

1 Introduction

This is the second annual report of the Graduate School of Spatial Sciences GSSS. The first report covered the short period since the start, on the 1st of September 2006 until the 1st of January 2007. This is the first annual report covering a whole year, 2007.

The GSSS combines the Research Master Regional Studies and the PhD training of the Faculty of Spatial Sciences (FRW). It is part of the Urban and Regional Studies Institute (URSI), the institute where all research activities of FRW are organized. URSI, in turn, is a member of the national research School Nethur (Netherlands Graduate School of Urban and Regional Research). Most of the PhD training courses of the GSSS are provided by Nethur.

The goal of the GSSS is to offer a professional PhD training and research environment within the FRW. In 2007 it housed a total of 50 PhD's. As will be presented below, in line with the rise in the number of students at the faculty level, the number of PhD's is also rising. In 2007 in total 15 students started a PhD trajectory. This is the highest inflow ever for FRW, and can be viewed as an indication of increasing awareness of the PhD program for the faculty. Incidentally, there was only one PhD promotion, but this should be seen as a temporary dip compared to the average of 4.6 per year since 2003 and, based on the high inflow of PhD's, the anticipated higher figures in the coming years. Moreover, 5 students started in the ReMa, which is also the highest since the start of 2004. Although this number is still low, the trend is an indication of the growing focus on research in the faculty.

In 2007 a lot of work was done to shape the PD training and research environment within the faculty. These involve better promotion of the Research Master, better administration of PhD's, setting up rules and protocols for entry, monitoring and exit of PhD's, but also, and equally important, to develop an awareness within the faculty, that PhD's are of vital importance to the standing and quality of the faculty. Most research is done by PhD's, and their work forms the heart of the research themes of URSI. These activities will also be at the heart of the work within the GSSS in 2008.

2 Organisation of the GSSS

Director and coordinator of the PhD training is Leo van Wissen. Coordinator of the Research Master is Inge Hutter. Stiny Tiggelaar is the office manager. The board of the GSSS, installed in the course of 2007, is composed of: Leo van Wissen (director, chair), Jouke van Dijk, Gert de Roo and Paulus Huigen. In 2007 the board had not convened formally.

3 Developments in number of students

Graduate School

On the 1st of January 2007 there were 7 students in the Research Master. In the course of 2007 the first two graduated, whereas 5 students enrolled. Consequently, On the 31st of December there were 10 students. Developments in the inflow have been modest, as can be seen from table 1.

Table 1 Inflow and outflow of Research Master Regional Studies 2004-7

	<i>inflow</i>	<i>graduated</i>
2004	3*	
2005	3	
2006	3	
2007	5	2
Total	14	

* one student terminated the master in 2005

Although there is a small increase in the number of enrolments in the Research Master, the numbers are still very low. This is a problem not only for the GSSS but apparent in almost all Research Masters in Spatial Sciences. The limited attractiveness of this master course is partly due to the limited visibility of the program for students at the end of their bachelor's. Therefore, more attention will be given to promotion and information. In the latest brochure, and on the website, the Research Master is promoted, not as something different from geography, planning or demography, but as a 'turbo' version of these specializations, in which you have more time to devote to each of these disciplines, and in which in addition an additional strong focus is on research methodologies.

PhD training

There is a clear upward trend in the number of PhD students since 2004. Figure 1 shows the development of the number of internal PhD's (person-years in PhD training) since 2000. After a peak in 2002-3 there was a downfall in 2004, but since then the number has increased.

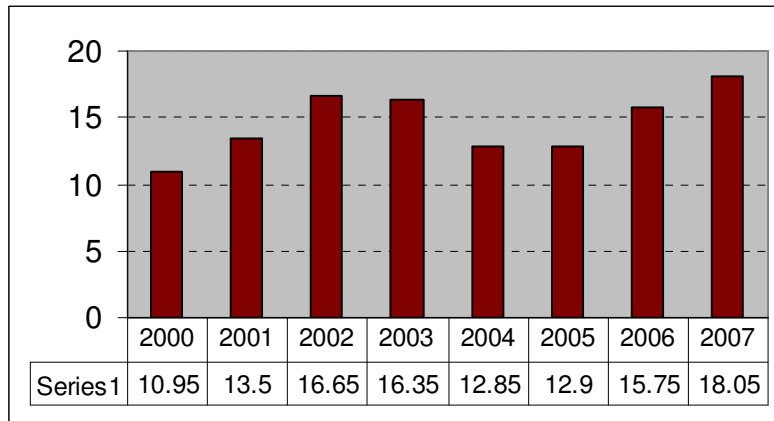


Figure 1 Number of PhD students per year 2000-7 GSSS (in fte)

Figure 2 shows the number of inflows (admissions) to internal PhD positions, as well as the number of promotions since 2003. Clearly, the number of admissions has increased substantially: from 3 in 2003 to 15 in 2007. The number of successful dissertations has shown a downward trend since 2005, which of course to a large reflects the developments in the number of admissions with a lag of 4 to 5 years. Based on these admission trends, a strong increase in the number of dissertations is expected in the coming years. Another factor which links admissions to promotions is the average PhD study duration. Although systematic data on these are still lacking, based on the admissions in the period an average duration of regular 4 year contracts was 5.2 years. One of the goals of the GSSS is to reduce this average significantly.

