

Evaluation of the PhD Scholarship Programme at the University of Groningen

Fourth Year,
1 September 2019 – 31 August 2020

This report covers the evaluation of the fourth year (1 September 2019 – 31 August 2020) of the UG PhD Scholarship Programme, which was set up in the framework of the national experiment, started on 1 September 2016, and planned to end on 31 August 2024. It is an intermediate evaluation, in between the mid-term evaluation of the national experiment in 2019 and the final national evaluation, foreseen for autumn 2021.

The academic year 2019/2020 has been the year of the last inflow of the first part of the programme, for which the UG received permission to fill 850 places for PhD scholarship students. It has also been the year of the second application to the Minister, submitted in December 2019, and the approval of the Minister for 650 extra places to be filled by the UG until the end of 2022. It has been the year of discussions with the PhD scholarship students of the Manifesto and the University Council about possible improvements in the programme. In its July meeting of 2020, the Council has advised positively on an implementation plan for the second part of it, of which of course also the PhD scholarship students of the first round will profit.

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The PhD Scholarship Programme at the UG

On 8 January 2016, the [Order in Council \(AMvB: Algemene Maatregel van Bestuur\)](#) concerning the PhD Scholarship Experiment (*Besluit experiment promotieonderwijs*) was published and the first round for submitting proposals for participation was declared open. The University of Groningen (for 850 places) and the Erasmus University Rotterdam (for 15 places) submitted proposals and both proposals were approved. The national experiment runs from 1 September 2016 until 31 August 2024, with a planned final evaluation in the second half of 2021. The [PhD Scholarship Programme](#) in Groningen started with a first cohort of PhD scholarship students on 1 September 2016. It has been agreed with the University Council that the UG programme will be evaluated annually.

The three objectives of the PhD Scholarship Programme, as stipulated by the Order in Council, are:

1. to increase the number of PhD graduations;
2. to improve the opportunities for PhD students to formulate their own research proposals;
3. to continue to improve training programmes for PhD students, focusing specifically on preparing them for their future careers after graduation – regardless of whether they choose to work in academia or elsewhere.

A fourth, additional objective of the UG, as agreed with the University Council, is to create a sound legal and socially responsible status within the programme for *all* PhD students with a scholarship. This therefore includes international PhD students with a competitive scholarship from an international body.

In the UG PhD Scholarship Programme both full scholarships and supplementary scholarships (top-ups) are given. The latter are given to international PhD students with a scholarship from their home country or from an (inter)national foundation. These top-ups supplement the PhD student's own scholarship to a net amount equal to that of PhD scholarship students with a full scholarship. Both types of scholarships can also be used in sandwich programmes with other universities.

PhD scholarship students have student status, but for their payment, the UG uses the 'notional' fiscal scheme for tax and social security. Therefore, social security premiums are paid for them, which means that they are insured for these social services, including having the right to benefits. The PhD scholarship students do not pay pension contributions and they do not receive a year-end bonus or holiday pay. Due to this system, also the international PhD students receiving a top-up are offered good living conditions with social security.

The Minister decided that as of 1 January 2019, supplementary (top-up) scholarships to international scholarship PhD students may be paid using the notional fiscal scheme also outside the national experiment. Therefore, since that date, the UG can provide top-up scholarships without having to include them in the quota assigned by the Minister. Nevertheless, the UG has decided that PhD students receiving a top-up outside the quota have the same rights, duties, and total net income as their colleagues with a top-up who started before January 2019.

The Board of the UG supports the PhD scholarship positions through the Ubbo Emmius programme and has tasked the Dean of Graduate Studies with the implementation of the programme. A PhD

Scholarship Desk was created to deal with all administrative issues concerning PhD scholarship students. As all UG PhD students, PhD scholarship students are part of their faculty's Graduate School. The Dean of Graduate Studies coordinates the Graduate Schools, and monitors their actions to help PhD students to acquire dedicated research and generic skills, to finish their thesis within the allotted time, to prevent unnecessary drop-outs, and to prepare them for a career as a scientist, both in- and outside academia. The Dean of Graduate Studies regularly reports to the Board of the University on the progress of the programme.

About this Report

We shall start this report with a review of the fourth year of the programme and a discussion on the developments, difficulties and achievements. Subsequently, we discuss the progress within the Career Perspectives Series (CPS), which has been set up in the framework of the third objective, *i.e.* to improve the preparation of PhD students for future careers after graduation, inside or outside academia.

The University of Groningen conducts surveys among PhD students to receive input where improvements of the PhD programme are needed and to see if measures taken based on previous survey results produce effects. During the reporting period considered here, there was no edition of the general, biennial UG PhD Survey, but we did have the second edition of the PhD Wellbeing Survey in May 2020. Out of this, we present a number of the key results in a comparison between PhD scholarship students and other PhD students.

Finally, we shall present the numbers of incoming PhD scholarship students of the first four years, the numbers of graduations, including the careers started after the graduations, and the numbers concerning premature termination of contract.

In Appendix 1, we shall provide the updated information, as requested by the Minister in the Order in Council to be included in the final evaluation, as to

- whether there were changes in the PhD student intake since 1 January 2016 in terms of type of student, country of origin and educational field;
- whether the university awarded more PhD degrees as a result of the programme (compared to the period 2010-2016; objective 1), and, if so, whether this differed for each educational field;
- whether the number of PhD graduates and the number of PhD students has changed since 1 January 2016 in terms of category, country of origin and educational field.

