in writing. Before the eleventh month<sup>15</sup> after the start of the appointment a final report must be ready..

At the latest in the twelfth<sup>16</sup> month of the appointment, the final assessment by the director of the research school takes place and the decision whether the appointment will be extended by two years and eight months will be made.<sup>17</sup> In case of a negative assessment, the appointment will not be extended, and no later than three months before the end of the employment notice will be given of its termination. For PhD candidates with a full-time appointment the corresponding reduced terms apply as mention in the footnotes in the text above.

After the first year, the candidate reports on his/her progress at least once a year to the principle / daily supervisor and the director of the research school. Aspects that should be taken into account are: the progress of the project, training courses taken, articles and or chapter excerpts published, personal contributions in the form of lectures at (international) conferences, foreign study visits, etc. The report should relate to the OBP, which may be adjusted on the basis of the report if necessary. If desired, the PhD candidate can use the opportunity to have a conversation with a staff member who is not directly involved in the project.

#### *Self-funded PhD candidates*

A self-funded PhD candidate should also regularly report on his/her progress to the supervisor(s) and the research school. Twelve months after the candidate's appointment, he/she should submit a progress report, including at least a work plan for the next years and an outline of the intended dissertation. If the supervisors are satisfied with the quality of the pilot study and the revised work plan, the contract with the PhD candidate will be extended.

Arrangements regarding extension of the appointments of self-funded PhD candidates are made on an individual basis.

## **5. COMPLETION**

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<sup>14</sup> Full-time: the seventh month.

<sup>15</sup> Full-time: the eighth month.

<sup>16</sup> Full-time: the eighth month.

<sup>17</sup> Full-time: two years and three months.

The doctoral program will be concluded with a public defense of the dissertation, chaired by the Dean of the Faculty or his/her replacement. Candidates who pass this academic exam are deemed capable of completing academic work independently. The guidelines and regulations of the Doctorate Regulations of the University of Amsterdam (2014) apply.<sup>18</sup>

## 6. EXTENSION

The appointment duration of directly and externally funded candidates are extended in case of pregnancy and parental leave. The appointment duration of directly and externally funded candidates can be extended on grounds of (delay due to) illness. In the event of illness only periods of at least a period of eight consecutive weeks will be taken into account and the delay must be substantial.

In assessing any claim for extension due to illness, the feasibility of completing the dissertation within the duration of the extension period will be a determining factor. This assessment will be drawn up by the director of the research school no later than three months before the expiry of the term of appointment, after consultation with the P&O division of the Faculty Office about the possibility of extension, and in consultation with the candidate and the supervisor(s). Subsequently, the P&O division in its turn will examine the request for extension, through the research department and in accordance with the CAO. The director of AIHR makes the final decision.

## 7. FACILITIES

The candidate will be informed by the Personnel Administration (*P&O*) about the university and faculty regulations and facilities that apply to the candidate.

The candidate can ask for reimbursement of the costs made in executing the research, in accordance with the regulations of the research institute. More information about the rules in force can be found on the faculty website and the website of AIHR. For NWO, EU, or third-party funded PhD candidates other arrangements may apply. Self-funded PhD candidates are entitled to a small research budget, library access, e-mail facilities, supervision, and they have access to the programs offered by the research school to which they belong.

## 8. PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING

A PhD candidate is a member of a research school and can sit on the advisory council of the research school, or on the PhD council. The PhD council has an advisory role and brings that function in practice in a monthly meeting with the faculty's research director and the director of the research department (*hoofd onderzoek*). In addition, one PhD candidate per research school participates in the Graduate Studies Committee of the Graduate School for Humanities. PhD candidates also have the right to vote and the right to stand as a candidate at elections for the Faculty Works Council (*Facultaire Ondernemingsraad*) and the Central Works Council (*Centrale Ondernemingsraad, COR*).

