Graduate School Social Sciences, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
The go / no go assessment
January 3, 2019

Introduction
Since long the FSS has implemented an assessment of 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 at 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 GNG 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.

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Cover Sheet
Save this part with document name "1CoverSheet.docx" (when delivered in Adobe Acrobat portable document format, use pdf as extension)

1. Date, team, project

Date of submission:	

Team

	Name	Email
PhD candidate:		
Supervisor 1:		
Supervisor 2:		
Supervisor 3:		
Supervisor 4:		

Project

Title of Project:	
Date of start PhD research:	
Date of proposed completion of PhD research (i.e. submission to the supervisors and the doctoral examination committee):	

2. Substantive product (see Part 2)

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.

	Document name	Mark with 'X' when attached
Full research proposal	21Fullresearchproposal.docx	
(Revised) brief research proposal	22Briefresearchproposal.docx	
Chapter: Introduction to the PhD research	23ChapterIntroduction.docx	
Chapter: Literature review	24ChapterLiteraturereview.docx	
Chapter: Empirical chapter	25ChapterEmpiricalchapter.docx	
Chapter: Other (specify)	26ChapterOther.docx	

Submitting a draft chapter assumes that the supervisors have approved the chapter as it is or with minor revisions to be made for inclusion in the dissertation.

Explanation (not required):

3. Review

Prior external review (leave blank if not applicable)

Submitted to (e.g. name journal)	Document name	Mark with 'X' when attached
	27ExternalReview.docx	

Proposed reviewers of the substantive product

	Name (with titles)	Position (e.g. substantive field, name of chair, affiliation)	Email
1. External			
2. External			
3. External			
4. FSS		Not necessary	Not necessary
5. FSS		Not necessary	Not necessary

Reviewers must have obtained a PhD-degree. A FSS-reviewer is preferable from another scientific department. The Graduate School may approach additional reviewers.

Explanation (not required):

4. Time schedule including milestones (see Part 4)

#	Topic	Due date	Date completed	Comments
1	go / no go assessment			
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				

Explanation (not required):

5. Budget plan (in €)

Year						
Research and PhD trajectory costs						
Data collection, field work						
Literature						
Publication fee (e.g. in cases of open access)						
Translation and editing						
Attendance scientific conference, workshop (including accommodation, meals, travelling)						
Summerschool or other doctoral education and training, not organized by the Graduate School						
Other research related visits (to VU, Amsterdam, within the Netherlands, to abroad), including travelling and housing						

Other travel costs								
Computer and other technical equipment								
Lay-out and printing thesis								
Costs of graduation								
Travel costs and accommodation opposition								
Tuition fee								
Other (specify)								
Total costs								
Coverage								
The main grant, subsidy or benchfee of your research								
The FSS-department								
The Graduate Fund *								
A specific scholarship, grant or subsidy from an external party								
Your employer								
Your own means								
After graduation VU pays €500 as royalty for your dissertation								
Other (specify)								
Total coverage								

* Note. Graduate Fund: In order to support PhD candidates to orientate themselves internationally and to promote a broad academic development, the Graduate School provides financial support through the Graduate Fund. After their first year a PhD candidate 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. Calls will be sent out approximately one month before the deadline.

Explanation (not required):

6. Data management plan

Document name	Mark with 'X' when attached	Mark with 'X' when approved in the course RIRS
6DataManagementPlan.docx		

Explanation (required when no Data management plan is submitted):

7. Ethical test of research

	Document name	Mark with 'X' when result is attached
Self-test	7EthicalTestST.docx	
Review by Research Ethics Review Committee	7EthicalTestRERC.docx	

Explanation (required when no self-test is conducted):

8.   Plan for doctorate education and training

At the time of the assessment 10 EC in doctorate education and training should be completed. There may be deviations from this requirement if so decided in agreement the program manager.