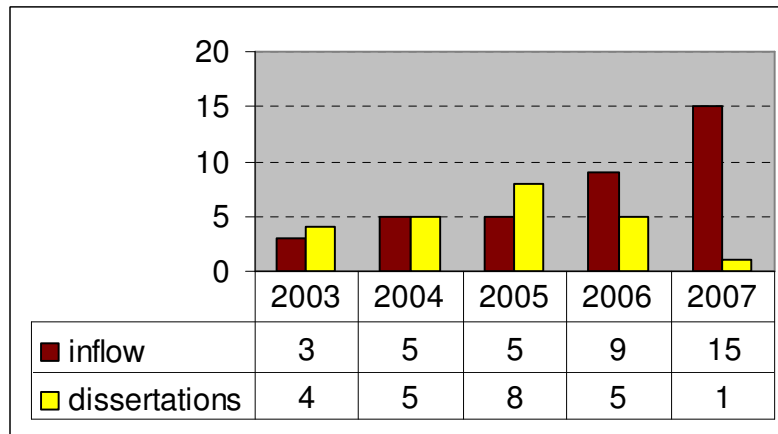


Figure 2 Trend in inflow and outflow 2003-7 GSSS

These are regular PhD's within the faculty, who are paid either as regular AIO's, OIO's or bursaries. Nevertheless, the total number of PhD trajectories affiliated with the GSSS is much larger: by the end of 2007 a total of 45. Their status, as defined by the provider of their budget, is given in the following table 2.

Table 2 PhD's by source of budget, 31 Dec. 2007

<i>AIO internally financed</i>	9
OIO	1
Aio financed by a third party	4
Ubbo Emmius	4
Bernouilli	6
Other Bursaries financed by a third party	2
Other	19
Total	45

In general there is a tendency that the number of AIO's or bursaries paid by outside university sources (housing corporations, ministries, international organizations) is growing. The large group of 'other' is composed of different types of students: those who have finished their regular 4 u-year contract, and still working to finalize their PhD', those who do a PhD on their own account, those paid by other organizations directly (NIDI, CBS) to work on a PhD, etc.

4 Developments around Nethur

All PhD's are required to follow courses for at least 30 ECTS. The content of the training programme is to a large extent provided by Nethur, in the form of compulsory courses. The compulsory part of the training consists of 20 ECTS, and involves general academic skills, theories and methods. In addition, each student can choose a number of courses (10 ECTS) specifically aimed at the field of his or her study. These additional courses can be given anywhere. Approval of the supervisor and director of the Graduate School are required.

With the start of the GSSS some of the tasks of Nethur were transferred to the GSSS. In consultation with the Nethur board a solution has been found for this duplicate requirements. First, the GSSS requires a formal review of the project proposal, at the start of the PhD. Nethur requires the same review. After approval of the project within GSSS the proposal and cv is sent to Nethur, where an outside reviewer will also take a look at it. Moreover, there was a large overlap in paperwork and entry documents. Now the admitted PhD fills in all documents for GSSS, and these are sent to Nethur for formal entry.

Of a more substantial nature are the developments around the Research Masters in spatial sciences. Since the start of the Graduate School format the Research Master and PhD are more closely connected. Moreover, all sister faculties face the same problem of limited numbers of ReMa students. Since the PhD training was already the task of Nethur, it seems logical to involve Nethur also more into ReMa education. More can be done to streamline different courses in the various ReMa programs under the umbrella of Nethur. This may solve some of the problems around the small scale of the individual ReMa programs. These developments will continue in 2008 and 2009.

5 Internal developments in the GSSS in 2007

Several developments may be mentioned under this umbrella:

- 1 The creation of a special website. Here, all information for current and prospective students and staff may be found. Although there are still ideas to add new elements to the website, it is a large step forward in terms of information and communication
- 2 The creation of a database and consistent files for all PhD students. The most important task under this heading was to remove a substantial backlog in vital information around current and past students. Since the RUG is implementing a university wide database system for PhD's, this information will be imputed in this larger system in due course
- 3 The streamlining of procedures for application, admission, monitoring and exit of PhD's. The aim of this task is to reduce the workload for standard procedures to a minimum, and to increase knowledge and awareness within the faculty about these (simple) procedures. To this end, various activities have been carried out:
 - a. First, an inventory of all protocols, rules, rights, duties, and other relevant information was collected, to create order in this matter. This information is now collected and will be combined in the first half of 2008 in two brochures, one for PhD's, and one for supervisors/promoters.
 - b. Second, forms and standard letters have been devised to standardize at least some of the activities that until now were of a more ad hoc nature.
- 4 The (re)-creation of a PhD monitoring system. A system was already in place, but has never functioned fully satisfactory. This monitoring system, in combination with the PhD database, will give more up to date information about the state of affairs of PhD's.

6 GSSS activities

Several activities are organized within the GSSS:

- lunch meetings
- research seminars
- PhD research conferences

7 Prospects for 2008

Many of the activities that started in 2007 will continue in 2008. The attention will shift from basic requirements (procedures, protocols, administration, information) to content, information and output. Specific points may be mentioned:

- More information should further increase the number of ReMa students, and PhD admissions. Funding of PhD's and foreign ReMa students

- remains a problem. More information about grants and subsidies within the faculty could help here, and this is one of the tasks of 2008.
- The gathered information for PhD's and supervisors (everything you always wanted to know about..) will be disseminated in the form of a website brochure
 - More information and training concerning publicising research results will be implemented. Promotion through journal articles will be propagated, and more awareness among all involved is necessary
 - Working towards a closer link between ReMa and PhD training, using Nethur and other means
 - Further development of the information data of PhD's

Based on the increasing numbers of admissions into the PhD programme, a substantial increase in the number of PhD dissertations is to be expected, especially after 2009.