In Appendix 2, we shall discuss a few administrative issues in regard to external institutions like UWV and SVB.

Finally, in Appendix 3, we shall give the total numbers of top-up scholarships during the first four years of the PhD Scholarship Programme, of which part is not officially included in the evaluation of the experiment.

Review of the Fourth Year

As a follow-up of the national mid-term evaluation ([CHEPS report](#), issued in May 2019), the Minister indicated in her letter to Parliament of 28 June 2019 that this mid-term evaluation was positive and in her letter of 18 September 2019 she invited the UG (and other universities) to submit a proposal for a second round of applications, with a deadline on 1 January 2020. Due to the fact that the mid-term evaluation of the national experiment was held one year later than planned (2019 instead of 2018), the UG already ran out of positions in the autumn of 2018. The Board had to adjust the Ubbo Emmius programme for the years 2019 and 2020 in such a way that also PhD students with employee status (*werknemerpromovendi*) would be subsidized, which led to an unwanted break in the UG policy. Though the UG could not guarantee the continuity it had wished for, it decided to take up the opportunity to extend the number of positions and prepare an application for the second round for 650 positions, on top of the 850 of the first round. The Erasmus University of Rotterdam, the other university that had participated in the first round, decided to discontinue its participation in the experiment because it chose to switch to top-ups instead of full scholarships. Universities that had not participated in the first round, were not allowed to participate in the second round, so the UG was the only applicant.

In the build-up of the second application, a group of UG PhD scholarship students composed a [Manifesto](#), in which apart from demanding to terminate the programme, they related the problems they faced with the experiment at the UG. The Board of the UG and the Dean of Graduate Studies discussed the points with the authors of the Manifesto and with the University Council.

For the second application (discussed by the Council on 12 December 2019), the Board of the UG wanted to additionally stimulate positioning of new projects in the context of its new strategic goals. Therefore, it divided the 650 new positions applied for into the following categories:

- a) 50 for interdisciplinary research within the ‘major’ societal themes of the UG that will be the strategic focus in the coming years:
 - i) Energy transition and climate adaptation,
 - ii) Healthy ageing for a healthy society,
 - iii) Digital society and technology,
 - iv) Governance and politics for a sustainable society;
- b) 50 for interdisciplinary research between two faculties, as previously done in the PhD scholarship positions assigned to the Young Academy Groningen;
- c) 90 for cooperation (sandwich construction) with societal partners;
- d) 210 for cooperation (sandwich construction) with international partners;
- e) 250 for research on faculty strategic themes and/or follow-up to a (research) master.

On 10 February 2020, the Minister informed the UG that it could fill 650 more positions in the course of three years (2020-2022).

During the first months of 2020, the Dean of Graduate Studies (prof. Lou de Leij, as of March followed up by prof. Petra Rudolf) had several discussions with the authors of the Manifesto, the Groningen Graduate Interest Network (GRIN) and a committee of University Council members. Possible improvements of the conditions for the PhD scholarship students figured prominently in these discussions. It became clear that in several cases, PhD scholarship students were not completely aware of their rights. In other cases, improvements possible within the rules and regulations that govern the UG programme were implemented, as described below.

In order to improve the way the modalities of the PhD scholarship are communicated, the Dean made a [new document](#) with the list of conditions, rights and duties of PhD scholarship students, in which also the adjusted conditions were included.

To enable prospective PhD (scholarship) students to better compare the conditions of a position offered to them with those of other types of PhD positions, a list of all important conditions of all types of PhD students at the UG was drawn up. Both documents were discussed and approved in the University Council meeting of 2 July 2020 and subsequently placed on the page of the UG website to substitute for the old list of conditions: rug.nl/phd-scholarship (choose 'Conditions and Application').

Developments in the Programme

One of the major points of criticism in the annual midterm evaluation of the national experiment in 2019 was that the communication around the programme should be improved, and the discussions in spring 2020 mentioned above echoed this need. This is why the Dean has been working on an improved and more user-friendly website for the PhD Scholarship Programme, which will be implemented during the first months of 2021.

To assure a better communication and information flow, the Dean also realized the following:

- The differences between the conditions for PhD scholarship students and those for PhD students with employee status were discussed in informative meetings the Graduate Schools organized for their (research) master students and prospective PhD students.
- All organizers of bachelor and master courses at the UG were informed that PhD scholarship students cannot be obliged to teach and that it is forbidden for them to have a part-time teaching appointment at the UG or UMCG in combination with their scholarship.
- A communication about the (adjusted) conditions was sent to the PhD councils, with the request to inform the PhD (scholarship) students of their faculty.
- A meeting with representatives of the PhD councils of all faculties with the Dean was organized by GRIN and the Dean could further illustrate improvements in that occasion.
- Trainings for starting and for experienced PhD supervisors are in development; information about the conditions of the different types of PhD students will be included in these trainings.

Most practical issues were solved, such as a computer on loan for the whole PhD project, reimbursement of travel costs from home country, discounts for language courses, and help with obtaining unemployment benefits. On the other hand, possibilities were created for PhD scholarship students to follow courses for obtaining a University Teaching Qualification (in Dutch BKO) or a professional qualification as high-school teacher (both starting in 2021).

