



**PhD policy
of the
School of Business and Economics**

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PhD policy of the School of Business and Economics

PhD candidates are essential for the progress of science. Our mission is to attract highly motivated, talented PhD candidates to further cultivate their talents through extensive supervision, by welcoming them in an international, open and inspiring environment where knowledge exchange and research cooperation are highly stimulated, and by providing a safe, informal and friendly atmosphere.

In this document we describe our policy and rules with regard to PhD trajectories, in accordance with the [Doctorate Regulations](#) of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (2024). On average, 20 PhD candidates are appointed at SBE each year. In addition, a large number of external PhD candidates are working on their dissertation under the supervision of at least two (co)supervisors from SBE. Approximately 30 PhD candidates receive a PhD degree each year at the faculty. All the PhD candidates at SBE are affiliated with ABRI or Tinbergen Institute, including the external and part-time PhD candidates.

Start of PhD

- **Initiation of PhD trajectories**

The way in which PhD students are recruited at SBE depends on the funding of the PhD trajectory.

PhDs funded by the university

Up until now it has been customary to recruit a fixed number of PhD candidates annually from the Tinbergen Institute and for ABRI. Due to budget cuts this recruitment has been put on hold for a while.

Externally funded PhDs

Supervisors can generate PhD positions through grants and contract research. The recruitment of externally funded doctoral candidates is not centrally regulated. The supervisor arranges the recruitment, with possible advice from the PhD candidate advisor for ABRI or TI.

The basic requirements for these PhD candidates are the following:

- At least a university master's diploma
- Excellent grades for master's
- A good proficiency of English (IELTS: 7.0; TOEFL: 100)

The supervisors can contact the PhD candidate advisor for advice (for possible candidates or suggestions for the selection process). When the PhD is appointed, the PhD coordinator and the PhD candidate advisor will be notified, so that the PhD candidate will be registered at Hora Finita, will be informed about the rules, procedures and facilities at SBE, and will be invited to meet with the PhD candidate advisor.

The externally funded PhD candidate will be affiliated with the Tinbergen Institute or ABRI.

Part-time, external and scholarship PhD candidates

For the appointment of part-time, external and scholarship PhD candidates a checklist need to be followed by the supervisors. This checklist includes checks on the research proposal, English language proficiency, knowledge security, and a budget plan.

The general admission criteria for PhD candidates apply:

- At least a university master's diploma
- Excellent grades for master's
- A good proficiency of English (IELTS: 7.0; TOEFL: 100)

Part-time, external and scholarship PhD candidates can take courses at the institute that they are affiliated with (Tinbergen Institute or ABRI) as well as other faculties of the VU or other graduate schools (30 ECTS) after approval of their TSP by the PhD candidate advisor and after payment of the tuition fee.

Registration in Hora Finita can be delayed during the first year.

The part-time PhD candidates who register for the Executive ABRI or Finance part-time program follow a fixed application procedure with a deadline. They are also required to follow a prescribed training programme.

• Supervisory team

Projects need at least two active supervisors (either first and second supervisor or first supervisor and co-supervisor, at minimum). At least one supervisor should qualify for the SBE publication criteria for Professor 2. Every PhD supervisor at SBE is expected to follow the 'supervising PhD students' course at the VU. This will be monitored by the Research Office and the HRM department.

• Training and Supervision Plan

To be formally admitted to a PhD trajectory at the VU, the PhD candidate and supervisors fill out the Training and Supervision Plan ([TSP](#)). This TSP should be created within the first three months of a project, except for the PhD candidates of the Executive Finance or ABRI Part-time PhD program in Business who will fill out the TSP after the 1st year when the supervisory team is appointed. When the TSP is completed, it will be sent to the PhD candidate advisor for approval. When the plan is approved, the plan will be uploaded in Hora Finita. A PhD candidate cannot be formally admitted to a PhD trajectory without an approved TSP and a PhD cannot be completed without a fulfilled TSP. The TSP consists of the following items:

Research Proposal and work plan

Every PhD candidate works with a feasible research proposal as of the start of the PhD or after the 1st year (executive trajectories), including a realistic work plan. It should be updated over time to make sure that at each moment a candidate has a feasible plan to complete within a mutually agreed time-frame.

Teaching

PhD students who are employed at SBE have a teaching obligation because it is important for their (academic) career to gain teaching experience. Regular PhD candidates have a teaching load of 0.2 fte. Departments have flexibility to spread teaching load across candidates and across periods. Supervisors and department heads need to ensure that PhD candidates do not teach more than expected.