Course or activity	EC	Approved by GC	Starting date	Mark with 'X' if completed (and registered in HF)
Induction	1	yes		
Research Integrity and Responsible Scholarship	3	yes		

Explanation (not required):

9.   Statement of the supervisors that the candidate and the project are in good standing

	Short description of evidence	Mark with 'X' if applicable
Candidate has sufficient capacities		
Research progress and results are convincing and promising		
Candidate is on track		
Candidate is expected to finish in time (nominal is normal)		
Candidate is on route to become an independent researcher		
The frequency of contact between candidate and supervisors is at least once in two or three weeks; or less if so agreed upon (explain in next column)		
When giving feedback, the supervisors write down their comments		

This statement is provided to the PhD candidate by the supervisors. The PhD candidate may deliver the statement on behalf of the supervisors

Explanation (not required):

Part 2. Substantive product

The substantive product is the most essential part of this assessment. It consists of either a full research proposal, or a (revised) brief research proposal combined with a draft chapter of the PhD thesis. In case of the latter, the brief proposal gives the context in which the draft chapter is embedded.
The work has been approved by the supervisors, and in case of a draft thesis chapter, (conditionally) accepted by the supervisors as chapter.
The product has been made predominantly in the first phase of the PhD research (i.e., for example, not as thesis for a MSc educational program) and is supervised by the current supervisors. Please report any deviations from these requirements on the cover sheet.

Please use font Calibri 11 points, Arial 11 points or Times Roman 12 points all over. Avoid fancy lay-out (colors, bold, italic). Double spacing is required. Use a text and referencing style like APA 6th edition consistently (an overview is available at owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/). Save documents with the name as specified at the Cover Sheet.

Contents of the full or brief research proposal

1. Name of PhD candidate
2. Title of research proposal
3. Number of words in 'description of the proposed research'
4. Abstract (max. 250 words)
5. Description of the proposed research
   Please use subheadings like
      a. Introduction
      b. Research topic
      c. Research questions
      d. Theoretical framework
      e. Approach (including description of data to be collected or analyzed; method of processing the data)
   Use between 6,000 and 8,000 words for a full research proposal, between 1,500 and 2,000 words for a brief research proposal, excluding references, including footnotes.
6. Literature references (about 30 references as a guideline)
7. Involvement of (co-)financing organizations
8. Time plan (Note: this might be similar to Part 4, but it is necessary for the review of the proposal)
9. Setting within research group
10. Expected scientific output and dissemination of results
11. Scientific relevance (max. 250 words)
12. Societal relevance (max. 250 words)

Contents of a chapter

There is no upper or lower limit to the number of words. However, the number should not exceed the limit that is set for the publication (e.g. the journal article or the chapter in an edited volume) when it is intended to submit the dissertation chapter.

1. Title
2. Authors
3. Affiliations
4. Author Contributions (specify: who did what)

5. Funding and Acknowledgments
6. Conflict of Interest
7. Number of words in main text (i.e., excluding abstract, references, tables and figures)
8. Abstract (max. 250 words)
9. Main text (e.g. subdivided in introduction, method, results, discussion)
10. References
11. Tables
12. Figures

The review procedure

Usually a review is conducted by two external reviewers and one FSS-reviewer. The Academic Director of the GS decides on the acceptability of the substantive product to be sent out for review, as well as on the extensiveness / scope of the review procedure. For example, when an elaborated external review is already available (e.g. a draft chapter of the dissertation is reviewed by a scientific journal recently - the review should be attached) a limited review procedure might be chosen. The reviewers should keep in mind that a research proposal has sufficient quality to prepare for successful PhD research within the time limit (usually about 5000 hours are left for conducting the research and writing the PhD dissertation). A chapter has sufficient quality to be included in the final PhD dissertation as it is or with (minor) revisions; FSS does not require that a chapter is published in an edited volume or a scientific journal.

Proposal - Reviewer Instructions

(1) Please select a recommendation from the following options: reject, major revision, minor revision, accept.
(2) Please give the proposal an overall rating on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 100 (highest).
(3) Please rate the proposal for each issue on a scale of 1 to 5:
    1 = low/poor quality/unacceptable
    2 = problematic
    3 = sufficient/acceptable
    4 = good
    5 = high quality/excellent
    N/A = not applicable, cannot be assessed

Clarity research question	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
Originality	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
Embedding in scientific literature/debates	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
Quality of research design (fit between research question and proposed research)	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
Feasibility and quality of time schedule/work plan	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
Feasibility and quality of research methodology	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
Adequacy of the data	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
Quality of writing (clarity, style)	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
Contribution to scientific knowledge	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
Contribution to application in practice	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
Feasibility, quantity and quality of proposed output	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
Adequacy of expertise supervision team	N/A	1	2	3	4	5

(4) Please enter your narrative review for the PhD candidate in the "Comments to PhD candidate" textbox. Please (a) describe what you consider to be the research's key contribution, and (b) identify critical issues that should or could be addressed to improve the proposal.