Up to now, the UMCG has done the payroll calculations for UG PhD scholarship students (while the actual payments for UG PhD scholarship students are done by the FSSC). This situation has a number of disadvantages, e.g. that UG PhD scholarship students cannot use the UG Shared Services declaration portal and that it is very complicated to implement the 30% ruling for international PhD scholarship students. For efficiency reasons, the UG is opting to take over the payroll calculations for the UG PhD scholarship students. Therefore, it was placed on the UG AFAS roadmap 2020, but this had to be postponed with one year.

Like for all other PhD students, the covid-19 pandemic affects the PhD scholarship students. The Board of the UG is of the opinion that PhD scholarship students should benefit from measures to mitigate the effects of working from home and getting delayed. To this end, the Board made available an extra budget for the extensions of PhD scholarship students, besides the 0,45% of the total wage bill that could be used for extensions for employees with temporary contracts (like PhD students with employee status). As of January 2021, UG PhD scholarship students can, under certain conditions, participate in the [Tablet/Laptop scheme for UG employees](#) (PhD scholarship students of the Faculty of Medical Sciences participate in the scheme for UMCG employees). For those who do not fulfill the conditions for participation, the equipment can be obtained on loan from the faculty or institute. Besides, all PhD scholarship students, including those from the Faculty of Medical Sciences, receive the € 25 internet allowance for working from home for UG employees during five months.

Career Perspectives Series

This is the third academic year in which the Career Perspectives Series (CPS) has been running in its full extent. Due to the covid-19 pandemic, the PhD Introductory event and most of the CPS courses and workshops had to be moved to an online format (since March 2020). Despite this temporary setback, the CPS courses were running smoothly and registrations and attendance were very satisfactory, often reaching maximum capacity. The 'Outside Academia' courses were very popular, especially those where PhD alumni came to speak about their own career paths. The course 'My Future Career', the core of the CPS programme, was well attended and also running at maximum capacity. We are looking into ways to scale up the course in order to allow for higher numbers of participants.

Below, the recent updates and current developments to the CPS programme are given.

1. Work Experience and Job Opportunities for PhD students

At the final stages of the PhD, PhD scholarship students who followed the My Future Career course and are interested in pursuing a career outside academia, can seek out internships or work experience opportunities in their field of interest. To facilitate this within the CPS programme, an online Employability platform is being developed together with Make it in the North and UG Career Services where PhD students can look for available work experience and Internship positions with external companies, industry, and governmental and non-governmental agencies in the North of the Netherlands (see <https://www.makeitinthnorth.nl>). In the near future, company networks will be extended to the rest of the Netherlands and Europe through, amongst others, the UG PhD Alumni network (see point 5), UG Career Services, and collaborating with the PhD Career programme

currently being developed by Academic Transfer (<https://www.academictransfer.com/en/your-career/>).

2. Research Collaborations

To help PhD students broaden their network with external businesses, government, and organizations for potential career connections, together with the Dean of Industry Relations, a programme has been developed that brings together young researchers and external partners to collaborate on research topics of common interest. If PhD students would like to find an external partner, together with their supervisor they can contact the industry relations team at industryrelations@rug.nl. In addition to facilitating career connections, these research collaborations also help PhD students to see the potential impact of their research on society, such as on policy changes, product development, or contributing to important societal challenges (such as digitalization, climate change, *etc.*). Such collaborations also broaden PhD students' research perspectives outside of their own academic research environment, which is an important skill if they decide to pursue a career outside academia.

3. Career Events for PhD students

Within the PhD Employability Programme career events aimed at PhD students are promoted and offered. These include Meet & Greet Young Researcher events (organized by the Graduate Schools and Industry Relations 1-2 times per year), PhD Day Career Events (1 time per year), Beta Business days (1 time per year), and Meet your Future (various events throughout the year hosted by Make it in the North).

4. PhD Career Portal

In order to make all career information easily available for PhD students, a PhD Career Portal website was created on My University where all the PhD career information described above can be found (see: <https://myuniversity.rug.nl/infonet/medewerkers/werk-en-carriere/informatie-voor-phds/phd-career-portal/>).

5. Connect current PhD students with the UG PhD Alumni (mid 2021)

Together with the Alumni & Fundraising department and faculty Graduate Schools, a PhD Alumni programme is being developed. The aims of this programme are to connect the UG PhD alumni with the activities in the Career Perspectives Series such as inviting alumni to speak at CPS workshops and career events, but also to help mentor current PhD students, become involved in research collaborations, and post job vacancies in the (future) Alumni and Employability portal. We anticipate that the Alumni programme will be ready in mid 2021.

Wellbeing of PhD Scholarship Students

PhD students, like all UG students and staff, had a hard time adjusting to the changed working conditions imposed by the covid-19 pandemic. A brief look at the first results from the 2020 PhD Wellbeing Survey, which summarize the replies from 473 PhD students with employee status and 246 PhD scholarship students, show that both categories experience the situation in a very similar way.

There are slightly more PhD scholarship students (66.7%) who work exclusively at home than PhD students with employee status (62.4%), and the percentage of PhD students with employee status who alternate work at home and in the office is correspondingly higher.