SBE has set up a teaching skills course, the so-called mini-BKO, for the employed PhD candidates to give them the skills to teach and supervise theses. This teaching course consists of 3 modules: Module 1 (basic teaching skills) takes place in September/October, Module 2 (advanced teaching skills) takes place in January and Module 3 (thesis supervision) takes place in March / April. Once PhDs have completed all modules, they will receive 4 ECTS.

Scholarship PhD candidates and external PhD candidates have no teaching obligation and therefore do not take the teaching skills course.

Training

All PhD candidates at the VU need to receive training at PhD level of a total size of at least 30 ECTS. PhD candidates who have completed a research master's degree in a relevant direction are exempt from following training. All PhD candidates of SBE are affiliated with the Tinbergen Institute or ABRI where they can take the courses to fulfill the requirement of 30 ECTS. It is also possible to take courses at other graduate schools within or outside the VU. An overview of all courses offered at the VU is available on [the VU PhD portal](#). In addition, ABRI has defined a baseline [curriculum](#) for each research track. In consultation with the supervisors and upon approval of the PhD candidate advisor, a training plan is drawn up at the start of the PhD process. Some components are compulsory for all PhD candidates, like the research integrity course and others are electives. The training program should form a complete and coherent whole. Only in exceptional cases PhD candidates are exempted from training.

Supervision

We expect supervisors to be closely involved and co-responsible for a project (e.g. contact every two weeks). Supervisors should support and mentor candidates, make sure that candidates have a feasible (high-level) planning throughout the trajectory, and that supervisor and candidate mutually agree on expectations that are aligned with career prospects. PhD candidates and supervisors should explicate expectations on content, process, and ambitions, which may be tailored to domain, topic, and candidate. The PhD candidate and the supervisors should discuss expectations at the start of the PhD and continue the conversation. Expectations may differ between candidates who aim for a position outside academia and candidates who want to be competitive at the academic job market. The role of supervisors could also become part of conversations as part of monitoring of progress. New PhD supervisors will be required to take the PhD supervision course (not only the main supervisors, but also co-supervisors). This item should be part of the annual evaluation with the head of department. Supervisors are permitted to supervise a maximum of 12 PhD candidates simultaneously, ensuring that each candidate receives the level of attention and academic support required to safeguard the quality of supervision.

- **Hora Finita**

[Hora Finita](#) is the registration system for PhD candidates of VU Amsterdam. All processes related to the PhD trajectory, from the admission to the trajectory to the submission of the dissertation, run through this system. PhD candidates are registered in Hora Finita within the first three months (external PhD candidates after the first year by the research policy officer. The key users of Hora Finita are part of the Research office (graduateschool.sbe@vu.nl). PhD candidates and their supervisors have access to Hora Finita with their vUNET-id or E-number.

PhD trajectories

- **Duration**

PhD trajectories typically take 4 years. In exceptional cases, a PhD candidate may be appointed for a period of three years. This applies, for example, to three-year trajectories within MSCA-DN projects. In such cases, the candidate must hold a research master's degree. The appointment is first for one year. After a positive assessment after the first year, the PhD position is extended for the remaining period. In the event of a negative assessment, the appointment will be discontinued. More information on this is described in section *Go/No Go*.

Scholarship PhD candidates usually receive a scholarship for 4 years and receive access to facilities for that period. The duration of part-time programs (external PhD candidates) depends on the time that these PhD candidates can spend on their research.

- **Monitoring and support**

At the start of the PhD trajectory, the Training and Supervision Plan is drawn up, which also focuses on a good and workable work plan for the entire period. In addition, the faculty has PhD candidate advisors, one for the TI PhD candidates and one for the ABRI PhD candidates. These PhD candidate advisors meet with all PhD candidates at least once a year in which progress and other PhD-related issues are discussed. In these meetings light-weight progress reports are used. In case of concerns, the supervisor(s) should be included in the conversation.

In addition, PhD candidates can make an appointment with the confidential counsellor of the faculty, Ina Putter, to discuss other issues that may occur. Depending on the issues, she may refer the PhD candidate to other persons such as the [confidential counsellor](#) for academic integrity issues, the [confidential counsellor](#) for VU personnel, or other [support](#).

- **Annual Introduction Meeting**

In October SBE organizes an introduction meeting for all the new PhD candidates. During this meeting, the PhD candidates receive information about their PhD programme from the two graduate schools (ABRI and TI) and about the facilities offered by the faculty. The meeting will be concluded with drinks or a lunch where PhD candidates can get to know each other.

