



Faculty of Humanities

Research Support Office

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Dear new PhD Candidate,

Welcome to the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Amsterdam. With this letter we not only want to express how much we appreciate that you are joining our research community, but would also like to provide some practical information regarding your new position.

1. The Job

Research School

As a PhD candidate your primary affiliation is with the Research School. The Research School has selected and endorsed your project and is glad to offer you a position within their community. It is in the interest of the Research School that your work progresses smoothly and in a satisfactory way. Please make sure that you get to know the coordinator of your school, who can help you find your way around and assist you when necessary.

Beginning

At the beginning of your PhD trajectory it is essential to have a meeting with your supervisors to discuss how your supervision will take shape. In particular, the division of tasks between your supervisors should be clarified; you should make a plan for your project. This plan is obviously not set in stone, but will be continuously adapted along the way. Most importantly, you should agree on the topic of the pilot study and a plan to have it ready in time (see below).

New PhD candidates will be invited by the Research School together with their supervisors in the first month of their contract period. At this meeting the above agreements will be discussed and noted in the *PhD Training and Supervision Plan*. Included in this plan is the date for the pilot study: the most important assessment in your first year.

As of September 2018, funded PhD candidates are in principle expected to teach in their second and third year for 0,2 fte. We recommend to discuss teaching options at the start of the PhD trajectory, in relation to your Training and Supervision Plan. In order to obtain a University Teaching Qualification (UTQ/BKO), the courses you teach should meet certain criteria. See: <https://aihr.uva.nl/phds-in-the-humanities/skills-development-training-at-the-graduate-school/overview-phd-skills-courses.html> .

Supervision

Make sure you report to your supervisors on the progress of your work at least once every six weeks. It is particularly important to contact your supervisors if you are feeling stuck or are facing issues that make it difficult to work on your PhD thesis. Only if your supervisors are aware of any problems they can help you resolve it or refer you to other people who can.

Please note that regular contact between you and your supervisors is a shared responsibility.

Generally, supervisory meetings last between thirty minutes and two hours. Make sure that you use your time well: hand in a written text or revised planning well in advance and make a list of the issues you want to discuss.

If a conflict with (or between) your supervisors occurs and you cannot resolve it, the director or vice-director of your Research School can mediate. Contact them or the coordinator. You don't have to solve such problems without help. Alternatively you can also seek advice from the PhD council (see below).

Evaluations

Usually, the Research School organizes evaluation meetings with all PhD candidates and their supervisors once a year (with self-funded PhDs the frequency may be different, see below). The candidates will report on their progress and their plan for the remainder of the trajectory. Besides that, your C.V. and non-research activities can be discussed, such as teaching opportunities, conference/summer school participation, or submitting publications. During the evaluation meeting attention should be paid to the supervision itself by reflecting on the collaboration between PhD candidate and supervisors.

Health issues, parental leave, and all other possible causes of delay should also be discussed during the evaluation. If you want more information on your legal position and/or the support structures offered by the University of Amsterdam, please consult the A – Z list on the UvA website (see below).

Self-funded PhD candidates do not necessarily have annual evaluation talks, but schools ask by email to send a short report every year and these meetings can be organized if necessary.

First year assessment for internally funded PhD candidates: go or no go

During the first year, funded PhD candidates are assessed on the basis of a pilot study evaluated by the supervisors, an external reader and the director of the Research School. In case this assessment is positive, the contract will be extended for the remaining period. If not, your contract will be terminated.

Because of this “go/no-go moment” it is important that you and your supervisors draft a plan for the completion of the pilot study – including deadlines and feedback moments – as soon as possible after the beginning of the contract. The completion of the pilot study should be the absolute priority for both the PhD candidate and the supervisors in the first year. Please make sure that you receive good information on the requirements of the pilot study and the implications of this important assessment from the coordinator of your school.

For PhD candidates with a full-time employment contract (1.0 fte), the pilot study is normally due in the 9th month; for PhD candidates with a part-time employment contract (0.8 fte), the pilot study is normally due in the 10th month. The month in which the evaluation will take place is stipulated in your employment contract.