(5) Enter any comments that are meant for the Academic Director of the Graduate School only in the "Comments to Director" textbox.

Chapter - Reviewer Instructions

(1) Please select a recommendation from the following options: reject, major revision (revise and resubmit), minor revision, accept.
(2) Please give the manuscript an overall rating on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 100 (highest).
(3) Please rate the manuscript for each issue on a scale of 1 to 5.

    1 = poor quality/unacceptable
    2 = problematic
    3 = sufficient/acceptable
    4 = good
    5 = high quality/excellent
    N/A = not applicable, cannot be assessed

Significance of the issue	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
Quality of research (design and analysis)	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
Adequacy of the data	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
Data interpretation	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
Quality of writing (structure, clarity, style)	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
Coverage of topic	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
Balance of arguments	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
Relevance/adequacy of literature reviewed	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
Theoretical contribution, contribution to new knowledge	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
Utility of tables and figures	N/A	1	2	3	4	5

(4) Please enter your narrative review for the author in the "Comments to Author" textbox. Please (a) describe what you consider to be the manuscript's key contribution to scientific knowledge and/or to application in practice, and (b) identify critical issues that should or could be addressed to improve the manuscript.
(5) Enter any comments that are meant for the Academic Director of the Graduate School only in the "Comments to Director" textbox.

Part 4. Time schedule and setting milestones

The time schedule consists of milestones defined within the PhD trajectory and the date set for the milestone (i.e. when the *work is completed and approved by the supervisors*; approval by the supervisors means, for example, that a chapter (as it is or with minor revisions) is accepted for the dissertation, an article is submitted to a journal, the manuscript is ready to be submitted to the thesis committee, or that data collection was conducted according to plan).

To assess milestones, ask advise from your supervisors and fellow PhD candidates. We suggest to create up to eight milestones for the whole trajectory, for example on:
- full research proposal;
- chapter in your dissertation;
- published article or chapter;
- data collected / field work conducted;
- manuscript dissertation.

On the date set for the milestone, the *work is completed and approved by the supervisors.* Approval by the supervisors means, for example, that a chapter (as it is or with minor revisions) is accepted for the dissertation, an article is submitted to a journal, the manuscript is ready to be submitted to the thesis committee, or that data collection was conducted according to the plan.

Note that a chapter, in particular when written in the beginning of the PhD trajectory, may need reworking or updating in the final phase of the dissertation process. Furthermore, an article submitted to a journal in most cases needs to be revised and resubmitted. Time spend on resubmission should be calculated in. Conducting doctorate education and training, as well as teaching, also require substantial time. In such periods there is less time for research activities and the calendar time between milestones should hence be extended.

Please find below a set of tables, derived from an Excel-file that is available from the GS-website, which provide due dates for a varying number of milestones, and is specific for various types of PhD trajectories. You may want to use or consult these as a guideline. The period between milestones for research is set as a constant. Each stage takes the same amount of time, for example about 700 hours of work in case of eight milestones. However, the length of a period varies in the number of months due to coursework and training (concentrated in the first three years) and teaching (in the second and third year), and due to rounding off the number of months. By changing the starting date in the Excel file the dates for your milestones can be easily computed.

starting date	1-9-'18			

type PhD trajectory	4 year fulltime			
go/no go assessment	1-5-'19			
end labor contract #1	1-9-'19			
number of milestones	8	7	6	5
milestone 1	1-3-'19	1-4-'19	1-5-'19	1-5-'19
milestone 2	1-9-'19	1-11-'19	1-2-'20	1-5-'20
milestone 3	1-4-'20	1-7-'20	1-11-'20	1-4-'21
milestone 4	1-11-'20	1-3-'21	1-8-'21	1-2-'22
milestone 5	1-6-'21	1-10-'21	1-3-'22	1-9-'22
milestone 6	1-12-'21	1-4-'22	1-9-'22	
milestone 7	1-5-'22	1-9-'22		
milestone 8	1-9-'22			