- **Go/No go**

Within one year (9-10 months) after the start of the PhD trajectory the PhD will be evaluated by the supervisors in a Go/No Go interview (coinciding with the first yearly evaluation), based on a progress report of the PhD candidate and the (updated) TSP and advice of the PhD candidate advisor.

In this interview, the supervisor will discuss the work of the PhD, their performance, the atmosphere at work, and working conditions. Furthermore, agreements will be made concerning the quality and execution of research and other tasks.

This interview should be taken very seriously. If there are any doubts concerning the performance of the PhD candidate, then the Scientific Committee and the PhD candidate advisor can be contacted for advice. After a positive evaluation, the contract will be extended for the remaining years, and the candidate should normally be able to finish the PhD.

- **Plagiarism scan**

VU and SBE mandate at least one plagiarism scan for education and prevention purposes. PhD candidates who started in or after September 2022, need to scan their first academic product (article or chapter) using the dedicated VU-licensed plagiarism software (Ithenticate). Results have to be discussed with PhD supervisors, and conclusions are to be shared with SBE's Research Office and uploaded in Hora Finita. In case of serious concerns, performance of another scan is mandatory before the thesis is finished.

- **PhD community**

A successful PhD project also depends on a supportive community. PhD candidates can find this among other PhD candidates in the graduate school as well as in the departments. Both ABRI and TI stimulate the development of collaborative relations. For both [ABRI PhDs](#) and [TI PhDs](#), SBE offers community pages at Canvas to share information. At SBE a [PhD council](#) has been installed in which the PhD candidates of the faculty are represented and who organizes academic and social events for all the PhD candidates of SBE.

End of the PhD

- **Thesis criteria**

The [Doctorate Regulations](#) of the VU (2024) specifies the basic rules regarding PhD trajectories. With regard to thesis content, SBE follows the guidelines and criteria as laid down in articles 16, 17, and 21 of the doctorate regulations, but with the following additions:

1. Within SBE, most dissertations will be written as a coherent collection of articles. In principle, such a collection involves at least three articles based on original research (empirical, theoretical, or otherwise). Depending on the nature of the research occasionally more articles may be included as part of the dissertation.
2. There is no strict criterion that these articles already need to have been published at the point at which the dissertation is submitted. The articles need to be of publishable quality, and may in due course be submitted to journals and/or publishers for publication.
3. In line with article 16, clause 5, SBE will ask each candidate when they submit their dissertation for examination to complete a form which indicates their own and others' contribution to each article (in terms of the work carried out). We expect that the contribution of the PhD candidate to the dissertation as a whole is in principle substantially larger than the contribution of each of the co-authors. The dissertation may include chapters for which the PhD did not contribute most work and is not first author, as long as the PhD's contribution to it was an essential part of the work. Supervising a PhD is not a sufficient condition for being listed as co-author; each co-author should fulfill the criteria for a contribution as specified in the [Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#) and explicated in [SBE's authorship guidelines](#).
4. When a dissertation consists of articles, SBE strongly recommends that PhD candidates affiliated with Tinbergen Institute include as part of their dissertation at least one single-authored article (in light of academic job market prospects).

- **Doctorate Board**

Once the thesis is completed, and the 30 ECTS are obtained or waived – this will be checked by the PhD candidate advisor – the PhD candidate initiates the finishing process by uploading the manuscript in Hora Finita and submitting the application for the defense.

Once the manuscript has been approved by all of the supervisors and co-supervisors, they, the graduate school and the PhD candidate receive an email confirming this. The first supervisor also receives an email asking him to propose members of the doctorate board to assess the manuscript. The supervisor proposes the members of the doctorate board, having first checked informally whether they want to take part. For detailed rules of the doctorate board: see article 13 of the doctorate regulations. In case of doubt, supervisors may check with the dean before checking informally with potential members.

After approval of the dean (in consultation of the scientific committee), an automatic email is sent to the members of the doctorate board as an invitation to assess the manuscript.

When all the board members have submitted an assessment - after 30 days - the chairperson is notified and submits the final assessment and recommendation to the dean.

After a positive assessment of the manuscript, the dean will grant the PhD candidate the opportunity to defend the manuscript. The PhD candidate can contact the Beadle's Office to schedule a date for the defense. Planning the date of the defense is not part of Hora Finita. As soon as a final date has been scheduled, the PhD candidate receives an email with instructions on the title page, printing the dissertation, uploading the thesis to the library, the reception, the presentation and the dress code, among other things.

