

University of Groningen 2016-2017 Financial Support Regulations for students who incur study delay due to force majeure and for PhD scholarship students

Introduction

Article 2a of the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW) relates to the Graduation Fund (*Profileringfondsen*) and contains regulations concerning financial support for students who incur study delay due to extraordinary circumstances (Stb.2010, 119).

The Decree on a PhD Scholarship Programme Experiment of 23 December 2015 (Order in Council) contains a number of stipulations on financial support for PhD scholarship students. The institutional board must make provision for financial support for PhD scholarship students through the Graduation Fund (Stb.2016, 3).

On the Board of the University approved the regulations set out below concerning the granting of financial support on the basis of these legal regulations and the Order in Council after approval by the University Council.

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Chapter 1 General provisions

Article 1 Definitions

- Act:** The Higher Education and Research Act (WHW: *Wet op het Hoger Onderwijs en Wetenschappelijk onderzoek*).
- Ba:** The nominal duration of a Bachelor's degree programme.
- Board of the University:** The Board of the University of Groningen.
- DUO:** Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs [Education Executive Agency].
- Ma:** The nominal duration of a Master's degree programme.
- Performance-related grant:** A student loan and travel allowance, possibly with the addition of a supplementary grant and bonuses. Performance-related grants are awarded by DUO for a period of three years for the Bachelor's degree programme and, depending on the duration of the Master's degree programme, one, two or three years for the Master's degree programme.
- PhD scholarship programme:** Teaching in the context of the PhD training programme experiment that does not take the form of a degree programme and is geared to the acquisition of research skills and generic skills by PhD candidates in order to benefit their PhD studies and improve their position in the labour market.
- PhD scholarship student:** A PhD candidate who begins a PhD programme after the Order in Council has entered into force and who has been admitted to the PhD scholarship programme.
- Student:** A person enrolled as a student in a degree programme at the University of Groningen.
- Student counsellor:** Confidential advisor for students who have study progress problems, employed by the Student Service Centre.
- Student Service Centre (SSC):** University of Groningen expertise centre for study progress supervision.
- Student finance** A performance-related grant that students receive during the nominal duration of their degree programme, followed by a three-year loan period, in accordance with the WSF 2000.
- Study advisor:** Advisor for study-related issues, employed by a faculty.
- UFC (University Funds Committee):** A committee installed by the Board of the University which advises the Board with regard to decisions made on the basis of these Regulations.
- UG:** University of Groningen.
- Wet studievoorschot hoger onderwijs:** Higher Education Student Loan Act. The amendment to legislation including the WSF 2000 (Student Finance Act 2000), following the introduction of a new student finance system: the student loan.
- WSF 2000:** *Wet studiefinanciering 2000* (Student Finance Act 2000).

All other terms used in these regulations will have the meaning that the Act ascribes to them.

Article 2 Conditions for financial support

The University of Groningen provides financial support from the Graduation Fund (*Profileringfondsen*) to students who incur study delay due to exceptional circumstances, and who

- are enrolled as full-time students in a degree programme and have not yet gained their degree
- have paid the relevant statutory tuition fees to the University of Groningen
- are or were entitled to a performance-related grant on the basis of the WSF 2000 during the period to which the request relates.

Article 3 Exceptional circumstances

1. The following may constitute grounds for financial assistance:
 - a. illness of the claimant
 - b. pregnancy and childbirth
 - c. physical, sensory or other functional impairments
 - d. extraordinary family circumstances
 - e. an insufficiently feasible study programme
 - f. a student's degree programme not being reaccredited while the student has not yet gained his/her degree.
2. Other exceptional circumstances include the extension by the University of a Master's programme. 'Exceptional circumstances' also cover talented non-EEA students, within the meaning of Chapters 3 and 4 of these Regulations.

Article 4 Duration of support

1. In addition to the provisions of Article 2, on the basis of these Regulations students are entitled to financial support for study delay incurred during the *Bachelor's phase* for one additional year calculated from the first year of registration in Higher Education (Ba + 1).
2. In addition to the provisions of Article 3, on the basis of these Regulations students will be entitled to financial support for study delay incurred during the *Master's phase* for one additional year calculated from the first year of registration in Higher Education (Ma + 1).

