VU Graduate School of Social Sciences
Faculty of Social Sciences
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Information Document
for PhD candidates and supervisors
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1 Introduction: The Faculty of Social Sciences & the Graduate School of Social Sciences

The Faculty of Social Sciences (FSS) of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam is devoted to research and training in the social sciences. Since 2000 FSS has invested intensely in becoming a center for high-quality research. The faculty's mission is to continue being a stimulating environment for committed academics who contribute to scientific and public debates. FSS aims to strengthen research in specific domains of the social sciences: e.g. integration and diversity, religion and identity, (multi-level) governance, security and conflict, media communication, societal participation and the welfare state. These themes accommodate scientific disciplines who contribute to the research program of the faculty. To increase the value, impact, and originality of research, researchers in the faculty not only collaborate across the borders of their own discipline within the faculty, but also at the university level. A multidisciplinary focus is increasingly required for scientific research that really makes a societal contribution.

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam has created Inter-Faculty Research Institutes in which FSS researchers participate. Of special importance to the FSS are the Network Institute, the Talma Institute for the Study of Work, Care and Welfare, and the VU Interdisciplinary Centre for European Studies (VICES). As of 2015 our research programs are closely connected to the four research subthemes of the Institute for Societal Resilience: Resilient Governance; Resilience, Diversity and Inclusion; Resilience through Communication, Organization and Interconnectedness; and Care and Welfare in a Resilient Society.

The FSS programs have committed partnerships with various societal organizations. Continuous exchange with, and exposure to, the international research community is achieved through well-established collaborations all over the world, and an active membership of scholarly associations and editorial boards. FSS welcomes several international guests and awards international fellowships on a yearly basis.

1.1 Mission of the VU Graduate School of Social Sciences

The mission of the VU Graduate School of Social Sciences (VU-GSSS) is to organize activities to enhance the quality of PhD research, to organize the education of PhD candidates, and to stimulate PhD candidates in participating in, and contributing to, an inspiring scientific community, both within and outside the Faculty of Social Sciences. Quality VU-GSSS serves the FSS's ambition to develop towards a high quality of social science PhD's and supports them to develop international top-level research skills as independent researchers. In order to achieve these aims VU-GSSS guards processes that ensure the quality of all PhD candidates in the Faculty. It organizes the internal and external review of the quality of PhD projects: from application and selection, through progress reports and meetings to final submission of the dissertation. VU-GSSS ensures a safe environment for PhD candidates to work in. It also supports supervisors in achieving a higher quality in their supervision.
Education
VU-GSSS ensures that training of theoretical knowledge and methodological and academic skills is available in a variety of courses that can be followed by all PhD candidates. Acknowledging the variety of starting skills, it favors an adaptive program, and allowing access to courses in other settings. Specific information about courses offered can be found in chapter 3 and in our annual Study Guide. VU-GSSS also teaches and discusses responsibility in the social sciences in three areas: 1) doing research relevant to society; 2) being responsible in our research practices, and; 3) balancing external demands and personal integrity.

Community
VU-GSSS stimulates the maintenance and development of a lively and internationally oriented research community. All PhD candidates are stimulated to be part of the research community, and they are supported to self-organize and join international meetings. VU-GSSS supports an interesting and stimulating environment for international scholars and young researchers in the FSS. VU-GSSS collaborates closely with the research programs in the FSS and supports these programs in attracting potential PhD candidates. VU-GSSS supports PhD candidates in their individual growth towards scholarship and in becoming independent, fully qualified and responsible researchers.
2 Admission and Registration of PhD candidates

2.1 Different types of PhD candidates

VU-GSSS is responsible for the admission and registration of all PhD candidates that aim to obtain a doctorate degree within the Faculty of Social Sciences. There are different routes towards obtaining a PhD title. Following the definitions by VSNU (2013), we distinguish four types of PhD candidates:

Type 1. PhD candidates who are employed by Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam as an employee PhD candidate (in Dutch known as werknemer promovendus). They have a legally enshrined labor contract. Their funding may come from a variety of sources such as NWO, EU and public and private organizations.

Type 2. PhD candidates who are employed by Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam as a lecturer or researcher, and who receive additional research time to write a dissertation and pursue a PhD title (promoverende medewerker). They have a legally enshrined labor contract with a teaching component and a research component.

Type 3. PhD candidates not employed by Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, but with an official agreement to work towards obtaining a PhD (contractpromovendus). This category receives funding and/or time in order to pursue a PhD title, comprising categories as different as NWO-funded allowance-based PhD's from developing countries, NUFFIC-funded candidates, PhD's partially or fully-supported by third parties while employed or through other means connected to the PhD (the third parties being public organizations, companies, institutes of higher education, etc.).

Type 4. PhD candidates who do not have an employment contract with Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, but will have their doctoral defense ceremony at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and whose objective is to pursue a PhD title (buitenpromovendus). They do have an official agreement with the Faculty, but do not receive funding or time in order to work towards obtaining a PhD (for example pensioners or employees pursuing a PhD in their own time).

2.2 Admission (see § 4.5)

All PhD candidates should formally request admission and provide VU-GSSS with the following documents through graduate.school.fsw@vu.nl:

- Curriculum Vitae;
- A short letter of motivation (approximately half a page);
- Copy of your Master diploma and Master supplement (list of grades);
- Proof of English level; minimum requirement is TOEFL 600 (internet based); TOEFL 100 (paper based); or IELTS 7.0. Exceptions to the English Language Proficiency requirement are made if you have completed your education in Canada, USA, UK, Ireland, New Zealand or Australia or in case you have obtained an English Master elsewhere;
- A preliminary research proposal including a time plan and budget plan (see our budget template under 'Important Documents' on our website);
- Intended composition of the supervisory team & a letter of intent from your 1st supervisor;
- Proof of scholarship (if applicable);

The Graduate School will make sure to obtain a statement of the Head of Department (including a statement on supervision costs, guest status, VU services, possible waivers, etc.). This will be added to your admission documents before sending it out for further processing.

Provisional admission gives you the possibility to start the project. It also gives you access to the procedure to be hired as employee, the application for housing of international candidates (through the International Office), the library (books and journals), software, use of office space, supervision, and participation in the Graduate School Doctoral training and education and other Graduate School activities.

_VU-GSSS advises a preferential starting date (September 1) in order to facilitate participation in the 1st year PhD education programme. In order to proceed your application, it is therefore recommended to submit your documents before 1 April._

Make sure to include all of the above documents as we won’t be able to process incomplete applications. In case of questions or deficiencies the Academic Director of VU-GSSS will consult the Assessment Board for more advice. The candidate and supervisor will be informed about the decision as soon as possible.

### 2.3 Intake
After admission the VU-GSSS will contact you in order to plan an intake of approximately 30-45 minutes. During this meeting we will give you more practical information, details on courses and other events and answer all your questions.

### 2.4 Registration (see § 4.5)
After admission all PhD candidates need to be formally registered through completing your Hora Finita registration form. The VU-GSSS will open a profile for you and sends you the link you need in order to complete your registration. Some of the documents that need to be uploaded are listed below:

- Certified copy of Master’s certificate (in order to obtain a certified copy please bring your original Master certificate to the VU Beadle’s office, they will make copies and give you the stamps you need. The VU Beadle can be visited from 10.00-12.00 on work days in 2D-05, main building);
- Detailed budget plan;
- Detailed work plan;
- Training plan;
- Supervision plan;
- Progress interviews.
Once all necessary information is uploaded in Hora Finita we will send it out to all people involved: your supervisors, the VU-GSSS, the faculties office, the Beadle’s Office, the Dean and the Rector Magnificus. They will all sign digitally. As soon as the Rector Magnificus signed you will receive a confirmation by e-mail. You are then also able to log in on https://horafinita.vu.nl with your VUnet ID, add your planning, upload courses, etc.