For self-funded PhD candidates, the first-year evaluation is less rigorous. They are expected to produce a pilot study in their first year, but continuation of their position depends solely on the approval of the pilot study by their supervisors. If they deem that the project can result in a successful PhD thesis the position will be extended for the remaining period.

Difficulties and tips

This may sound a little alarming, but every PhD candidate will experience ups and downs, and sometimes the downs can be tenacious. Writing a thesis is a difficult and sometimes lonely undertaking. For many of you this will be your first job. A responsible job, and one without daily supervision. There is no one who will tell you exactly when to do what, and as an academic staff member, you do not have to register your periods of leave or to be present at work on a daily basis. Although this is not an obligation, we do recommend that you report ill, especially when you are ill for a period longer than 4 weeks. You can register this in the Self Tool (see below) and inform your supervisors and the coordinator of your research school.

Besides writing your thesis, you are therefore also your own project manager. Make sure you define a clear set of rules for yourself and stick to them. Make a daily schedule and a work plan for the longer term. And be a wise manager who takes time for self-care: make sure that you include periods of rest, relaxation and physical exercise.

For many people it helps to start writing as soon as possible. It is normal to feel insecure at first, but you learn writing by doing it. And even if the first result will not be as good as you would like it to be, it will give you something to build on and a feeling of substantial progress.

Do not commit yourself to too many activities (such as teaching, organizing events, writing articles). Always put your thesis on the first place and try to make other activities feed directly into the PhD thesis. Protect your time.

If you suffer from a writing block, or something else that prevents you to make progress do not panic; most of these problems are common and can be solved. It may be the case that you will encounter more serious work-related mental or physical health problems during your PhD. Make sure you seek help from your supervisors, the coordinator or your colleagues. There is also a psychological service available for free for PhD candidates (see the [service page](#)) and the University of Amsterdam also offers several courses to reduce stress.

2. Facilities

Research Funding

Self-Funded PhD candidates are entitled to a small research budget of up to € 3,000 (for the entire PhD trajectory, not per year) for conference visits, the production of the dissertation or other research costs. To apply for this funding, please send a message to Astrit Blommestijn: a.blommestijn@uva.nl. For more information, see: <https://aihr.uva.nl/phds-in-the-humanities/practical-matters/practical-matters.html>.

Faculty Funded PhD candidates are entitled to an annual research budget (the amount fluctuates; currently it is 1,200 Euro per year). To use this budget, please follow the instructions on this website: <https://medewerker.uva.nl/en/humanities/a-z/item/research-fund-fgw.html>

Faculty funded and self-funded PhD candidates can claim up to € 750,- for the final editing and printing of their manuscripts. Please contact Astrit Blommestijn to access this budget.

Externally Funded PhD candidates usually have a separate budget (bench fee) in their project. They should contact their project manager or supervisor/coordinator of the school.

Self-Service Tool

The self-service tool (<https://zelfbediening.sap.uva.nl/uva>) allows you to submit reimbursement requests and report ill or pregnant. Here you may also view your personal information and salary specification.

UvAnet and Library Access

All PhD candidates receive an UvA-net ID which gives access to all the databases and electronic journals to which the UvA library subscribes, WIFI, SURFspot (including—for funded PhDs-- an annual budget for software etc.), and Blackboard. The UvA-net ID also gives access to e-mail facilities, both with an e-mail client and with webmail, and a login for UvA computers.

UvA Staff Card

In the Netherlands, PhD candidates are considered to be 'employees' and not 'students'. Hence, you are entitled to an UvA staff card, for which you can apply here:

<https://medewerker.uva.nl/en/humanities/shared-content-secured/medewerkersites/uva-medewerkers/en/az/staff-id-card/staff-id-card>

UvA Profile

All PhD candidates will be visible on the UvA website. Please make sure to create and update your online profile: <https://medewerker.uva.nl/en/humanities/shared-content-secured/medewerkersites/uva-medewerkers/en/az/my-uva-profile/my-uva-profile>

Office Space

At the Faculty of Humanities, PhD candidates are assigned to the Department of their main supervisor and these departments are responsible for providing office space to funded PhD candidates. If possible, your supervisor, or the Research School will try to arrange a flexible work space for self-funded PhD candidates.