For what working conditions are concerned, only about one fifth of all PhD students can concentrate better at home and has fewer distractions there. About two thirds say that they concentrate better in the office, have fewer distractions there, get more work done, and are more motivated there; half of the PhD students writes better and reads literature better in the office. The internet connection quality is better in the office for about half of all PhD students but another two fifth find no difference between the quality at the office and at home. The compensation of the internet costs for five months is intended to offer support for mitigating this difference. The quality of the PC is also an issue: 58.1% of the PhD scholarship students say they have a better PC/laptop at the office, while 45.5% of the PhD students with employee status shares that opinion. This is where the new regulation for laptops (either through the UG Tablet/Laptop scheme or on loan by the Graduate Schools) described above will bring improvement since through these measures all PhD students will have up-to-date hardware at home. More than 75% of all PhD students say they have an ergonomically better working place at the office (79.3% of PhD scholarship students versus 74% PhD students with employee status) and the extra attention both in facilitating taking material (chairs, big screens, etc.) from the office to the home and the financial help by the university will hopefully bring an improvement.

65.0% of PhD scholarship students and 61.7% of PhD students with employee status state that the pandemic has affected their PhD programme, but slightly more than one quarter of all PhD students state their project is on track and they will be able to finish in time, another quarter thinks they will recover the delays and also finish in time, while about one third thinks they will not finish in time. The rest either do not know or are already on a prolongation or other conditions. As already mentioned above, with the extra budget made available by the Board of the University for the extensions of PhD scholarship students, all PhD students will receive an identical support concerning prolongations.

In general, all PhD students are satisfied with the supervision they receive (judged by PhD students with employee status with 3.85/5 and by PhD scholarship students with 3.83/5) and with the PhD programme (judged by PhD students with employee status with 3.56/5 and by PhD scholarship students with 3.36/5). However, about 11% of all PhD students say they think (very) often about quitting (no difference between categories).

It is important to mention that during the reporting period important measures were implemented to help PhD students maintain a good work-life balance, cope better with stress, stay healthy mentally and straightforwardly find help when problems arise. In addition to further consolidating support as can be seen on the [PhD Support webpage](#), a PhD psychologist as well as PhD counselors for the Faculty of Medical Sciences and the Faculty of Science and Engineering were hired. Additionally, special help for PhD students affected by covid-19 pandemic related stress and mental health issues was implemented.

Intake of PhD Scholarship Students

Tables 1 shows the intake of PhD scholarship students during the first four years of the UG programme, divided by faculty, intake year (year 1-3 vs 4), and type of scholarship (full vs supplementary (top-up)).

Table 1a. Intake of PhD scholarship students in the period September 2016 to August 2020, divided into scholarship type (full vs supplementary), faculty, and year (year 1-3 is September 2016 – August 2019, year 4 is September 2019 – August 2020). For full scholarships, the tables show how many were awarded to students with Dutch nationality. As of January 2019, new top-up scholarships are not part of the experiment anymore.

Fac.	Year 1-3				Year 4				Total			
	Full		Suppl.	Tot.	Full		Suppl.	Tot.	Full		Suppl.	Tot.
		NL				NL				NL		
FEB	21	2	6	27	1	—	—	1	22	2	6	28
FGGW	13	5	2	15	1	—	—	1	14	5	2	16
FGMW	20	12	12	32	3	1	—	3	23	13	12	35
FdL	43	21	10	53	1	—	—	1	44	21	10	54
FMW	207	115	110	317	5	1	—	5	212	116	110	322
FRG	24	21	3	27	3	3	—	3	27	24	3	30
FRW	16	7	5	21	3	—	—	3	19	7	5	24
FSE	140	34	162	302	8	1	—	8	148	35	162	310
FWB	14	7	2	16	—	—	—	—	14	7	2	16
CF	14	12	—	14	3	1	—	3	17	13	—	17
Total	512	236	312	824	28	7	—	28	540	243	312	852

Full names of faculties:

- FEB: Faculty of Economics and Business
- FGGW: Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies
- FGMW: Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences
- FdL: Faculty of Arts
- FMW: Faculty of Medical Sciences (UMCG/FMW)
- FRG: Faculty of Law
- FRW: Faculty of Spatial Sciences
- FSE: Faculty of Science & Engineering
- FWB: Faculty of Philosophy
- CF: Campus Fryslân

The numbers in Table 1a deviate slightly from those in the evaluation of the third year. The reason is that in April 2020 KVI-CART stopped as an interfaculty institute and its PhD (scholarship) students moved, together with their research groups, to FSE and FMW. Also, there were some last-minute shifts between starting dates in the third and the fourth year, so that Table 1a shows that 824 PhD scholarship students started until the third year, *i.e.* until 31 August 2019, instead of the 825 mentioned in the evaluation report of the third year. Most of the PhD scholarship students in the second round will start as of September 2020. They are not included in this evaluation yet.

Because as of January 2019, the new supplementary (top-up) scholarships are not part of the experiment anymore, during the fourth year no intake of this type of scholarships is reported. The new intake came only from PhD students with full scholarships. After the stop to the intake by the Board of the UG in November 2018, the 30 places remaining at that time were distributed over the faculties: they received 3 remaining places each. The majority of the faculties already filled these places during the second half of the third year (spring 2019), but faculties like FGMW and FRG waited with filling them until the new cohort of their research master students was able to start with a PhD programme in September 2019.