The process of registration is monitored by the VU-GSSS and needs to be completed within two months after the start date of your project. If necessary, we will plan a short meeting half-way through the registration phase. You can always drop by our (flexible) office for questions or e-mail us through graduate.school.fsw@vu.nl.

2.5 Annual Fees for External PhD Candidates

Due to a variety of PhD types it is important to discuss the annual fee that applies to your situation before the start of your project. In most cases an annual fee will be charged for the PhD Education Program for the first three years of your project as (most of) the course work is done in this period. Costs for supervision and facilities such as VUnet ID and computer costs also need to be settled in consultation with the intended department and the VU-GSSS.

After 3 years an annual administration fee of € 100,- applies, and a fee for VU services (VUnet ID, access to the library, a work space, etc.). By paying the fee you can participate in all courses organized by VU-GSSS, as well as a variety of courses organized by our partners. It is also possible to pay per course (€ 150,- per EC). This can be discussed at the start of your project. Keep in mind that fees can increase during a PhD trajectory.

Note that costs for research, conference visits, etc. need to be taken into account when applying for an external PhD position. The budget template on our website (see ‘Important Documents’) can be used to get an idea of what costs need to be included.
3 Academic Training: The PhD Education Program

The activities of a PhD candidate mainly consist of conducting research (about 80-85%), resulting in a dissertation. Many (i.e. internal candidates) also take part in teaching at the Ba or Ma level. In addition, all PhD candidates participate in PhD education: as of 2015 the new VU Doctorate Regulations requires all PhD candidates to invest a reasonable amount of their time (at least 30 EC – 840 hours) to further educate themselves.

The required PhD education is intended to ensure that PhD candidates are given the opportunity to enjoy further education. This is, on the one hand, intended to enhance the individual development of PhD candidates, and to equip them with transferrable skills that are useful in their future career. On the other hand, it is aimed to support and advance their individual PhD research projects, by providing them with the relevant content, methodological knowledge and required academic skills to improve the quality and progress of their research.

A proper PhD education should thus both be seen as an advantage for PhD candidates and as an instrument to improve the progress and outcome of PhD projects in the Faculty of Social Sciences. A well-designed training plan should support PhD candidates in acquiring the final attainment levels that are expected from successful PhD candidates. This chapter will first specify the general final attainment levels expected from PhD candidates in the Faculty of Social Sciences. Next, it is explained how PhD candidates and their supervisors can design a training plan aimed at attaining these during their PhD trajectory.

3.1 Final Attainment Levels for PhD candidates

In order to obtain a PhD degree from the VU Faculty of Social Sciences the following is expected from a PhD candidate. Whether the candidate fulfills these final attainment levels is assessed in the final stage by the VU-GSSS (through a Training Certificate, an Assessment by the supervisor(s), and through an Assessment by the Thesis Committee members).

With respect to content, theory building and application, the PhD candidate:
1. Has advanced knowledge and understanding of (recent) theoretical developments in the area of expertise of his/her dissertation;
2. Has made a significant, original, and coherent contribution to scientific knowledge within his/her major discipline that can pass peer review;
3. Has broad knowledge and understanding of the general field of social sciences and possesses the ability to relate and position the work in his/her dissertation work vis-à-vis this broader field.

With respect to research design and methodology, the PhD candidate:
4. Has demonstrated the ability to choose and apply appropriate methods and analytical instruments (e.g., research design, data collection, measurement, analysis techniques) to answer particular research questions;
5. Has demonstrated advanced knowledge and understanding of the specific research design(s) and methods used in his/her dissertation research, the ability to relate these to alternative
research methods within the social sciences, and analyze their applicability, strengths and weaknesses in specific circumstances.

With respect to academic skills, the PhD candidate:
6. Has demonstrated advanced writing skills to independently write scientific texts and articles that can pass (inter)national peer reviewed evaluation;
7. Has demonstrated the skills to orally present scientific research at (inter)national seminars and conferences;
8. Has demonstrated the skills to function as a full member of the scientific community (e.g., ability to collaborate in research teams; discuss, evaluate and design scientific research; deal with and conduct peer review of scientific articles);
9. Has demonstrated the skills to contribute to the valorization of scientific knowledge by communicating about his/her area of expertise to a broader (academic) community and/or by explaining its value for society in general and/or by teaching undergraduate students;
10. Is knowledgeable of the prevailing standards of scientific integrity, research ethics, and proper scientific behavior, is aware of prevailing codes of conduct to prevent integrity violations, and follows these norms for proper scientific behavior in his/her own research practice.

3.2 Goals of the PhD training plan
The PhD training should, in general terms, support the PhD candidate in achieving the final attainment levels specified above. The heterogeneous origins from PhD candidates, significant differences in their prior training levels, combined with a great variety in their PhD research projects, demands a highly flexible approach to individual training plans. There is no single way to a successful PhD trajectory; PhD candidates differ in their path towards completing their dissertation and in developing towards achieving the final attainment levels for PhD candidates.

In order to serve the needs and wishes of the varied group of PhD candidates connected to the FSS, VU-GSSS maintains a number of starting points for the PhD training.

- The ways in which individual PhD candidates can fulfill the required 30 EC is as much as possible tailor made. Beside some basic general elements that are considered mandatory for all PhD candidates (see §3.3.1), the training plan can be tuned to individual needs and wishes depending on already available - or lack thereof - knowledge and expertise (i.e. prior education and experience) and the requirements of the PhD project. PhD candidates are given ample freedom to choose a most fitting set of courses in their training plan, and even within VU-GSSS courses tuning to individual needs and wishes is often possible.

- In line with the previous point, the VU-GSSS course program is designed to maximize the relevance of course work to the research projects of individual participants. This link is often made through assignments in which PhD candidates work on developing their own research questions, methodology,

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1 According to the European Credit Transfer System → 1 EC = 28 hours.
analyze their own project data, or write on their own texts and articles. In that sense the courses function as an addition to the regular supervision.

- In addition to developing expertise on their own specialized topic, however, the course program is also intended to stimulate a broader development beyond individual PhD research projects. A majority of graduated PhD candidates end up outside academia, and even those who do continue in academia may work in a very different scientific field and/or research area. PhD candidates are therefore advised to design a training plan that not only focuses narrowly on deepening knowledge and expertise related to their dissertation project, but also on broadening their knowledge and skills. The training plan should incorporate courses and activities aimed at the development of transferable skills that are relevant and useful in other (academic) fields or branches.

### 3.3 Training requirements and recommendations

Within the official registration in Hora Finita a detailed training plan is designed & uploaded. Your plan needs to be discussed with your supervisors and the VU-GSSS Programme Director, [Dr. Naná de Graaff](#). It is strongly advised to make an appointment with all of them before uploading your plan in Hora Finita. The training plan specifies the courses and activities that will be conducted during the PhD project. In general terms, the training plan should be designed such that PhD candidates aim at acquiring the final attainment levels specified above. The training program may vary per individual candidate depending on discipline, prior training, personal interest and the requirements of the candidate’s research project. The following basic elements, however, are required for all PhD candidates. These rules are in accordance with the [Doctorate Regulations](#) of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and implemented within FSS by VU-GSSS.

#### 3.3.1 Training Requirements for all PhD candidates

The following elements are required within the training plan of all FSS PhD candidates:

1. A minimum of 30 EC of PhD training (see below for potential dispensations depending on prior education);
2. Faculty PhD Induction programme. Each year new PhD candidates are welcomed in an introduction programme: participants learn about the research themes within the FSS and meet their fellow PhD candidates and colleagues in social events (1EC);
3. Course on Research Integrity and Responsible Scholarship (2 EC);
4. Writing a Data Management Plan course (1EC)
5. Attendance (and a presentation) to at least one large (2 days or more) scientific conference (1EC for attendance only, 2EC for an oral or poster presentation; 1 EC is required);
6. Finally, we aim to ensure that PhD candidates develop in both social scientific theoretical knowledge, methodological expertise and in academic and transferable skills. It is therefore required that PhD candidates complete a training plan, with a
balanced, but not necessarily equal, distribution of courses and training activities across the following three areas:

- **Area 1:** Social scientific content, theory building and application
- **Area 2:** Social scientific research design and methodology
- **Area 3:** Academic (and transferable) skills

VU-GSSS requires PhD candidates to complete at least 6 EC in each of these three areas. During the first year, PHD candidates should obtain 10 EC. The next section (§3.4) specifies the various available VU-GSSS courses within each area. The choice of courses within these three areas is flexible (3 * 6 EC).