Chapter 2 Study delay due to force majeure

Article 5 Reporting study delay

1. A student must immediately report to his/her study advisor as soon as it becomes clear that the exceptional circumstance will last more than a month (resulting in a study delay of 5 ECTS credit points or more) to discuss how the study delay can be limited as much as possible.
2. After the initial report to the study advisor, the student must also contact the student counsellor immediately if the study delay increases during the academic year to more than 15 ECTS.
3. If the study advisor refers the student to a student counsellor, the student must make an appointment with the student counsellor within 4 weeks of reporting to the study advisor.
4. The study advisor or student counsellor will complete a digital registration form on the basis of the study delay circumstances. This form also includes the agreements made. The student must tick this digital form for approval via the website.
5. Students who are unable to report to the study advisor and/or the student counsellor themselves must appoint someone to do this for them.
6. Students must follow the advice of the study advisor and/or student counsellor and make every effort to minimize the study delay.

Article 6 Reporting obligation for functional impairments

In the event of expected study delay due to a functional impairment or chronic illness, the student must report in accordance with the provisions of Article 5.

Article 7 Extension of student finance

1. In the event that the study delay is caused by a temporary or structural functional impairment, the student may in certain cases request an extension of the performance-related grant from DUO after consultation with the student counsellor. The study delay upon which such a request is based must have been reported to the student counsellor in accordance with Article 5 of these Regulations.
2. Students who are awarded an extension of the performance-related grant received from DUO are not entitled to financial support from the Graduation Fund during that period.

Article 8 Extent of study delay

1. The link between the exceptional circumstance as referred to in Article 2.1 and the study programme will be taken into consideration when deciding on the extent of the study delay. Thus the number of months of study delay caused by an extraordinary circumstance can normally only be calculated at the end of the period Ba+1 or Ma+1.
2. Financial support is only granted per full month.
3. No financial support will be granted for study delays of less than one month (less than 5 ECTS).

Article 9 Amount of financial support

The financial support, related to the amount of study delay, will be € 286 per month, plus any supplementary grants and bonuses that the student received in the last month of the academic year in which the extraordinary circumstances occurred or in the last month of the period of the performance-related grant.

Article 10 Request for provisional financial support

1. The request can be submitted between 1 September and 1 February following the academic year during which the extraordinary circumstance occurred.
2. Students must request financial support by means of the digital request form on the website: www.rug.nl/studievertraging.
3. Students must upload the documentary evidence via the website, and must then fill in the digital request form in accordance with Article 10.2.
4. Students can check the status of the request procedure at any time via the website.
5. Requests submitted on or after 1 February of the year after the academic year in which the extraordinary circumstance occurred will not be processed.
6. If the request is incomplete, the student will be granted four weeks to complete the request. If the request is not completed within this term, it will not be considered any further. The student will be notified of this.
7. The Board of the University will make a decision with regard to the request after consultation with the UFC. This will take place as soon as possible but within a maximum of 8 weeks of receipt of the completed request.
8. The decision will be:
 - a. either the conditional granting of financial support, or
 - b. rejection of the request, or
 - c. non-consideration of the request because it was submitted after the deadline, or
 - d. non-consideration of the request because the request was incomplete

- and the missing information was not provided before the deadline.
9. The decision, and the reasons for it, will be communicated to the student in writing.

Article 11 Request for definitive granting of financial support

1. A request for definitive approval of conditionally granted financial support may be submitted:
 - a. one month before until no more than six months after the end of the period Ba+1 or Ma+1, or
 - b. one month before until no more than six months after graduation or termination of registration.
2. The decision will be:
 - a. either the definitive granting of financial support, or
 - b. rejection of the request, or
 - c. non-consideration of the request because it was submitted after the deadline, or
 - d. non-consideration of the request because the request was incomplete and the missing information was not provided before the deadline.
3. The amount of financial support will depend on the amount of study delay actually incurred, which will be determined on the basis of an up-to-date printout of the student's study results.
4. The decision, and the reasons for it, will be communicated to the student in writing.