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<sup>18</sup> For English: <http://www.uva.nl/en/research/phd/doctoral-programme/doctoral-programme.html>  
For Dutch: <http://www.uva.nl/onderzoek/promoveren/promotietraject/promotietraject.html>

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## 9. DISPUTE SETTLEMENT

If a conflict arises between the PhD candidate and one of the supervisors, the director of the research school should be informed. The same holds for complaints about educational and material facilities. If the complaints cannot be resolved satisfactorily by the parties, the conflict will be referred to the faculty's research director who will attempt to resolve the matter. If desired, the candidate can contact one of the faculty's confidential advisors<sup>19</sup> (*facultaire vertrouwenspersonen*) or the Central Complaints Committee of the UvA

Next page: **Appendix 1 – The Training and Supervision plan**

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<sup>19</sup> For English: <http://student.uva.nl/en/shared-content/az/confidential-adviser-for-undesirable-behaviour/contact/contact.html>

For Dutch: <https://medewerker.uva.nl/a-z/content/vertrouwenspersoon/overzicht-klachtenregelingen/overzicht-klachtenregelingen.html>

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Faculty of Humanities

## Graduate School of Humanities Training and Supervision Plan PhD candidates

### 1. General details

Name PhD candidate	
Project title	
Research School	
Principle supervisor ( <i>promotor</i> )	
Co-supervisor ( <i>co-promotor</i> )	

### 2. Supervision Plan

The following agreements regarding supervision of the PhD candidate are formulated:

The **principle supervisor (*promotor*)** meets with the PhD candidate daily / ... times per week / ... times per month, to discuss the progress of the candidate's research\*.

\* Please fill in; strike out what is not relevant.

Additional information:
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The **co-supervisor (*copromotor*)** meets with the PhD candidate daily / ... times per week / ... times per month, to discuss the progress of the candidate's research\*.

\* Please fill in; strike out what is not relevant.

Additional information:
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Additional agreements regarding supervision of the PhD candidate:
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### 3. Training Plan

Please indicate which skill courses the PhD candidate will take during the doctoral program:

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<b>Skill courses offered by Graduate School Humanities</b>	<b>year 1</b>	<b>year 2</b>	<b>year 3</b>	<b>year 4</b>
PhD project management (compulsory)	0.5 EC			
Advanced Academic Writing (in English or Dutch, compulsory)		3 EC		
Presentation skills (in English or Dutch, compulsory)			1 EC	
Dutch language course (optional)	3 EC			
Building an academic career (optional)		0.5 EC		
PhD Social Skills (optional)		0.5 EC		
Blogging and Twitter for academics (optional)		0.5 EC		
Academic English (optional)		3 EC		
Teacher training (optional)			2 EC	
How to write a Postdoc research proposal (optional)			0.5 EC	
Valorisation (optional)				0,5 EC

**Please indicate which courses the PhD candidate will take at national research schools:**

<b>Courses offered by national research schools</b>	
Course / EC:	
Research school:	
Planned in year of doctoral program:	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 * <span style="float: right;">*Please strike out what is not relevant</span>
Course / EC:	
Research school:	
Planned in year of doctoral program:	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 * <span style="float: right;">*Please strike out what is not relevant</span>
Course / EC:	
Research school:	
Planned in year of doctoral program:	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 * <span style="float: right;">*Please strike out what is not relevant</span>
Course / EC:	

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Research school:			
Planned in year of doctoral program:	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 *		*Please strike out what is not relevant
Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:
Signature Principle Supervisor (promotor)	Signature PhD candidate	Signature Director Graduate School	Signature Director Research School

Additional remarks:
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#### **4. Training Plan - external**

**Please indicate what additional external courses the PhD candidate will have to take:**

External courses	
Course / EC:	
Institution:	
Estimated costs:	
Financed by:	
Planned in year of doctoral program:	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 * *Please strike out what is not relevant
Course / EC:	
Institution:	
Estimated costs:	
Financed by:	
Planned in year of doctoral program:	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 * *Please strike out what is not relevant

#### **5. Approval / Signatures**

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## **Appendix 2 - Duties and responsibilities**

### *1. The director of the Graduate School for Humanities*

The director of the Graduate School for Humanities has the final responsibility for the educational part of the PhD program. The director is responsible for the organization of education and manages the resources involved. He/She also monitors the quality of education.