The training plan may differ depending on prior education and the type of PhD project. In order to enable a most fitting training plan, in the next section we further specify requirements and recommendations for PhD candidates with different prior education and project type. Note that a departure from these requirements may be possible in individual cases, but should be proposed and justified at the start of the trajectory in the Training and Supervision plan, which is reviewed by the VU-GSSS.

### 3.3.2 Requirements and recommendations depending on prior education

- **PhD candidates who have completed a regular one-year Master of Science (MSc) in the Social Sciences or Behavioral Science (i.e., Psychology).** This group usually has enjoyed education in all three areas, the training program should thus be aimed at further developing these to more advanced levels. For this group at least 6 EC in each of the three areas is required.

- **PhD candidates who have completed a (one or two year) Master of Arts (i.e., Humanities, Letteren, Theology or Philosophy, Business and Economics, Computer Science).** These PhD candidates, compared to the above, are usually behind in both social scientific theoretical knowledge (area 1) and social scientific methodological knowledge (area 2). For this group also at least 6 EC in each of the three areas is required, but they are further strongly advised to spend an additional 3 EC to courses within these two areas (i.e., 9 EC in area 1 and 2, and 6 EC in area 3).

- **PhD candidates who have completed a two-year research Master in the Social Sciences or Behavioral Science (i.e., Psychology).** A research master is usually regarded as preparing for a PhD trajectory, and often succeeded by a 3-year (rather than 4-year) PhD trajectory. Given this additional year of prior education, this group has an advantage over 1-year-masters in all three areas, and are therefore given dispensation of 20 EC of training. The remaining 10 EC for PhD training can be used flexibly, more is obviously allowed.

### 3.3.3 Recommendations depending on type of PhD project

- **PhD candidates who combine a (part-time) PhD trajectory with other obligations (e.g. a job), which makes planning of courses more of a challenge.** Obviously, the regular course program (see §3.4.1/2) is open to external PhD candidates, but it is
worthwhile to check out the possibilities for (individual) tutorials or online participation (to be developed).

- Some PhD candidates start their project with a clearly specified project proposal while others start without such a clearly delimited project plan. Particularly for those who do not yet have a clearly specified project plan, we strongly recommend following the VU-GSSS course *Proposal design and writing* at the start of their PhD trajectory (see §3.4.2).

### 3.4 Available courses and education for PhD training

*Up-to-date information on our courses can be found in the Study Guide on our website.*

The VU-GSSS PhD education program (published and updated each year in a study guide on our website) is designed such that PhD candidates can fulfill their 30 EC’s internally. Depending on individual needs and wishes, PhD candidates can also follow courses outside the VU-GSSS program. These different parts of education possibilities are outlined in the next sections.

The individual training plan likely varies between PhD candidates depending on their prior education and methodological differences in their research projects. In designing their training plan, PhD candidates are advised to concentrate their course work in the first two years of their PhD project, and thus limit the course work in the last (two) year(s). It is important to note that the PhD candidates themselves are responsible for obtaining their 30 EC (minus possible dispensation) of training. The VU-GSSS PhD training certificate that is obtained after successful completion of the training plan (see §4.4.1) is required before one can enter the dissertation defence.

#### 3.4.1 Structure and content of the VU-GSSS general PhD education program

VU-GSSS offers a strong basic curriculum in social science content, research methodology, and academic skills with a range of options (see VU-GSSS Study guide). The courses are taught by the staff members of the Faculty of Social Sciences and by international fellows. During the year the program may change, for instance when new courses or workshops are added depending on availability of international fellows. Refer to the VU-GSSS study guide for the latest program and details about the various courses, or contact the VU-GSSS management. The various courses in the VU-GSSS program can be classified in the three main fundamental areas specified above, although there will certainly be overlap and courses may attend to more than one area. You can find an overview of these areas and courses in the study guide.

The courses in the PhD program are also open to PhD candidates from relevant other VU faculties and other universities. These external participants are usually charged a fee (€ 150,- per EC).

#### 3.4.2 Basic program for first year PhD candidates

A number of courses are particularly relevant and instructive in the starting period of a PhD project and thus provide essential education for first year PhD candidates. These courses provide useful knowledge and assignments that help PhD candidates to
understand and delimit their research field, to review and evaluate the literature, to formulate a proper research question, to determine the right methodology, and to conduct research in a responsible manner. As such they support PhD candidates to specify the research plan of their PhD project, prepare them for the delivery of the Go/No-Go assessment, and facilitate a proper start of the project.

In designing a training plan first year PhD candidates are therefore urged to schedule these courses within the quality assessment scheme (see Chapter 4) aimed to enhance progress and quality of PhD projects (i.e., the formal registration in Hora Finita and the Go/no-go assessment, see §4.1 and §4.2). For the cohort of PhD candidates who start their PhD trajectories at the advised starting period in August / September, this results in the following basic course program:

- Bridging Program (by IO)
- Induction (period 1: Sept-Oct.)
- Key Thinkers in the Social Sciences (by AISSR)
- Proposal Design & Writing (period 2/4: Oct-March)
- Deadline Go/no-go assessment (March / April)
- Research Integrity and Responsible Scholarship (October)
- Writing a Data Management Plan (Period 1: October)

The remaining courses offered in the program are usually advised for the second and third year of the PhD trajectory.

3.4.3 Self-organized activities and modules granted with EC

In addition to following courses offered by VU-GSSS PhD candidates can (collaboratively) organize their own activities and modules of their need, with support of VU-GSSS, and obtain credits.

Individual PhD candidates, or small groups of up to five participants, can organize tutorials supervised by a Faculty member focusing on a specialized theoretical or methodological topic, or skill (Theoretical, methodological and skill tutorials; usually 3 EC). Tutorials allow PhD candidates to profit from the expertise of Faculty researchers other than their own supervisors on a topic of their need. They can be organized by PhD candidates themselves, throughout the PhD trajectory, and are thus highly flexible both with respect to timing and content. Faculty tutors receive compensation for these activities.

Science blogging can be performed throughout the PhD trajectory (see also §5.4). Communicating about scientific activities in online blogs is intended to aid PhD candidates both in developing academic skills (i.e., writing, valorization) as well as in their project- and individual progress (fostering understanding, networking, publishing).

PhD candidates can also self-organize seminars, lab group meetings or PhD reading club meetings under the supervision of Faculty staff member(s). Such self-organized regular meetings in a research group can for instance be used to discuss papers, methods, or other topics related to the PhD projects of participants. Credits can be obtained in a similar way as for tutorials; participating PhD candidates have to submit a plan prior to the meeting schedule and report afterwards (maximum of 3 EC).

PhD candidates can also obtain credits for conference presentations (i.e. oral or poster presentations) and participation in conference workshop specifically focused on PhD
candidates. Note that conference attendance to at least one scientific conference is expected from all PhD candidates. (See §3.3.1; maximum of 2 EC).

### 3.4.4 Courses offered outside VU-GSSS

All PhD candidates are stimulated to attend courses that are offered outside the VU-GSSS educational program, provided they are at least research master or PhD candidates’ level. These may be courses and workshops offered at other VU faculties or at other universities in the Netherlands or abroad, in (inter)national research schools, or in VU Interfaculty Research Institutes. Following external courses may be particularly appropriate when they offer a specialized content that is not covered within the VU-GSSS program, or when they are organized in a more convenient time period. Also, some PhD projects are closely linked to a disciplinary research school outside VU-GSSS, which justifies following (part of) the education program offered there.

