

International Scholarship PhD candidates – Faculty of Law – February 2025

Scope of application

This policy applies to international scholarship PhD candidates ('type 2b'). According to the [Universities of the Netherlands \(UNL\) definition](#), these are PhD candidates who do not have an employment contract with the university where they are doing their PhD, but whose main objective is to complete their PhD and who receive a scholarship for this purpose. These candidates differ from other types of PhD candidates without an employment contract. 'Type 3' PhD candidates are externally funded PhD candidates who receive funding other than in the form of a scholarship and who may complete their PhD 'during their employer's time', while 'type 4' PhD candidates are not given time or money by an external party, but are instead self-funded or funded by, for example, family members.

The following applies to international scholarship PhD candidates:

The VU admits international scholarship PhD candidates to PhD trajectories, providing they meet the following conditions:

1. Start of the trajectory

We aim to clarify our expectations from the outset (i.e. before the start of the trajectory) so that PhD candidates and their supervisors have a strong substantive basis for successfully completing the trajectory. We take various steps to ensure this clarity:

a. Checking quality of research proposal

The supervising team will ensure, through the involvement of the Graduate School, that the PhD candidate's research proposal is of sufficient quality and can be completed within the envisaged period.

Faculty of Law Graduate School (RCH):

- Within the Faculty, research proposals that have not been checked are read by the referees committee. This committee, consisting of current or former members of the Research Board, will assess the prospective PhD candidate's research proposal before the start of the trajectory. The intended supervisor will submit the research proposal to the Graduate School, which will then select and contact two members of the committee to read the proposal and assess its quality and feasibility.

b. Checking candidates' English

In liaison with the Graduate School, the intended supervisors will check whether the candidate's English (written and spoken) is such that he or she can engage in scholarly debate with peers and be part of the research community. Ways in which a candidate's linguistic proficiency can be measured or checked include requesting a certificate (requiring a minimum score) and attending an interview.

Faculty of Law Graduate School (RCH):

- Written proficiency
 - o A language certificate such as TOEFL (100) and/or IELTS (7.0) is a good indicator of proficiency in written English.
- Spoken proficiency
 - o An interview, possibly on Zoom, will be scheduled by the intended supervisor to check a candidate's spoken proficiency. This interview will be attended by the supervisor, as well as by a peer who is not a member of the supervising team. The intended supervisor is responsible for the interview and will report the outcome to the Graduate School.

Every prospective PhD candidate must meet the following conditions. No exemptions are granted, even for prospective candidates who have completed a Research Master programme.

c. Checking knowledge security

The VU Amsterdam knowledge security framework is part of our process for entering into, extending and evaluating international collaboration and so also part of the process for international scholarship PhD candidates. The supervising team will consult the Faculty's knowledge security contact(s) to assess

the risks in this respect. The Faculty will then decide whether to proceed with the candidate.

Faculty of Law Graduate School (RCH):

- Check knowledge security via [Knowledge security for VU employees - VU Amsterdam](#).

d. Budget

How the full duration of the PhD trajectory, including research and related development costs, is to be funded must be clear from the start of the trajectory. The Faculty covers the education costs for the 30 EC per PhD candidate (in accordance with the Doctorate Regulations). Account also has to be taken of training costs and the costs of attending conferences (funded by the Faculty or the scholarship provider).

Faculty of Law Graduate School (RCH):

- Courses arranged by the Faculty of Law Graduate School can be followed free of charge, including the compulsory elements (an academic integrity and a methodology course). PhD candidates may also choose to take courses elsewhere, but the Graduate School does not have a budget for any fees that may then be payable.
- The department must make a PhD 'pot' of EUR 5000 available if this is not included in the candidate's scholarship. This is usually used to pay course and conference attendance fees (e.g. registration costs and travel and accommodation expenses).

2. Financial position during PhD trajectory

The financial position of international scholarship PhD candidates must be sufficient and, in any event, meet the standard set by the Dutch Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND). If the scholarship is insufficient for this purpose, the Faculty will arrange a top-up. The general rule applying is that the top-up must not be awarded in return for some other kind of performance. In practice, therefore, the PhD candidate cannot be asked to perform work for the VU (excluding work relating to the PhD) that would otherwise be performed by someone in paid employment.

The total amount of the scholarship must take account of the fact that the standard set by the IND is indexed semi-annually. To ensure that the scholarship meets the IND standard throughout the research period, any top-up awarded must take account of the IND's semi-annual indexation and the costs of living in Amsterdam.

Faculty of Law Graduate School (RCH):

- If the IND standard is not met, the department must arrange a top-up. This means drawing up a written agreement with the international scholarship PhD candidate. This will state that the agreement does not constitute an employment contract (fictitious or otherwise). The agreement will also specify the rights and obligations of both the Faculty and the PhD candidate regarding the top-up. A model agreement is available. It is the intended supervisor's responsibility to establish, before the start of the trajectory, whether a top-up is necessary and to check whether the department has sufficient funds for this purpose.
- If the scholarship covers only three years of research, the intended supervisor must submit a request to the Research Portfolio Holder for matching.

NB: Scholarship PhD candidates are not allowed to be assigned to teach in return for the top-up!

3. During the trajectory: part of the VU community

International scholarship PhD candidates are part of the VU community and contribute to the research culture that we aim to maintain through our research strategy based on an open and enterprising approach, a safe working environment, diversity, transparency and integrity.

VU researchers inspire and learn from each other in the linked Research Data Management, Open Science, Academic Integrity, Science in Dialogue and Knowledge Security communities.

In turn, the VU undertakes the following as a sign of our commitment to international scholarship PhD candidates:

- a. The faculties provide access to all digital and other systems relevant to the candidate;
- b. The faculties ensure that international scholarship PhD candidates can take part in the [Bridging Programme](#);
- c. The VU allows international scholarship PhD candidates the same access to the VU Sport Centre and VU Griffioen theatre as other colleagues.

Faculty of Law Graduate School (RCH):

- a. VunetID (annually: approx. EUR 1000 + EUR 9000 for workspace);
- b. Bridging Programme (EUR 750); this can be reimbursed from the candidate's PhD 'pot';
- c. Staff rates for scholarship PhD candidates.

Summary of costs

What?	Costs (EUR)	Total	Who pays?
Top-up	Depends on amount and duration of scholarship		Department
VunetID (+ workspace)	1000 (9000) per year	4000 or 36000	Department
PhD 'pot' (e.g. for Bridging Programme)	5000	5000	Included in scholarship; otherwise the department
Language test (own costs)	100	100	PhD candidate

Creating the PhD file

The intended supervisor is responsible for creating the PhD file. This will consist of:

- Report by the referees committee on its assessment of the research proposal;
- Test of language proficiency: written (test) and spoken (interview);
- Knowledge security advice, if applicable;
- Check of financial position + (if applicable) draft agreement on top-up;
- Budget plan (PhD 'pot' + hospitality).

The file will be submitted to the Graduate School. If the file is approved, the intended supervisor will contact the International Office to set the procedure in motion for applying for the scholarship. The International Office will support the application for accommodation and a visa.

Formal admission to the trajectory and the applicable regulations will start upon registration in Hora Finita.