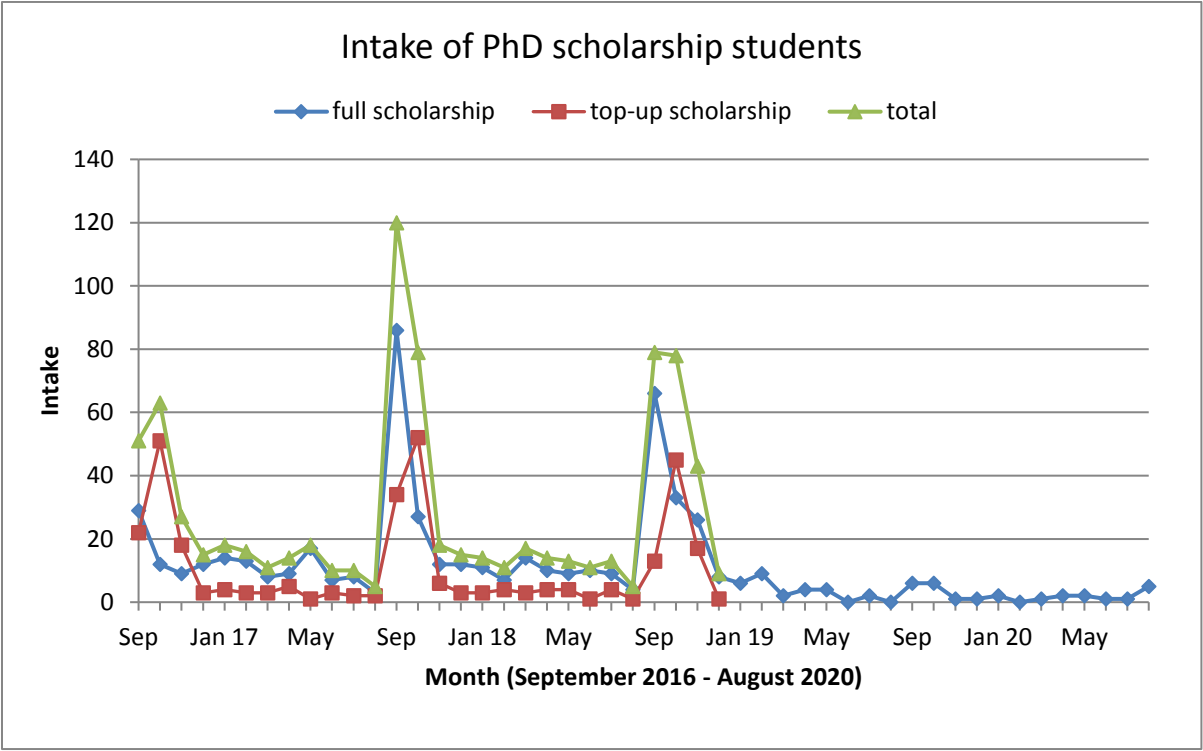


Figure 1. Intake per month of PhD scholarship students with a full scholarship for the period September 2016 to August 2020 (blue line). Until December 2018, the numbers of top-up scholarships (red line) and the total intake per month (in green) are shown.

Figure 1 shows how intake numbers changed over time, divided into full and top-up scholarships. The figure clearly shows the impact of the programme launch and the fact that the majority of PhD scholarship students start their programme in September - November. It is also clear from the figure that awardees of a top-up scholarship are not in the programme anymore since January 2019 and that in 2019 and the first part of 2020 only a small amount of full scholarship awardees has started.

Graduations

Until August 2020, 29 PhD scholarship students completed their PhD programme with a graduation. Of them, 20 had a full scholarship and nine a top-up. Remarkably, 18 were in a sandwich programme and did part of their programme at another university, either with a three- or four-year scholarship

from their home country, topped up part of the time by the UG, or with a full scholarship from the UG/UMCG for the time they spent at UG/UMCG.

Most of the PhD scholarship students with an early graduation were from FMW (22), three were from FSE, while FEB, FGMW, FdL, and FRG each had one. Four of them were Dutch nationals, the others internationals.

The nine graduations in the third year were all from PhD scholarship students with a three-year contract (mostly from FMW). The graduations in the fourth year were mostly from PhD scholarship students with a four-year contract. Since all of them graduated within four years from the start of the PhD Scholarship Programme, clearly all of them graduated also within four years of the start of their contract, which testifies to the excellent capabilities and the dedication of these PhD scholarship students. One of them graduated with cum laude distinction.

Sixteen of the PhD scholarship students who graduated have post-doctoral or research positions in academia, two have research positions in industry, two have teaching positions at a university, two are medical doctors in a hospital, two have positions as a medical doctor in training (*arts in opleiding*), and five did not find a position so far or are not searching yet.

Premature Termination of Contract

Until August 2020, the scholarship was prematurely terminated for 48, i.e. 5.6%, of the 852 PhD scholarship students, a percentage very similar to that for all other PhD students, 6-7% of whom stop during their contract. Of these 48 PhD scholarship students, 21 had a negative outcome of the go/no-go-interview, three stopped because of protracted illness, and 24 stopped at their own request. Ten of this latter group accepted another PhD place. 17 of the 48 PhD scholarship students who stopped (about 2% of the intake) did so within a year. Also this 'drop-out rate' is comparable to that of other PhD students, 1-2% of whom usually pull out within a year. Of the 48 PhD scholarship students whose contract stopped, 32 had a full scholarship. In other words, proportionately more PhD students with a full scholarship did not continue than those with a supplementary scholarship. Sixteen were Dutch nationals, which is in line with the percentage of Dutch PhD students in the programme (29%: 241 out of 842). 22 of the PhD scholarship students who pulled out were from the Faculty of Science & Engineering, 16 from the Faculty of Medical Sciences and ten from faculties in the Social Sciences and Humanities.