VU GSSS aims to facilitate linking PhD candidates to suitable research schools, relevant courses and other scientific researchers, both in national and international contexts. The VU-GSSS also collaborates with major research schools in Amsterdam in order to increase supply of courses and flexibility to design individualized training plans. We have an agreement for exchange of course participation free of charge with ABRI (VU), Faculty of Religion and Theology, and AISSR (UVA). This means that PhD candidates enrolled in the VU-GSSS can participate without fee in most courses offered by these Graduate Schools. The actual overview of PhD courses offered by AISSR is available on request, and information about how to sign up through an online form, can be found on their website. The same holds for a limited number of courses offered in the ABRI PhD program (VU Faculty of Economics & BA) and the , Faculty of Religion and Theology. Note that participation is only possible if space permits. Usually there is a maximum of 15 participants in a course and internal PhD’s get priority over external participants.

Many external institutes offering PhD courses provide participants with a certificate specifying the number of EC’s earned once the course requirements are fulfilled. Such a certificate is needed as evidence that a course is completed (see §4.4.1). PhD candidates can upload the pdf in Hora Finita. If credits are not specified for a course, PhD candidates can request VU-GSSS to judge the content of the course to specify whether, and how many, credits can be awarded. Make sure to submit a timely request in order to ascertain whether EC’s can be obtained for a course. PhD candidates can upload the supportive documents in Hora Finita.

### 3.4.4.1 Courses offered at other departments of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

The following courses offered at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam can be included in a PhD’s training plan.

- **PhD Success and Personal Efficacy**
  
  For first-year PhD candidates at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Human Resource Management organizes the training PhD success and personal efficacy. In this training, which is taught in English, one will learn how to set their own goals, develop a strategy for realizing them and to communicate them to others. More information about the course can be found on VUnet. A certificate is provided after completion of
the course. A successful completion of this training is counted as 3 EC by VU-GSSS. Participation is free of charge for PhD candidates employed at the VU, but external PhD candidates are charged a fee.

- **University Teaching Program (UTTP)**

  This course, currently offered within the VU Faculty of Psychology and Education, prepares academic teachers for the University Teaching Qualification (UTQ; or Basiskwalificatie onderwijs, BKO), which is nationally recognized by all Dutch universities. The UTTP has a study load of approximately 150 hours. A certificate is provided after completion of the course. A successful completion of this track is counted for 5 EC’s by VU-GSSS. A short track UTTP is available for teachers with a minimum of 5 years of experience in academic teaching. The study load for this short track varies between 50 and 100 hours depending on experience. A successful completion of this track is counted as 3 EC’s by VU-GSSS. Employees of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam only pay an administrative fee. External PhD candidates need to pay for this course. Please check the website for up-to-date costs.

### 3.4.4.2 Courses offered at other Research Schools within the Netherlands

The following research schools offer PhD courses, and have regular attendance of VU-GSSS PhD’s. These courses are accepted for the training plan. Courses of some schools are open for VU-GSSS PhDs without a fee (ABRI, AISSR and Religion and Theology). For other schools a participation fee is usually required (see Chapter 6 for financial support).

Graduate Schools where VU-GSSS has an exchange agreement for (limited) participation without fee:
- University of Amsterdam: Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR; *PhD program current courses* )
- Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam: Amsterdam Business Research Institute (ABRI)
- Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam: Graduate School of Religion and Theology

Other Graduate Schools that may ask a fee:
- Research School for Resource Studies for Development (CERES)
- Kurt Lewin Institute (KLI)
- Netherlands Institute of Government (NIG)
- Netherlands School of Communication Research (NeSCoR)
- Netherlands Research School of Gender Studies (NOG)

### 3.4.4.3 International Summer Schools & winter schools

The following international summer schools are accepted for the training plan, but note that a participation fee is usually required (see chapter 6 for financial support).
- Essex Summer School (Social Science Data Analysis)
- ECPR Summer School/Winter school, Ljubljana (Methods and Techniques)
- Oslo Summer School (Comparative Social Studies)
- ICPSR Summer Program, Michigan (Quantitative Methods of Social Research)
- Summer School in Comparative Urban Studies
- VU Amsterdam Summer School
• **VU Winter School**
• **Berlin Summer School in Social Sciences**
• **GESIS Summer School in Survey Methodology**, Cologne

### 3.5 Teaching

Make sure you discuss your teaching obligations at the beginning of your contract, to avoid conflicts while you're working on your project. Agreements made about teaching should be uploaded during the Hora Finita registration. Teaching obligations differ between the various departments of the Faculty, but in general PhD candidates should not teach in their first and last year. The maximum teaching load for PhD candidates is 5% of the overall working time according to the Faculty guidelines. It is crucial that you voice your preferences with regard to teaching early on – also, if you intend to go away for research, you should make sure well in advance that this does not clash with teaching obligations. For any questions concerning your teaching obligations please contact your supervisor, Head of Department or the Director of the Graduate School.
4 Quality Assessment of PhD projects

In order to support the progress and quality of PhD projects VU-GSSS organizes a scheme of subsequent assessments. In its quality assurance program VU-GSSS aims to ensure that PhD projects follow the guidelines and requirements established in the employment contract of PhD candidates and the Doctorate Regulations applicable at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam as a whole. Quality assurance is composed of the following elements: assessment of quality on entry (admission), official registration as a VU PhD candidate (in Hora Finita), including a project description, project planning, supervision plan and a budget plan, external assessment of the quality of proposal and first product (Go/no-go assessment), and the annual progress reports.

Quality on entry is assessed by the PhD candidate's supervisors and the VU-GSSS. The assessment of the project within the admission procedure needs to be positive in order to start the PhD project. In all PhD projects the crucial Go/no-go assessment of PhD projects takes place within the first year. After the first year, subsequent annual reports provide insight in progress and delays that may occur.

The following sections describe the consecutive parts of the quality and progress assessment program in more detail. See §4.5 for an overview of the steps of a promotion trajectory and quality assessment procedures.

4.1 Formal Registration in Hora Finita

To ensure a proper start of the project the PhD candidate and the supervisor(s) come to an agreement during the official registration in Hora Finita: all those involved in a PhD project document what is expected in terms of research to be conducted by the PhD candidate, and the support, education and supervision offered. The registration is an obligatory part of the PhD trajectory, completed by the PhD candidate and the supervisor and co-supervisor(s). The registration must be finalized within 2 months of the start date. All registrations will be signed digitally by the supervisors, the VU-GSSS, the Faculty’s Office, the Beadle’s Office, the Dean of the FSS and the Rector Magnificus. Documents uploaded in Hora Finita serve as a point of reference to evaluate the progress of a PhD project in the course of subsequent years (usually four). Adjustments can be made at the end of each year.

The registration documents describe and contain the following:
- The planning of the research with an emphasis on the goals for the first year;
- Who is responsible for the supervision and how supervision is organized;
- The training plan, i.e. courses and other activities (such as summer schools, seminars or external courses) that are part of the PhD education (see Chapter 3 for requirements and recommendations). The training plan depends on the needs and interests of the candidate and should be developed in collaboration with the supervisory team;
- Teaching or other tasks;
- Project budget;
- A statement indicating the responsibility of membership fees of VU-GSSS and payment of supervisory costs;
- A statement on the distribution of the promotion revenues, if applicable (the so called promotie premie).

Completion of the registration process marks the proper start of your project and plays an important role in the subsequent assessment of the progress of the PhD project.
The VU-GSSS team will guide you through the process and supports you with all questions related to your registration. Feel free to e-mail or call us, or drop by in our (flexible) office. We will monitor the registration process and keep you updated in case we need more information.

### 4.2 The Go/no-go Assessment (GNG)

Since long the FSS has implemented an assessment of the candidates’ quality, performance and project progress in the first year of the PhD trajectory. This assessment was called the “8-month assessment”. Because many candidates do not work full-time on their dissertation research and might need more than eight months, and because a positive assessment is required in order to continue with the PhD trajectory, the name has changed to “Go/no-go assessment” (GNG).