The following tasks are also part of the responsibility of the director of the Graduate School for Humanities or his/her authorized representative:

- To provide information about the relevant training opportunities within and outside the university;
- To organize the Skills development training at the Graduate School of Humanities and ensure the participation of candidates in national research schools;
- To sign and approve the OBP (Training and Supervision Plan), for which the director of the Graduate School has the final responsibility;
- To ensure that it is reported which courses PhD candidates take, and to take care of the administrative procedures.

### *2. The director of the Faculty Research Institute (AIHR)*

The director of AIHR oversees the correct functioning of the research schools regarding the selection, monitoring and evaluation of PhD candidates. He/she also takes decisions in those cases in which agreement cannot be reached at the level of research schools.

### *3. The director of the research school*

The director of the research school (or his/her authorized representative, in particular the coordinator of the research school) takes the initiative to draw up the OBP and oversees its implementation. He/she also monitors the quality of the supervision of the candidate. The evaluation of supervisor / principal supervisor and other supervisors falls within his/her responsibility.

The following tasks are also the responsibility of the director of the research school or his/her authorized representative:

- To provide information on conferences / symposia etc. inside and outside the university;

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- To report and administratively handle the progress monitoring and assessment interviews;
- To allow the termination of a project in case of insufficient progress;
- To mediate in any disputes between candidate and supervisor / co-supervisor;<sup>20</sup>
- To capture data that provide insight into the PhD success rate (*promotierendement*).

#### 4. Principal supervisor

The supervisor should coach, assist, inspire and encourage the candidate. The supervisor is supposed to help the candidate find the right strategies and resources that lead to answers to the research questions of the OBP.

Furthermore, the supervisor should focus on the following points:

- To complete the OBP in time;
- To have regular (at least monthly) meetings with the candidate;
- To assess the progress the candidate makes by reviewing the pilot study that is submitted by the candidate at the end of the ninth month of the appointment.
- To discuss the annual progress reports;
- To encourage the candidate to attend conferences and other activities that aim at internationalization;
- To assist the PhD candidate in outlining a future career path inside and outside of the institution;
- To provide all relevant information on progress and performance of the candidate to the director of the research school.

#### 5. The PhD candidate

The duties and responsibilities of the PhD candidate include:

- To meet the requirements of the Doctorate Regulations as to Admission to the doctoral programme and if necessary Exemption from the legal educational requirements;
- To conduct research;
- Together with the principle/daily supervisor, to set up or adjust a draft of sections 1 to 5 of the Training and Supervision plan;
- To prepare a dissertation plan;
- To report in writing the progress of the doctoral research, which is important in view of the assessment of the pilot study (which will take place for a regular appointment of 0.8 FTE in the tenth month) and the annual progress reports;
- To write and publicly defend the dissertation.

#### 6. Afdeling

The department chair – *afdelingsvoorzitter* - has personnel mandate; the PhD candidate therefore legally speaking belongs under his/her authority. However – given the specific

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<sup>20</sup> If the conflict cannot be solved in this way, the Arbitration procedure as foreseen in Section XI of the Doctorate Regulations must be applied.

requirements of the functioning of the candidates within the context of the research school, the Graduate School, and the department – the research department conducts the appointment and extension modalities and provides the standard facilities that are applicable for any staff. For more information, PhD candidates can contact the relevant Head of Operational Management (*Hoofd bedrijfsvoering*).

#### *7. The personnel advisers (P&O-adviseurs)*

The personnel advisers advise – if necessary in confidentiality – the director of AIHR and the individual staff members in cases concerning appointments, salary grades, progress, dismissal, and functioning of the candidate.

#### *8. The officer for Academic Affairs*

The officer for Academic Affairs monitors the application of the Doctorate Regulations. This includes the procedures for Admission to the doctoral programme (and if necessary Exemption from the legal educational requirements) at the very start of the PhD research and the composition of the Doctorate Committee and the formal aspects of the manuscript towards the end, as well as the check on plagiarism required by the Doctorate Regulations.