Appendix 1. Impact of the PhD Scholarship Programme

Intake of PhD Students

In the Order in Council, the Minister requested that information should be included in the final evaluation as to whether there were changes in the total PhD student intake since 1 January 2016 in terms of type of student, country of origin and educational field. To this end, Tables 2a, 2b and 2c below show the breakdown for all new PhD students in 2015 - 2020.

Table 2a. Intake of all new PhD students in 2015-2020, divided into faculty¹ (source: Hora Finita²).

Faculty	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*
Economics and Business (FEB)	38	30	27	43	38	5
Theology and Religious Studies (FGGW)	16	8	10	6	12	3
Behavioural and Social Sciences (FGMW)	61	57	72	46	56	11
Arts (FdL)	58	64	54	65	53	12
Medical Sciences (FMW)	260	341	339	328	313	122
Law (FRG)	24	26	26	22	14	10
Spatial Sciences (FRW)	12	14	21	22	18	10
Science & Engineering (FSE)	188	219	272	267	217	95
Philosophy (FWB)	3	11	9	10	7	4
Campus Fryslân (CF)	0	3	10	13	11	6
KVI-CART	2	0	0	1	0	0
UG total	662	773	840	823	739	278

*Figures until 31 August 2020.

From Table 2a, the development of the PhD Scholarship Programme can be followed clearly: an increase in intake in the year of the start of the programme (2016), followed by a year in which PhD scholarship students could be attracted limitlessly (2017), a year with a proclaimed stop in November (2018), a year with only limited intake of PhD scholarship students with full scholarship but continued intake of awardees of top-ups (2019), and finally a year in which positions became available again (2020).

¹ Due to the fact that in all faculties PhD students are sometimes registered retrospectively, the intake numbers for the years 2015-2018 are slightly higher than those in the previous evaluation reports. The largest effect is seen in the intake of 2019 (registered as 519 on 16 October 2019; see the evaluation report of the third year).

² The PhD registration and monitoring platform of the UG.

Table 2b. Intake in the years 2015-2020, divided into the various VSNU PhD student status categories³ (source: Hora Finita).

VSNU PhD student status	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*
1a. PhD student with employee status	369	371	274	290	373	150
1b. Employee conducting PhD research	20	29	29	24	29	15
2a. PhD student on scholarship from UG/UMCG	29	70	214	215	55	13
2b. PhD student on scholarship from other inst.	88	139	143	119	107	18
3. PhD student on external funding	45	75	83	69	71	34
4. External PhD student (self-funded)**	97	83	88	94	96	45
Unknown/not filled in	14	6	9	12	8	3
UG total	662	773	840	823	739	278

* Figures until 31 August 2020.

** In Dutch: *Buitenpromovendus*.

In the new VSNU PhD student categorization³, PhD students with a full scholarship are categorized as type 2a (PhD student on scholarship from UG/UMCG), while PhD students with a scholarship from their country of origin are type 2b (PhD student on scholarship from another institution). PhD students with a full scholarship who started in 2015 are international ‘sandwich’ PhD students (UG Ubbo Emmius programme). They began their programmes before 1 September 2016 and they fall outside the scope of the PhD Scholarship Programme. PhD students with a scholarship from their country of origin were already coming to the UG before the PhD Scholarship Programme was launched, but thanks to the appeal of the Programme, and the top-ups it provides, their number increased.

The number of PhD students with employee status fell slightly after 2016, but rose to its original level again in 2019. This was due to the fact that in 2019 hardly any scholarship positions were available anymore and the Board decided to also subsidize PhD students with employee status during 2019 and 2020. Starting in 2021, the Board will again only subsidize PhD scholarship positions in the Ubbo Emmius programme, as it was intended from the start.

Table 2b clearly shows the rise and fall of the numbers of PhD scholarship students with a full scholarship (type 2a) during 2015-2019. Now that the second round of the PhD Scholarship Programme started, it is obvious that the numbers will rise again in 2020 (this will become clear in the data as soon as all PhD students who started in 2020 are registered in Hora Finita).

It is also clear from Table 2b that the number of awardees of top-up scholarships did not drop that much in 2019, due to the fact that these scholarships could be attributed outside the experiment, which made them independent of the quota in the experiment.

³ See https://vsnu.nl/files/documenten/Domeinen/Onderzoek/Types_of_PhD_candidates.pdf.

PhD scholarship students are categorized as either status 2a (if awarded a full scholarship from the UG/UMCG) or 2b (if awarded a supplementary (top-up) scholarship from the UG/UMCG). In the VSNU system of before 2019, the PhD scholarship students were categorized as status 3a and 3b, respectively. Due to the redefinition, some minor shifts may be seen.

Table 2c. Intake in 2015-2020, divided by nationality (source: Hora Finita).

Nationality	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*
Dutch	346	385	361	375	384	148
EU (non-Dutch)	94	118	168	132	135	59
Non-EU	207	248	297	307	211	68
Unknown/not filled in	15	22	14	9	9	3
UG total	662	773	840	823	739	278

* Figures until 31 August 2020.