Moreover, we have changed the GNG procedure for candidates starting on January 1, 2019 or later (candidates started earlier may adopt the new procedure), in the following ways. First, we give more choice in the form of the substantive product (see below). Second, at the time of the Go/no-go it is in the interest of the candidate and of the project that there is an elaborated plan for the remaining trajectory. Also, the design of the research should fit with contemporary standards on ethics. Third, also in the interest of the candidate, the Graduate School wants an explicit approval by the supervisors.

Components of the go/no go assessment (see also the form and the specifications below):

1. Cover sheet
2. Substantive product
3. Suggestions for three external and two FSS reviewers of the substantive product
4. (Updated) time schedule including milestones (one of these is the GNG)
5. (Updated) budget plan
6. Data management plan
7. Ethical test of research
8. (Updated) plan for doctorate education and training
9. Statement of the supervisors that the candidate and the project are in good standing

The candidate submits all the required components by email to the FSS Graduate School (graduate.school.fsw@vu.nl) with a copy carbon to the supervisors acknowledging their approval. A cover letter is not necessary.

The PhD-candidate is free to choose between two general formats of the substantive product: 1) a full research proposal, or 2) a (revised) brief research proposal in combination with one draft chapter of the dissertation.

The Go/no-go assessment is evaluated by at least two external reviewers and one internal reviewer at the level of associate professor or higher. Based on these reviews the VU-GSSS Academic Director decides whether the product is of sufficient quality, and if it will be accepted. A motivated response by the candidate to these reviews is sometimes necessary. A revision of the proposal or paper may be required. In case of conflicting opinions on the quality of the work, the final evaluation will be referred to the Assessment Board. The evaluation of the Go/no-go Assessment plays an important role in ensuring the quality of the research and the trajectory of the candidates.
role in the decision concerning the extension of the first 12-month contract of employed PhD candidates, as well as for the extension of the project of external PhD candidates (hospitality agreement). The formal responsibility for an extension lies with the Head of the Department to which the PhD candidate belongs. If the Academic Director and the Head of Department come to opposing conclusions, the final decision is referred to the Dean of the Faculty. The Academic Director of the Graduate School will inform the PhD candidate, the Supervisory Committee and the Personnel Department about the outcome.

The format and guidelines of the Go/no-go assessment can be found on our website (under ‘Important Documents’).

NB: The outcome of the Go/no-go assessment will also be taken into account during the annual consultation and assessment interview (see §4.3.1).

NB2: extension of the Go/no-go deadline will only be given in very exceptional situations, e.g. in case of long-term illness.

### 4.3 Annual Progress Reports

The annual progress report is essential in monitoring the progress and development of the research after the first year. It is a follow-up on the registration in Hora Finita and the Go/no-go assessment in the first year. The supervisors report progress to the department. The PhD candidate is required to submit their own separate annual progress report directly to VU-GSSS. The yearly report of the PhD candidate lists the courses completed (i.e., as a follow-up on the training plan, see §4.1) as well as problems that hamper progress of the research project in the past year. In this confidential document, the PhD candidate may for instance report on his/her progress, supervision and any other activities related to the research. If the report notes any problems that require attention, the PhD candidate will be contacted in order to discuss a potential solution.

For all PhD candidates an additional annual consultation and assessment is also required (see §4.3.1), more information below.

#### 4.3.1 Annual Consultation and Assessment

Each year all employees, including employee PhD candidates of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam have an annual consultation and assessment conversation (i.e. jaargesprek). These are not organized by VU-GSSS. Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam strives for an open working relationship, in which supervisors and employees can talk freely and respectfully with each other about their mutual responsibilities as essential. Once a year, during the annual consultation and assessment, they have an opportunity to speak formally about development, results and working conditions. Supervisor and employee both look back at the previous year, and they make concrete and transparent agreements about how the employee is expected to perform and develop.

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2 Type I and II, see § 4.5
Even though the Annual Consultation and Assessment is not formally embedded for non-employed PhD candidates, we strongly recommend all other PhD candidates to make use of the opportunity to discuss these aforementioned topics. The format used for employees can serve as a guideline (see website under ‘Important Documents’). The VU-GSSS is currently working on a way to embed this for all PhD categories.

4.4 PhD – final phase

Upload manuscript by PhD candidate
Once the PhD candidate and the supervisor(s) agree that the programme can be completed and that the dissertation can be assessed, the candidate initiates the process by uploading his/her manuscript in Hora Finita and submitting the application for the defence. The supervisor(s) then receive(s) an email that the manuscript is ready for assessment, with a link that leads to the assessment page.

Request Training Certificate
If the PhD candidate is obliged to obtain 30 ECTS credits as part of the programme, he/she must first fulfil this obligation and request a certificate from the FSS Graduate School.

Assessment of the manuscript by supervisors
The supervisor can download the manuscript via Hora Finita and must give his/her assessment and supporting arguments. The first supervisor should indicate whether he/she considers the dissertation worthy of the distinction ‘cum laude’. If this is the case, the supervisor must provide reasons for this recommendation. 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.

Proposing a doctorate committee3 (to assess the manuscript)
The first supervisor receives an email asking him to propose members of the doctorate committee to assess the manuscript. The supervisor first informally checks whether the intended members want to take part and also informally checks the dean whether he/she can approve. If the dean approves the committee members, the supervisor uses the link from the Hora Finita mail to submit the proposal. The area of expertise for each member is included in the ‘remarks’ field. Also a chair of the committee has to be appointed. The Graduate School will consult the Pool of Professors about the appointment of the Doctorate Committee.

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3The definitions for the different committees used in this document are the definitions that are used in Hora Finita.
After this consultation, the dean receives the email with the proposal for the Doctorate Committee and approves it. Following the dean’s approval, an automatic email is sent to the members of the doctorate board as an invitation to assess the manuscript. Via a link in this email, the assessment committee members receive the manuscript.

**Composition of doctorate committee**

The doctorate committee should consist of at least five members of which a minimum of one and not more than two members are affiliated to the VU Faculty of Social Sciences. Not more than one member may be part of the supervisor’s work unit. At least two members are affiliated to another university than the university granting (i.e. VU), or co-granting the degree. These external members may not be co-authors on more than one article included in the dissertation. One of the members (a Full Professor preferably employed by FSS, or else the VU) is assigned as chair of the Doctorate Committee.

**Assessment of the manuscript by doctorate committee**

The committee members are asked to assess the manuscript and also to indicate whether they consider the dissertation worthy of the distinction ‘cum laude’. When all the board members have submitted an assessment, the chairperson is notified and submits the final assessment and recommendation to the dean (manuscript approved/not approved). The dean reviews all assessments and approves the final assessment and recommendation.

**Compose PhD examining committee**

The supervisors then receive an email notification. The first supervisor also receives an email asking him/her to propose members of the PhD examining committee to serve as opponents at the defence. The PhD candidate receives an email including the notification that he/she can contact the Beadle’s Office to schedule a date for the defence.

**Determining the ceremony date**

After approval of the manuscript by the dean, the PhD candidate will receive a message that he/she has been admitted to the defence and that he/she can contact the Beadle’s Office to coordinate the promotion date. He/she is given two options with which he can approach the members of the PhD examining committee. When the final date is determined, the PhD candidate confirms it to the Beadle’s Office and all persons involved will be notified of the date.

**Appoint Advisory members (opponents) of the PhD examining committee**

At the same time, the supervisor will be notified that the doctorate examining committee can be composed. The supervisor should wait with adding the intended committee members in Hora Finita until the promotion date is final (otherwise the members will receive confirmation that they are members of the opposition without a ceremony date).