Article 12 Documentary evidence

The following documents must be submitted with requests for financial support:

- a. If the request is based on circumstances referred to in Article 3.1.a and 3.1.b, a declaration from a specialist (e.g. a physician or psychologist) specifying the period during which the circumstances occurred, or, in the case of a request for definitive awarding of provisional support, the statement of provisional approval issued previously.
- b. In the event of a structural functional impairment or chronic illness as referred to in Article 3.1.c, a declaration by a specialist must be presented stating that there is a structural functional impairment or chronic illness. This declaration only has to be submitted once.
- c. If the request is based on extraordinary family circumstances as referred to in Article 3.1.d, written proof of the extraordinary family circumstances.
- d. If the request is based on grounds as referred to in Article 3.1.e, a declaration from the faculty.
- e. If the request is based on loss of accreditation for the degree programme as referred to in Article 3.1.f, written proof and an explanation to support the request.
- f. A notification from DUO stating the amount of the grant in the last month of the academic year during which the extraordinary circumstances occurred. If relevant, a notification from DUO stating the amount of the last month of the performance-related grant during the loans phase.
- g. The most recent printout of the student's study results, certified by the Student Administration Office.

Article 13 Payment of financial support

Payment will take place close to the date indicated by the student. The date of payment must be within a year of termination of the registration.

Chapter 3 Compensation for extended Master's degree programmes

Article 14 Conditions and amount of compensation

1. The University of Groningen will grant financial compensation to students who are registered at the institution for an extended Master's degree programme with a student workload of 90 ECTS or 120 ECTS.
2. Students must satisfy all conditions listed in Article 2 of these Regulations.
3. When the Board of the University decides the amount of financial compensation, it will base its decision on the most recent information or the most recent 'Notification' concerning the basic grant, plus any supplementary grant/bonuses in accordance with the WSF 2000. The financial support will also comprise a sum to cover the costs of the student travel product that is in line with the amount that DUO reimburses for temporary absence abroad. No financial support will be provided for a loan granted under the Higher Education Student Loan Act.
4. Financial compensation will be paid on the basis of the number of months of the academic year that the student was registered at the University of Groningen and will not exceed the period corresponding to the student workload over and above 60 ECTS credit points.
5. Students can only qualify for financial compensation for one extended Master's degree programme at the University of Groningen.

Article 15 Request procedure

1. Students who believe they qualify for financial compensation may submit a digital request through the University of Groningen website <http://www.rug.nl/studenten/studiebegeleiding/studievertraging/index>.
2. The request must be submitted within six months of registration terminating. Requests submitted after this period will not be processed, except in the event of force majeure.
3. Decisions will be made by or on behalf of the Board of the University as soon as possible, and in any case within 8 weeks. The Board of the University – or someone on its behalf – may consult the relevant Faculty Board, Programme Director or study advisor for advice before coming to a final decision.
4. The requester will be notified in writing of the decision.

Chapter 4 Financial support for talented non-EEA students

Article 16 Conditions

A talented student who is not a member of one of the groups set out in Article 2.2 of the Student Finance Act 2000 and does not have Surinamese nationality is eligible for financial support in the form of a 'knowledge grant' if:

- a. he/she resides in the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg or one of the following states of the Federal Republic of Germany: North Rhine-Westphalia, Lower Saxony or Bremen
- b. and meets the criteria set by the faculty in question for eligibility for a 'knowledge grant'.

Article 17 Request for financial support

1. Students must contact the Board of the relevant faculty to request financial support.
2. Each faculty has its own request procedure and the amount of financial support may vary.

Chapter 5 Financial support for PhD scholarship students

Article 18 Conditions

1. Contrary to the provisions of Article 2 of these Regulations, the University of Groningen provides financial support to PhD scholarship students who satisfy the following conditions:
 - a. They must have been admitted to the PhD programme by a recognized University of Groningen Graduate School.
 - b. While following the PhD scholarship programme, they may not simultaneously follow another degree programme for which they are entitled to student finance under the Student Finance Act 2000.
2. If the conditions set out in Article 18.1 are satisfied, the financial support will start in the month in which the PhD scholarship student in question started the PhD programme.