- **Contract extension**

PhD contracts typically last 4 years. The planning of the PhD should be such that the manuscript is completed, and send to the doctorate committee, at the end of the contract. In some cases, an extension of the contract is possible, funded by the departments or individual supervisors.

- **Job Market**

During their PhD trajectory, the PhD candidate needs to be prepared for the job market or career after the PhD. The Tinbergen Institute offers an intensive job placement service, and ABRI offer job market preparation as well. Furthermore, PhD candidates can take advantage of the extensive international networks of TI and ABRI fellows and PhD supervisors to secure placements in leading national and international academic and private institutions. Besides, PhD candidates are stimulated to take workshops organized by the [Career Office](#) to be well prepared for their career after their PhD.

Fees and budgets

- **Tuition fees external and part-time PhD candidates**

For the scholarship PhD candidates who receive a scholarship from their government and for whom the government is willing to pay a tuition fee, SBE asks a tuition fee of €25,000 (€6,250 per year). This tuition fee covers the following costs for 4 years: doctoral education, research costs, conference visits, dissertation printing, vumet-id, and guest account, including access to office space and IT facilities. External PhD candidates who are doing a part-time PhD at SBE (outside the executive Finance and ABRI part-time PhD programme) pay a tuition fee of €5,000 per year for 4 years. When the thesis is still not finished after 4 year, they pay a fee of €1,000 until the end of the PhD trajectory (to cover costs for

vnunet-id, doctoral education and supervision). The maximum duration of external PhD trajectories is 10 years, except otherwise agreed with supervisors.

The external PhD candidates who are doing the [part-time PhD programme for business leaders at ABRI](#) or the part-time PhD in [Finance](#) pay a different fee for the costs of modules, individual supervision, access to summer schools, registration, food catering and access to VU facilities and services.

- **Budget**

PhD candidates who are employed at the School of Business and Economics have a research budget of €6,500. The PhD candidate can get reimbursed by filling out a reimbursement form at the HRM system. The 'wbs element' is H/271300.006 for TI PhD candidates and H/271300.008 for ABRI PhD candidates. PhD candidates who are employed on an NWO grant have a benchfee of 5,000 euro for research and traveling. They need to submit their claims on another 'wbs element' (project number). When the 5,000 euro is spent, they have another 1,500 euro research budget from SBE.

PhD candidates who need to take courses for 30 ECTS can also submit claims for the courses they have taken. They do not have a fixed budget for education, but the courses are paid by the faculty when approved in the TSP.

Full time PhD candidates with a scholarship for the China Scholarship Council have a research budget of €2,000. This budget is for traveling (in and outside the Netherlands for attending conferences, workshops, and summer schools, and for research visits at other universities), for literature, and other research activities. Their education for the 30 ECTS is paid by the faculty

- **Dissertation printing costs**

PhD theses of TI students are published in the Tinbergen Institute Research Series. For this purpose, TI has made an agreement with Rozenberg Publishers in Amsterdam. All internal PhD candidates affiliated with TI are supposed to publish their thesis in these series, provided that they finish their thesis within two years of the end of their TI appointment. When the thesis is published in these series, TI pays the printing costs of the thesis up to a maximum of €1.250.

PhD theses of ABRI PhD candidates are published in the ABRI Dissertation Series. For this purpose, ABRI will give the PhD candidate the ABRI logo and format to put on the back cover and the spine of the book. All internal PhD candidates of ABRI are supposed to publish their thesis in these series. SBE pays the printing costs up to a maximum of €1.250 for the internal PhD candidates.

- **Promotion Allowance**

After each successful PhD trajectory, the faculty is entitled to a promotion allowance from the Dutch government. SBE receives this allowance two years after the defense. The allowance will from 2024 onwards no longer be distributed among supervisors from different universities.

According to the Doctorate Regulations article 9.3 a dean may grant ius promovendi to an associate professor of their own faculty. The dean evaluates the competence of the staff member concerned in relation to the relevant criteria set by the College of Deans. The criteria are:

- the Associate Professor is a good researcher, as demonstrated by multiple peer-reviewed publications of excellent scientific quality. In particular, the associate professor meets the publications criteria as set for [professor 2](#).
- The Associate Professor is a good supervisor, attested by at least two successfully completed PhD theses that the associate professor has supervised in the formal role of co-supervisor.

If an associate professor meets these criteria, an application can be submitted for ius promovendi to the dean via Ina Putter (i.putter@vu.nl).