**Composition PhD examining committee**
In principle, these are the same persons as the members of the Doctorate Committee, some members may be replaced in case one is unable to attend. At least five PhD examining committee members should attend the defence, of which at least three members of the Doctorate Committee. The majority must be in possession of the ‘ius promovendi’.

**Ceremony preparations by supervisors**

The board secretariat sends a template letter to the supervisor that can be sent to the members of the PhD examining committee to inform them about the ins and outs of the ceremony. The board secretariat will also find a chairman for the ceremony (Please note: the chairman of the doctorate is not the same person as the chairman during the defence.) The board secretariat will inform the supervisor about who the chairman is and will also send the dissertation to the chairperson.

**Ceremony preparations by PhD candidate**

As soon as the PhD candidate has confirmed the date with the Beadle’s Office, an automatically generated email is sent to the Graduate School and the supervisors and co-supervisors, among others. At this stage, the PhD examining committee members receive a final invitation to the defence. 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. The Beadle’s Office ensures that the degree certificate and statement, signed by the Rector Magnificus, are ready on the day of the PhD ceremony.

**Ceremony**

See the ppt slides of our Pizza Session the final phase of your PhD.

**After the Ceremony**

After the ceremony, the status of the candidate’s PhD programme will be changed by Hora Finita to ‘doctorate obtained’, signalling the completion of the PhD programme.
4.5 Overview: Time plan of PhD trajectory and quality assessment

This chapter describes a number of steps required for the admission of a PhD candidate within FSS and subsequently to successfully proceed in a PhD project. The following table provides an overview and details on all these steps from admission and registration to public defense and promotion. Some of the steps differ at points for different types of PhD candidates (see § 2.1).

**Time Plan PhD Project /Quality Assessment**

Your (proposed) status as a PhD candidate:

- **Type 1.** *Employed* by Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam as an employee PhD candidate (*werknemer promovendus*) → start with step 1

- **Type 2.** *Employed* by Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam as a lecturer or researcher with additional research time to write a dissertation and pursue a PhD title (*promoverende medewerker*) → proceed with step 2

- **Type 3.** PhD candidates *not employed* by Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, but with an official agreement to work towards obtaining a PhD (*contractpromovendus*). This category receives funding and/or time in order to pursue a PhD title → proceed with step 2

- **Type 4.** PhD candidates *not employed* by Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, but with an official agreement to work towards obtaining a PhD (*buitenpromovendus*). This category does not receive funding or time in order to pursue a PhD title → proceed with step 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1 Job application</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>To do</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>How</th>
<th>More information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job application / interview</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Type 1</td>
<td>Before the start of a PhD project</td>
<td></td>
<td>Vacancies can be found on the website of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Once you've passed the job application procedure you can send in your VU-GSSS admission document: proceed with step 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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4 See § 2.1 for a more detailed description of the various types of PhD candidates.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 2</th>
<th>VU-GSSS Admission</th>
<th>Year 0</th>
<th>Submit an application including the following documents:</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Curriculum Vitae</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Motivation letter (approximately half A-4)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Copy of your Master diploma and list of grades</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Proof of English level: minimum requirement is TOEFL 600 (internet-based), TOEFL 100 (paper based) or IELTS 7.0. If an English Master has been obtained a TOEFL, IELTS certificate is not necessary</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Preliminary research proposal including a time plan and budget plan</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• (Intended) composition of the supervisory team</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All types</th>
<th>Before the start of a PhD project</th>
<th>Your application docs can be submitted by e-mail</th>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>(<a href="mailto:graduate.school.fsw@vu.nl">graduate.school.fsw@vu.nl</a>)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

See Chapter 2
In case you have any questions about the admission procedure please contact VU-GSSS (graduate.school.fsw@vu.nl)
VU-GSSS decides upon the admission of PhD candidates. In case of exceptions the VU-GSSS Assessment Board will be asked for advice. Once these steps are approved a PhD candidate can proceed with step 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 3</th>
<th>Year 0</th>
<th>Submit (online) application form (Personnel Department)</th>
<th>Supervisor/PhD candidate (Type 1 only)</th>
<th>Before the start of a PhD project</th>
<th>Personnel Department</th>
<th><a href="mailto:Personeelszaken.fsw@vu.nl">Personeelszaken.fsw@vu.nl</a></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Employment contract document</td>
<td>Personal detail form</td>
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<tr>
<th>Step 4</th>
<th>Year 0</th>
<th>Arrange hosting agreement</th>
<th>Department (Types 3 &amp; 4)</th>
<th>Before the start of a PhD project</th>
<th>Personnel Department</th>
<th><a href="mailto:Personeelszaken.fsw@vu.nl">Personeelszaken.fsw@vu.nl</a></th>
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</table>

**FORMAL REGISTRATION AS A VU PHD CANDIDATE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 5</th>
<th>Year 1 – within the first two months of your PhD project</th>
<th>Complete your formal registration in Hora Finita through the link you will receive from the VU-GSSS</th>
<th>PhD candidate (all types) with input from supervisor</th>
<th>At the start of a PhD project</th>
<th><a href="mailto:graduate.school.fsw@vu.nl">graduate.school.fsw@vu.nl</a></th>
<th>§ 2.4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

26
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 7</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Submit your Go/no-go assessment (see §4.2)</th>
<th>PhD candidate (All types) in close consultation with supervisor</th>
<th>8 Months after the start of a project in case of a 4-year contract</th>
<th>Submit an electronic version to <a href="mailto:graduate.school.fsw@vu.nl">graduate.school.fsw@vu.nl</a></th>
<th>Guidelines can be found on our website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- The Go/no-go assessment will be reviewed by both internal and external reviewers. The VU-GSSS will inform the PhD candidate and the supervisory team of the outcome. A positive advice is required before the first-year employment contract or hospitality agreement is extended.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>PROGRESS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Year 1</td>
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- The progress of PhD candidates is monitored on an annual basis. This is done by both the PhD candidate and the supervisors and the department. The VU-GSSS examines the reports and will take action when necessary (see § 4.3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 2 and all subsequent years</th>
<th>Submit potential adjustments in your Hora Finita profile</th>
<th>PhD candidate (All types) in close consultation with supervisor</th>
<th>Early year 2</th>
<th>Submit an electronic version to <a href="mailto:graduate.school.fsw@vu.nl">graduate.school.fsw@vu.nl</a></th>
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<tr>
<th>Year 2 and all subsequent years</th>
<th>Annual Consultation and Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Year 2 and all subsequent years | Submit Annual Progress Report | PhD candidate (All types) | December |

| Year 4 | Submit training overview in order to obtain an official PhD Training Certificate and form II | Submit your overview to graduate.school.fsw@vu.nl | Form II |

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<tr>
<td>Year 4</td>
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<td>Year 4</td>
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</table>
5 Scientific environment and PhD Community

VU-GSSS aims to establish a lively and stimulating scientific environment for PhD candidates, in which young researchers and staff can mutually inspire each other. This is achieved by involving international scholars of high reputation in the training of PhD candidates, by stimulating an active contribution of PhD candidates, and by facilitating the formation of a PhD community within the Faculty. The following activities aim to stimulate such an environment and active participation and contribution of PhD candidates to this environment, allowing them to create a network of fellow researchers.

5.1 International Scholars

In order to promote internationally orientated and high-level research, VU-GSSS wants to attract a variety of international scholars who are involved in our PhD education program. A balanced mix of methods and theoretical interests is aimed for. Most of the courses given by international scholars are short and intense. At the same time we try to have them as tailor-made as possible, which sometimes means that lecturers will give you feedback through Skype over a longer period of time, or they will return when assignments are finished in order to discuss your work and give you the feedback you need.

5.2 Graduate Council

To facilitate and support an active community of PhD candidates the VU-GSSS PhD Graduate Council (previously known as Graduate Platform) plays an important role. Their main task is to create a social platform, and to represent the interests of all PhD candidates within the Faculty of Social Sciences. The Graduate Council consists of up to six internal and/or external PhD candidates, representing all departments of the Faculty of Social Sciences. Ideally, each department within the faculty is represented within the council by one of its PhD candidates, who usually are member for one year. The Graduate Council has a couple of main tasks.