Training

At the Faculty of Humanities, PhD candidates are not obliged to earn ECTS credits. Training is offered on a voluntary basis and we encourage you to make a fruitful selection of what is offered. Your Research School and the Graduate School of Humanities offer PhD training. Their programmes are free and open to all PhD candidates. The Graduate School offers Dutch language courses and academic skills training (such as presenting and academic writing). The Graduate School also organizes an introductory meeting for new PhD candidates twice a year.

The national research schools also offer PhD courses, which are usually open to all PhD candidates (sometimes a small fee is charged to non-members). Funded PhD candidates all enrol in one national research school (which is registered in the OBP); self-funded PhD candidates also have the option to enrol (sometimes a fee is charged) and participate in the national research schools.

See: <https://aihr.uva.nl/phds-in-the-humanities/skills-development-training-at-the-graduate-school/phd-training.html>

Finishing Fellowships

The Faculty of Humanities offers fellowships to self-funded PhD candidates who have reached the finishing stage of their project. These fellowships are announced on the [AIHR website](#).

3. Regulations

Admission to the Defense

At the time of your registration, you will be asked to register for the Admission to the Defense. This is a separate administrative track handled by Tanja Rijstenbil and Hotze Mulder, who can be contacted at promoties-fgw@uva.nl. See: <http://www.uva.nl/en/research/phd/doctoral-programme/admission/admission.html>

PhD Regulations

All formal regulations for PhD candidates at the Faculty of Humanities can be found in the PhD Regulations document <https://aihr.uva.nl/phds-in-the-humanities/practical-matters/practical-matters.html>

Ethics Committee

Projects involving participation of other people (such as is the case with interviews) are becoming more frequent within this faculty. Your supervisors may not be aware that for such projects the [ethics committee](#) must give its approval. Please contact Gea Lindeboom if you do something involving participants: commissie-ethiek-fgw@uva.nl

Finishing

When you approach the completion of your PhD thesis, please read (at least twice) the PhD Defense Guidelines: <http://aihr.uva.nl/phds-in-the-humanities/practical-matters/practical-matters.html>.

4. Social

Since writing a PhD thesis is something you do virtually alone, it can be lonely affair. Fortunately, you will discover that you have many colleagues, in your school or department, with whom you may share your experiences. In addition to this, there are some other groups that may contribute to a pleasant social life.

International PhD candidates

There is a special section on the UvA website for international students and employees which will help them with practical matters and has many valuable tips: <http://www.uva.nl/en/about-the-uva/working-at-the-uva/practical-information/practical-information.html>

PhD Council

The PhD council represents all PhD candidates at the Faculty in all matters that affect their interests. Each Research School has at least one representative who represents both funded and self-funded candidates. Its main task is to advise the research director of Amsterdam Institute for Humanities Research, Thomas Vaessens, and the head of research of the Faculty of Humanities, Elske Gerritsen. The PhD council welcomes your suggestions, concerns and comments concerning your labor rights, problems with supervision and other matters that affect your research: <http://aihr.uva.nl/phds-in-the-humanities/phd-council/phd-council.html>

Jong UvA

Jong UvA is a network for young employees (<36) of the University of Amsterdam. In spite of its ageist character, this may be worth checking out. They organize events where you can meet other young academics: www.uva.nl/jonguva

All other practical matters (A – Z List)

The University of Amsterdam is a huge and complex organization, offering practical assistance to its employees on many levels: medical and psychological services, sport facilities, assistance with visa applications, housing, language courses, career coaching etc. Many interesting things, and also the updated regulations on parental leave or illness, can be found in the A – Z list: <https://medewerker.uva.nl/en/humanities/a-z/a-z.html>.

Other sources of information are the website of your Research School and of the Amsterdam Institute for Humanities Research website: <http://aihr.uva.nl/>.

We expect that during your first months at the Faculty of Humanities, as well as later on, many more questions will arise. Try not to worry about it: the Faculty of Humanities is an incredible complex organization, but eventually you will get some sense of how it works. Always keep in mind that, even though you are the person in charge of your project, we are in this together, and you can ask for help.

Best wishes,
On behalf of the Faculty of Humanities,

Elske Gerritsen
Irene Zwiép