Table 2c shows that the number of Dutch PhD students stayed about the same in 2015-2019. The variation in the intake of PhD students seems mainly due to the variation in the intake of non-EU PhD students. The intake numbers are higher during 2017 and 2018, when the PhD scholarship positions were abundant, and lower again in 2019, when less full-scholarship positions were available.

Number of PhD Graduations

In the Order in Council, the Minister requested that information be included in the final evaluation as to whether the university awarded more PhD degrees as a result of the programme (compared to the period 2010-2016), and, if so, whether this differed for each educational field. The evaluation must also include information as to whether the number of PhD graduates and the number of PhD students has changed since 1 January 2016 in terms of category, country of origin and educational field. To this end, as baseline measurements we are using the overviews generated in Hora Finita regarding the number of PhD graduates from the various faculties (*i.e.* educational fields) in the period 2010-2020 (see Table 3a) and the distribution per PhD student status and country of origin of those who were awarded their PhD degrees in 2015-2020 (see Tables 3b-c).

Table 3a. Number of PhD graduations per faculty in 2010-2020 (source: Hora Finita).

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*
FEB	26	31	33	24	26	29	23	25	22	30	13
FGGW	4	3	1	3	5	3	2	5	5	6	5
FGMW	24	24	26	24	33	50	28	37	35	33	18
FdL	28	26	36	33	24	34	30	29	35	36	23
FMW	147	156	188	159	197	209	224	192	195	243	104
FRG	10	15	13	15	13	12	16	16	18	18	11
FRW	10	8	8	10	6	13	21	13	15	11	3
FSE	139	133	137	146	134	146	185	170	177	163	86
FWB	2	3	5	3	2	3	5	11	2	3	1
CF	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
CART	7	8	4	7	3	2	1	4	3	2	3
UG	397	407	451	424	443	501	535	502	507	546	267

* Figures until 31 August 2020.

The rise in the number of PhD graduations in 2019 and 2020 is already partly an effect of the start of the PhD Scholarship Programme in 2016. As mentioned in the previous chapter, 29 PhD scholarship students graduated until August 2020. All of them graduated within four years from the start of their programme.

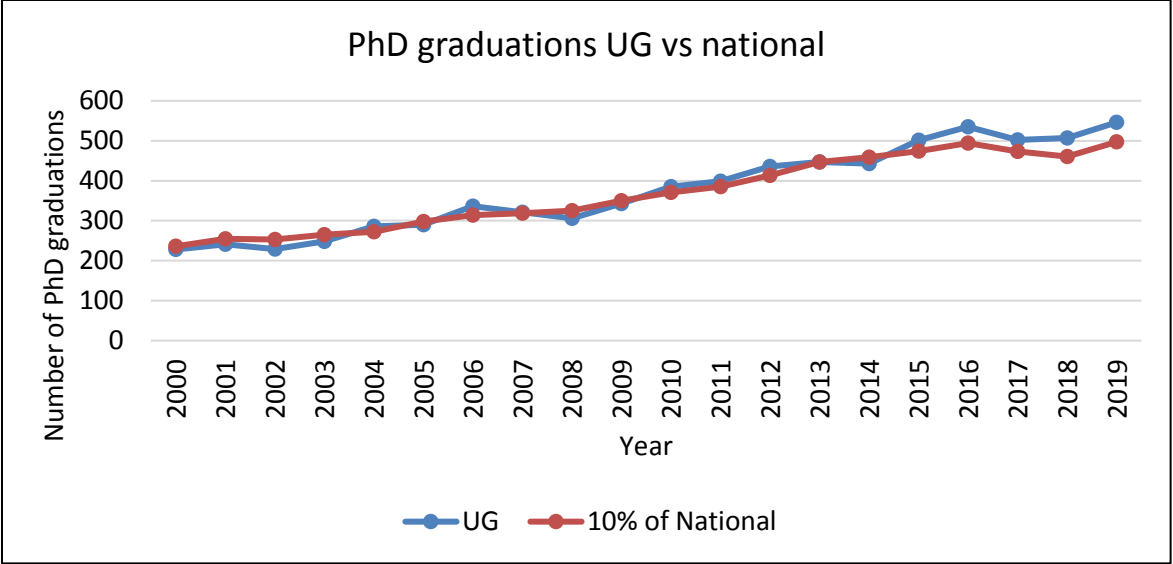


Figure 2. Number of PhD graduations per year during the past 20 years in Groningen (in blue) compared to the corresponding numbers in the Netherlands divided by 10 (in red) (data: VSNU).

In Figure 2, the PhD graduations at the UG are compared with those in the Netherlands for 2000-2019. The figure shows that until 2015, the UG had approximately 10% of the PhD graduations in the Netherlands, while from 2016 onwards, the UG seems to have more than 10% structurally. The PhD Scholarship Programme of the UG has certainly importantly contributed to this trend as intended by the Minister when starting the experiment.

Table 3b. Number of PhD graduations in 2015-2020, divided into the various VSNU PhD student status categories (source: Hora Finita).

VSNU PhD student status	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*
1a. PhD student with employee status	267	312	292	306	294	130
1b. Employee conducting PhD research	31	34	30	23	39	13
2a. PhD student on scholarship from UG/UMCG	70	42	41	31	42	22
2b. PhD student on scholarship from other inst.	30	51	51	52	60	54
3. PhD student on external funding	21	33	27	42	41	21
4. External PhD student (self-funded)	61	52	56	50	65	27
Unknown/not filled in	21	11	5	3	5	—
UG total	501	535	502	507	546	267

* Figures until 31 August 2020.