Article 19 Amount of financial support

1. PhD scholarship students are entitled to financial support of € 1700 per month. This amount will be adjusted annually to account for inflation.
2. The financial support is awarded in the form of a non-repayable grant, which will be terminated four years after the start of the PhD programme or upon premature termination of the PhD programme.

Article 20 Delay due to extraordinary circumstances

1. PhD scholarship students who incur study delay due to extraordinary circumstances as listed in Articles 20.2 and 20.3 can apply for an extension of their financial support with the Graduate School.
2. The extraordinary circumstances listed in Article 3.1 a, b, c, and d of these Regulations also apply to PhD scholarship students.
3. In addition to the circumstances referred to in Article 20.2, the following situations also qualify as extraordinary circumstances:
 - a. a valid complaint about the quality of the PhD programme.
 - b. circumstances to be assessed by the Director of the Graduate School.
4. The extraordinary circumstances referred to in Articles 20.2 and 20.3 must have occurred in the period in which the PhD scholarship student qualified for financial support based on these Regulations.
5. As soon as a PhD scholarship student incurs study delay or expects to incur study delay due to extraordinary circumstances, they must report as soon as possible, and in any case within four weeks, to the Graduate School if it becomes clear that the extraordinary circumstance will last more than a month.
6. PhD scholarship students must satisfy all written agreements made with the Graduate School in order to qualify for extension of the financial support. These agreements aim to help prevent or limit further delays in the PhD programme.

Article 21 Request for extension of financial support

1. A request for an extension of financial support must be submitted to the Graduate School three months before the end of the PhD programme.
2. The request must be supported by relevant documentary evidence of the extraordinary circumstances and a statement from the supervisor confirming the need for an extension. Article 12 a, b and c also apply.
3. The Graduate School will make a decision with regard to the request as soon as possible but within a maximum of 8 weeks of receipt of the completed request. The possibility of and deadline for lodging an objection will be stated in the written decision.

Article 22 Determining the duration of the extension

1. The amount of delay will be determined on the basis of the nature of the extraordinary circumstances referred to in Articles 20.2 and 20.3, the study programme, the actual delay incurred and the time within which the delay can be remedied. The resulting amount of study delay, expressed in months, is the maximum period with which the financial support can be extended.
2. Financial support is only granted per full month.
3. No financial support will be granted for study delays of less than one month.

Chapter 6 Transitional and final provisions

Article 23 Transitional provisions

Students who incur study delay as a result of exceptional circumstances referred to in Article 3 of these Regulations, and to whom the Higher Education Student Loan Act (*Wet studievoorschot hoger onderwijs*) does not apply on 1 September 2015, are entitled to support from the Graduation Fund in accordance with the University of Groningen Graduation Fund Regulations 2014-2015.

Article 24 Lodging an objection

Students can lodge a written objection with the Board of the University against a decision as referred to in Article 1:3 of the General Administrative Law Act taken by or on behalf of the Board of the University on the grounds of these Regulations within six weeks through the Central Portal for the Legal Protection of Student Rights, P.O. Box 72, 9700 AB Groningen, the Netherlands, www.rug.nl/CLRS

Article 25 Concurrence

In the event that study delay within the meaning of these Regulations coincides with membership of a consultative body or board/committee, or with top-level sport activities as determined in the '*University of Groningen 2015-2016 Financial Support Regulations for student members of consultative/administrative bodies, committee members of student organizations and top athletes*', the specified term for these activities will be taken into consideration when determining the extent of the study delay. The maximum number of months of financial support per academic year is twelve.

Article 26 Hardship clause

In some cases a request for financial support may be granted if rejection would result in a situation of unfairness of overriding nature.

Article 27 Deviation from the regulations

In exceptional circumstances the Board of the University may deviate from the provisions of these Regulations.

Article 28 Date of commencement and validity

These regulations will take effect on 1 September 2016 and will remain in force until 1 September 2017.

Article 29 Citation and publication of these regulations

1. These regulations may be cited as: University of Groningen 2016-2017 Financial Support Regulations for students who incur study delay due to force majeure and for PhD scholarship students
2. These regulations have been sent to the Faculty Boards and Graduate Schools for reference, published on the internet and included as an appendix in the Students' Charter.