A first task of the Graduate Council is to advice the VU-GSSS management team and FSS Faculty board. The Graduate Council informs and advises the VU-GSSS management team on all PhD related issues, such as this PhD Information Document and the VU-GSSS education program, and surveys such issues for this purpose.

Second, the Graduate Council has a social function in bringing internal and external PhD candidates from different departments together. Being part of a community of fellow PhD candidates is important because it provides opportunities for peer feedback and informal exchange experiences. To this end, the Graduate Council regularly organizes PhD seminars, workshops, and informal drinks. The Graduate Council also supports and facilitates (in terms of snacks, drinks and space) activities initiated and organized by other PhD candidates if they are open for all PhD candidates of the Faculty. Regular events involve, for instance, workshops for personal or skill development, discussions about what it means to be a social researcher, but also social gatherings and drinks. Each year, the Graduate Council also organizes a PhD Day (e.g.
poster market) in order to showcase the research done by PhD candidates. Here, PhD candidates can present their research and informally interact with senior staff. A price is awarded to the best presenter.

The Graduate council is also involved in organizing the PhD Induction Conference for first year PhD candidates. During the Induction Conference PhD candidates are welcomed and introduced in the Faculty of Social Sciences. The 2-day meeting consists of a mixture of lectures by renowned researchers of the Faculty of Social Sciences, presentations about practical issues, presentations by participants, workshops and assignments, and social events etc. New PhD candidates get to know their fellow PhD candidates in the FSS, both those in their cohort year and more advanced PhD candidates, which will be pleasant and valuable for the remainder of their PhD project and after.

A third task of the Graduate Council is fulfilling the role of departmental PhD buddies. The members of the Graduate Council function as a buddy for fellow PhD candidates in their respective departments. They introduce new PhD candidates to the VU-GSSS community, and are the primary contact person for PhD related issues.

The Graduate Council has a yearly budget to organize workshops, drinks and the annual PhD Day. Members of the Graduate Council receive financial compensation for their work.

### 5.3 Blogging website

Another means by which VU-GSSS facilitates and supports the creation of a lively PhD community is through our blogging website. The website [http://socializingsciencevu.com/](http://socializingsciencevu.com/), launched on February 19 2014, provides an online platform for all VU Social Sciences PhD candidates. On this website, PhD candidates can post blogs about their own research, scientific research they read and hear about in colloquia, and reflect on other PhD relevant issues. The blogs are disseminated through social media both within and outside the Faculty of Social Sciences (FSS).

The website allows PhD candidates to take note of the fellow researchers or people working in practice, and to partake in the valorization of scientific knowledge. Moreover, writing blogs gives PhD candidates the opportunity to publish in an informal manner, at an early point in their PhD trajectories, to build a reputation, and to practice writing by explaining scientific research to a broader audience.

Moreover, the website facilitates the creation of a VU Social Sciences PhD community – involving internal and external PhD candidates, and candidates working abroad. Socializing Science makes for a lively platform showcasing excellence and expertise of FSS PhD candidates and stimulates the exchange of scientific research both within and outside the VU Faculty of Social Sciences.

In addition, scientific blogging is part of the VU-GSSS education program and PhD candidates can obtain EC’s for their blogging efforts (see §3.4.4). A manual is available for more information, through socializingscience.fsw@vu.nl.
6 Financial Support

6.1 Internal support: The Graduate Fund

In order to support PhD candidates to orientate themselves internationally and to promote a broad academic development, VU-GSSS provides financial support through the VU-GSSS Graduate Fund. Internal PhD candidates can apply for various international activities, for instance for attending a summer school, presenting a paper at an international conference or workshop, participation in international education abroad, or conduct of fieldwork or a research stay at a foreign university. Deadlines are twice a year in April and October. Calls will be sent out approximately 1 month before the deadline. More information can be found in the guidelines on our website.

6.2 External Financial Support

There are some external funds available from (semi) governmental and international agencies, which are differentiated between disciplines and funding goals. Funding options are:

- Nuffic (Netherlands Organization for International Cooperation in Higher Education)
- Grantfinder (part of Nuffic) or Beursopener (in Dutch)
- Scholarship Portal
- The Grants and Funds page of the VU
- Fondsenboek/Fondsendisk

6.3 PhD Dissertation Remuneration

All PhD candidates who provide the University Library with a free license for non-exclusive publication of the dissertation in electronic form, if necessary with a temporary publication embargo, are entitled to a Dissertation Remuneration of € 500.-. This bonus can be used to compensate part of the following expenses:

- Printing and editing of the manuscript (see Article 24 of the VU Doctorate Regulations);
- Costs for renting suitable clothing for the defense;
- Reception costs

As of 1 January 2017, the PhD defence reimbursement will be paid out by the PhD candidate’s own Faculty or Department (instead of the Pedel). The signed license agreement is a compulsory attachment when applying for this reimbursement.

To apply for the reimbursement, you print and sign the license agreement\(^5\) for your PhD manuscript and send it to the University Library:

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
Bibliotheek, afd. AMS
T.a.v. DARE-team, kamer 13B-01

\(^5\) More information about the license agreement and the document itself will be given to you by the Pedel.
The University Library will check and sign the license agreement on behalf of the Executive Board and send you the signed document by email. Please attach this document when you apply for the PhD Dissertation Remuneration. You can use the following links to proceed with your reimbursement:

**Employees**
- For employees of Vrije Universiteit/Faculty of Social Sciences: [https://vunet.login.vu.nl/services/pages/detail.aspx?cid=tcm%3a165-920335-16](https://vunet.login.vu.nl/services/pages/detail.aspx?cid=tcm%3a165-920335-16)
  Please make sure the 'kostenplaatsnummer' in the reimbursement is switched to 2622104!

**Non-employees**
- For non-employees at Vrije Universiteit [https://serviceplein.login.vu.nl/Pages/SelfServices/GenericForms/expenses.asp](https://serviceplein.login.vu.nl/Pages/SelfServices/GenericForms/expenses.asp)

You can use the following kostenplaatsnummer/budget number: 2622104. In the attachment you can then upload the (signed and checked!) license agreement. It is not necessary to upload additional receipts. More information and FAQ’s about uploading your dissertation can be found on the website of the UBVU.

**6.4 Financial Reimbursement – General Information**

PhD candidates with an employee contract need to complete their reimbursement or advance payment digitally through VUnet/E-HRM. In case you have questions, please contact the HRM Servicedesk through servicedesk.hrm@vu.nl or 020 59 82882. PhD’s without a contract need to submit an expense claim form. The form for 2015/2016 can be found on VUnet. If you have any specific questions or encounter problems going through the system please contact the financial administration for instructions: servicedesk.fsc@vu.nl or 020 59 83478.
7 VU-GSSS Governance and Organization

7.1 Governance Structure

VU-GSSS has a multi-layered governance structure and operates under the ultimate responsibility and authority of the Faculty Board of the Faculty of Social Sciences. The Management Team of the VU-GSSS consists of the Academic Director, Course Director, Programme Manager and Management Assistant. The team meets regularly and discusses decisions in the day-to-day running of VU-GSSS.

VU-GSSS is directed by the Academic Director (a Full Professor), appointed for a term of 3 years (renewable once). The Academic Director is responsible for the development of the VU-GSSS strategy. The Academic Director is responsible for the overall functioning of VU-GSSS, and answers to the Faculty Board.

The Course Director co-ordinates the content and organization of the PhD education program and coursework. The Program Director also supports and executes the development of new program elements and programs. The Course Director also serves as an educational adviser to the students, referring them to the appropriate external courses for their questions. The Course Director answers to the Academic Director.