type PhD trajectory	5.7 year 3.5 days/week			
go/no go assessment	1-8-'19			
end labor contract #1	1-2-'20			
number of milestones	8	7	6	5
milestone 1	1-6-'19	1-8-'19	1-8-'19	1-8-'19
milestone 2	1-5-'20	1-8-'20	1-12-'20	1-6-'21
milestone 3	1-3-'21	1-8-'21	1-1-'22	1-7-'22
milestone 4	1-1-'22	1-5-'22	1-11-'22	1-7-'23
milestone 5	1-8-'22	1-2-'23	1-9-'23	1-6-'24
milestone 6	1-4-'23	1-10-'23	1-6-'24	
milestone 7	1-11-'23	1-6-'24		
milestone 8	1-6-'24			

type PhD trajectory	5 year 4 days/week			
go/no go assessment	1-7-'19			
end labor contract #1	1-12-'19			
number of milestones	8	7	6	5
milestone 1	1-5-'19	1-6-'19	1-7-'19	1-7-'19
milestone 2	1-1-'20	1-3-'20	1-7-'20	1-11-'20
milestone 3	1-10-'20	1-1-'21	1-6-'21	1-12-'21
milestone 4	1-6-'21	1-11-'21	1-3-'22	1-10-'22
milestone 5	1-1-'22	1-6-'22	1-12-'22	1-8-'23
milestone 6	1-8-'22	1-1-'23	1-8-'23	
milestone 7	1-2-'23	1-8-'23		
milestone 8	1-8-'23			

type PhD trajectory	3 year fulltime			
go/no go assessment	1-5-'19			
end labor contract #1	1-9-'19			
number of milestones	8	7	6	5
milestone 1	1-2-'19	1-2-'19	1-3-'19	1-4-'19
milestone 2	1-6-'19	1-7-'19	1-9-'19	1-11-'19
milestone 3	1-10-'19	1-1-'20	1-3-'20	1-7-'20
milestone 4	1-3-'20	1-6-'20	1-10-'20	1-3-'21
milestone 5	1-8-'20	1-12-'20	1-4-'21	1-9-'21
milestone 6	1-1-'21	1-5-'21	1-9-'21	
milestone 7	1-5-'21	1-9-'21		
milestone 8	1-9-'21			

Part 6. Data management plan

Most PhD research is empirical research, based on data. Data is essential in socio-scientific research. To the extent that conclusions in socio-scientific research rely on data, this data must be diligently collected and must be traceable for those who wish to verify these conclusions. All data also has an important documentation function: data that is collected in the present can prove to be of great value to future research (provided the data has been carefully managed and documented).

A data management plan outlines how data are to be handled both during a research project, and after the project is completed. The data management plan is specific for a method or design of research. PhD research may include various methods and designs. In such a case it is not necessary that at the time of this assessment the data management plan covers all research to be conducted; it is sufficient when the data management plan for the first research is described.

The purpose of the FSW Research Data Management policy (vunet.login.vu.nl/_layouts/SharePoint.Tridion.WebParts/download.aspx?cid=tcm%3a164-867378-16) is therefore to encourage and facilitate its researchers to systematically and carefully collect, manage and archive their data and ensure that they adhere to the three principles of data management highlighted above: diligent collection, traceability and documentation.

You will find an overview of all relevant information, products and support services FSS provides (in collaboration with other VU services) at vunet.login.vu.nl/services/pages/practicalinformation.aspx?cid=tcm%3a164-867392-16.

Making a Data management plan is subject of the GSSS course 'Research Integrity and Responsible Scholarship'. Participants create a plan and receive feedback, prior to a final assessment by the teacher.

The Data management plan is attached to the GNG and stored on a FSS drive (location G:\).

For questions and advice on data management, please contact the FSS research office (onderzoeksbureau.fsw@vu.nl) or the library (UBVU; ResearchDataServices.ub@vu.nl).

Part 7. Ethical test of research

FSS asks researchers to conduct a self-check prior to the start of the research. This check is documented in a pdf-file. If the outcome of the self-check indicates that a full review has to be conducted by the FSS Research Ethics Review Committee (RERC). Only research project leaders can submit research for an ethics review. The PhD candidate asks her or his supervisor to submit an application for review. Apply for the ethics review procedure in time: at least three months before you start collecting data!

When the PhD research consist of various data collections, the ethical test of research has to be conducted for each part. In such a case it is not necessary that at the time of this assessment all ethical tests are conducted; it is sufficient when the first research is tested.

Please visit fsw.vu.nl/nl/onderzoek/research-ethics-review/ to conduct the self-check and for further information.