Until 2019, most of the PhD students with a scholarship who graduated (type 2a and 2b) were old-style 'bursary' students (including those with a scholarship from their home country without a UG top-up). In 2019 the first graduations of PhD students from the PhD Scholarship Programme took place. In 2019, these were 14 (twelve with a full scholarship and two with a top-up) and until 31 August in 2020, these were 15 (eleven with a full scholarship and four with a top up). This means that also in 2020 still most of the PhD students with a scholarship who graduated were old-style 'bursary' students.

The numbers of PhD students with employee status who graduated has been rather stable in the past years, which dovetails with the intake numbers (Table 2b). It looks like the main increase is caused by the relatively large number of PhD students with their own scholarship (type 2b).

Table 3c. Number of PhD graduates in 2015-2020, divided into nationality (source: Hora Finita).

Nationality	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*
Dutch	286	298	267	263	274	116
EU (non-Dutch)	72	86	92	95	86	36
Non-EU	137	146	138	148	176	106
Unknown/not filled in	6	5	5	1	10	9
UG total	501	535	502	507	546	267

* Figures until 31 August 2020.

Table 3c shows an increase in the number of PhD graduations of non-EU PhD students. This fits with the increasing number of graduations of PhD students with their own scholarship in Table 3b and is a confirmation that UG's efforts to assure this category a better income and better social security are recognized by PhD candidates when they choose the institution where to carry out their project. For the rest, the numbers are fairly constant.

Appendix 2. Administrative issues in regard to external institutions

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) set a framework in the Decree on PhD training programme experiment (AMvB). The Decree does not describe in detail all the implementation aspects. This led to problems that cannot be solved by the UG but every effort is made to assure that PhD scholarship students are well informed and supported. The PhD Scholarship Desk, the faculty Graduate Schools and the Dean of Graduate Studies also immediately exchange information when any issue comes to light.

The status of the PhD scholarship students is new to external institutions such as the SVB (*Sociale VerzekeringsBank*) and the UWV (*Uitvoeringsinstituut Werknemersverzekeringen*). Therefore, this must be constantly brought to the attention of these external institutions.

Apart from the fact that not all implementation aspects were described in detail and the status of the PhD scholarship student is new to the organizations such as the SVB and the UWV, internal policy changes within these institutions can have an impact on administrative procedures. In order to inform PhD students of these changes in procedure or implementation at these institutions, an effort is made to communicate these as clearly as possible within the UG in order to prevent misunderstandings by PhD scholarship students. This is especially crucial for procedures that change with respect to the initial information the PhD scholarship students receive at the start of their PhD project. The relevant information is also communicated through a newsletter and placed on the intranet pages for PhD students.

Nevertheless, we report here the following information with regards to health insurance and employment history.

Health insurance (situation March 2021)

It appears that health insurance companies changed their application procedure and want certainty in advance about the type of health insurance they issue. This is related to the concept of 'residency'. A resident of the Netherlands is obliged to take out Dutch basic health insurance; a non-resident must ensure that s/he is adequately insured for medical expenses in the Netherlands, but cannot take out Dutch basic health insurance. EU PhD students are obliged to take out Dutch basic health insurance based on the EU treaty. Non-EU PhD students are not covered by this EU treaty and, due to the changed procedure, must submit an application to the SVB in advance. The provision of information within the UG was adjusted accordingly. Non-EU students are informed in advance that they should submit a Wlz application to the SVB (*Wet langdurige zorg*; in order to present the outcome to a Dutch health insurance company). This adjustment was communicated in the newsletter for PhD scholarship students. Furthermore, a communication leaflet was designed and distributed on a national level in order to improve the transparency on the implementation of schemes.

Contract history (situation March 2021)

PhD scholarship students who approach the end of their agreement, have to arrange an update of their contract history at the UWV (with help of the PhD Scholarship Desk). The UG currently investigates how this procedure can be optimized, so that the total contract history of the PhD scholarship student is visible at UWV and the above-mentioned update may become obsolete in the future. This situation was communicated in the newsletter for PhD scholarship students as well.

Addendix 3: Supplementary Scholarships

As of 1 January 2019, the UG can provide supplementary (top-up) scholarships to international PhD students with a scholarship from their home country, without having to include them in the quota assigned by the Minister. Nevertheless, the UG decided that PhD students receiving a top up since that date have the same rights, duties, and total net income as their colleagues with a top up who started before January 2019. They are all treated in the same way. And though part of them is not included in this evaluation report (14 in the third year and all 109 in the fourth year), it makes sense to give their data in this addendum. See Table 4 below.

Table 4. Intake of PhD scholarship students with a top up during the period 1 September 2016 – 31 August 2020.

Faculty	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
FEB	2	1	4	1	8
FGGW	1	1	—	—	2
FGMW	3	7	3	4	17
FdL	3	2	5	4	14
FMW	37	50	27	36	150
FRG	2	1	—	2	5
FRW	3	—	2	2	7
FSE	65	57	48	58	228
FWB	1	—	1	—	2
CF	—	—	—	2	2
Total	117	119	90	109	435