The Program Managers support the administrative processes for the organization of courses, evaluation and registration of coursework of the PhD program and serves as secretary for the VU-GSSS Assessment Board. The Program Managers are responsible for the registration of PhD’s, co-ordination and management of the day-to-day functioning of the Graduate School, in close co-operation with the Academic Director. They also function as Hora Finita key-users. The Program Managers run the office of the Graduate School, are responsible for the implementation of formal arrangements, administers official correspondence, registers and maintains the information on progress of the PhD’s. The Program Managers answer to the Academic Director and the Managing Director of the Faculty.

The VU-GSSS Assessment Board consists of five Professors / Associate Professors. One of the members acts as chair. The Board has as its main task: the admission of new PhD candidates, the evaluation of Go/No-Go products that are negatively evaluated after revision, and the annual progress reports. The Assessment Board also judges the applications for financial support from the Graduate Fund by individual PhD candidates and the annual reports by the departments. The Assessment Board advises the Academic Director in all matters concerning the Graduate School, awards and fellowships. If appropriate it can delegate part of its duties to smaller subcommittees, and may create its own internal rules of decision. The Assessment Board is installed by the Faculty Board and performs its duties independently.

The Graduate Council consists of a number of PhD candidates from the various FSS departments who act as representatives of all FSS PhD candidates. The Graduate Council regularly meets with the Academic Director and one of the representatives participates in the Management Team of VU-GSSS. The Graduate Council advises the VU-GSSS management on all PhD-related issues, and funnels PhD concerns for this purpose. It
also organizes social activities for the PhD community, welcomes and introduces new
PhD candidates, and functions as the primary contact point for PhD-related issues both
within departments as well as the Faculty as a whole.

7.2 Complaints: Confidential advisors

If PhD candidates feel they are receiving insufficient supervision, or a serious conflict
has arisen, they can take the following steps:
• If possible, discuss the issue with their PhD supervisor or daily supervisor, for
example at the annual consultation and assessment meeting (see §4.3.1). If feeling
more comfortable with the research program leaders they can also take their
complaint to them.
• If the above is not possible, the issue can be discussed with the PhD buddy of the
relevant department. They can (anonymously) submit the complaint to the Graduate
Council or PhD ombudsman.
• The VU-GSSS also has a PhD ombudsman whom can be contacted by the PhD when
in doubt about issues that may hinder the progress of the PhD project: Dr. Ida
Sabelis.
• If the above steps are not possible or inadequate, the PhD also can contact one of the
FSS confidential (staff) advisor Dr. Mario de Theije. These advisors are for all
personnel, but are also specifically charged with helping to resolve issues that can
arise between PhD candidates and their supervisor(s). Their role is distinct from the
roles and responsibilities of the supervisors, PhD representatives, and VU-GSSS
management team. These advisors are charged with helping to resolve conflicts in as
early a stage as possible. PhD candidates can also contact the confidential VU staff
advisors regarding any complaints about unfair treatment by a person or
organizational unit at the VU including a conflict with a supervisor. Confidential staff
advisors hold an independent position within the FSS and are under an obligation of
confidentiality, meaning they must address complaints in a confidential manner. An
advisor will therefore not communicate any information to other parties (including
VU-GSSS) unless requested and approved by the employee (PhD candidate) in
question.

Anally, the PhD ombudsman evaluates PhD experiences by requesting a confidential
progress report or survey (see §4.3). The VU-GSSS Academic Director will follow up on
the information provided if necessary, and keeps such discussions with PhD candidates
confidential. The resulting information is used to improve PhD supervision and support
where possible.

7.3 Co-operation with other Graduate Schools
The VU-GSSS cooperates with a number of partner institutions:
1. Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam Interfaculty and Faculty Institutes (e.g. Camera, Visor,
the Network Institute, ABRI, the Institute for Global Change)
2. The University of Amsterdam Graduate School of Social Sciences and the Amsterdam
Institute for Social Research (AISSR)
3. National research schools in disciplines relevant to the disciplines of the FSS (e.g. NIG,
CERES, NESCOR, IOPS, Psychology and Health)
4. International (often EU-supported) networks for graduate training
5. Bilateral partner institutions (e.g., the Department of Political Science cooperates closely with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in the training of PhD candidates).
8 Practical Information for PhD candidates

8.1 Library
The VU Library not only gives you access to a large selection of academic resources, it’s team also offers research support on finding literature, data management and Open Access. You can access the library resources both from the campus and at home. More information on how to get access at home is available on VUnet.

Other topics the VU Library can help you with:

• Google Scholar (search for articles, reports, conference proceedings, etc.);
• LibSearch (for access to the library catalogue);
• Selection of databases available at the VU:
  o Picarta: catalogue of all academic and many public libraries in the Netherlands
  o IBSS: International Bibliography of the Social Sciences
  o Web of Science
• Courses on finding and managing literature and data through (online) courses and workshops

More information & Contact
Rian Kriesels: Rian.kriesels@vu.nl, +31(0)20 59 83971

8.2 Open Access
A publication is 'open access' if you are free to read, download, copy, print or distribute it. The author has given a license for a broad (re-)use, but retains his/her copyright. This makes it possible to make material accessible via Internet or to use it for teaching and new research. Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam wants to encourage and promote open access publishing. Research which is financed with public money should be publicly accessible. One of the biggest advantages of open access is that it makes scientific research findings accessible to all. This method of publishing makes the dissemination of knowledge more efficient. The main advantage for authors is that it allows them to increase their readership and therefore the impact of their publications (more downloads and citations). More information about Open Access can be found on the Libraries website.

8.3 Webmail, wifi, surfspot & access to files at home
It is possible to check and send e-mails from home. You can do this through following this link: http://webmail.vu.nl and log in with the same codes as you normally use to log in on your computer at the VU. It is furthermore possible to access your files via Webdrive. For more information on wireless internet at the VU click here. In case you have any ICT-related questions, please contact the UC-IT servicedesk through (020) 598 0000 or by e-mail through ucit-servicedesk@vu.nl.
Students and employees of Dutch universities can obtain cheap soft- and hardware through [www.surfspot.nl](http://www.surfspot.nl). Free software for employees and students can be downloaded via [download.vu.nl](http://download.vu.nl), make sure your device is at the VU campus. Employees can use the free cloud service for academic institutions: Surfdrive

### 8.4 People and contact details

#### 8.4.1 Management team VU-GSSS

- **Central VU-GSSS email address, managed by MT members:**
  [graduate.school.fsw@vu.nl](mailto:graduate.school.fsw@vu.nl)

- **Academic Director of the Graduate School**
  Prof. Dr. Theo van Tilburg
  Tel. 020-59 86870; E-mail: [theo.van.tilburg@vu.nl](mailto:theo.van.tilburg@vu.nl)

- **Program Director**
  Dr. Naná de Graaff
  Tel. 020-59 88762; E-mail: [n.a.de.graaff@vu.nl](mailto:n.a.de.graaff@vu.nl)

- **Program Managers**
  Alexandra Filius
  Tel. 020-5987069; E-mail: [afilius@vu.nl](mailto:afilius@vu.nl)
  Saskia Jans
  Tel. 020-59 85542; E-mail: [s.jans@vu.nl](mailto:s.jans@vu.nl)

#### 8.4.2 PhD Buddies

- Herbert Ploegman (SCA): [h.b.ploegman@vu.nl](mailto:h.b.ploegman@vu.nl)
- Karin Kee (ORG): [k.kee@vu.nl](mailto:k.kee@vu.nl)
- Britta Brugman (CW): [b.c.brugman@vu.nl](mailto:b.c.brugman@vu.nl)
- Maria Rast (SOC): [m.c.rast@vu.nl](mailto:m.c.rast@vu.nl)
- Yvonne La Grouw (BP): [y.m.lagrouw@vu.nl](mailto:y.m.lagrouw@vu.nl)

#### 8.4.3 Personnel Department

- Judith ten Brink
  Phone: +31 20 870 14
  Email: [j.h.h.ten.brink@vu.nl](mailto:j.h.h.ten.brink@vu.nl)