

# **Conditions of PhD Scholarship Programme at the UG**

## **1 General**

On 1 September 2016, the University of Groningen (UG) and the University Medical Centre Groningen (UMCG) launched its PhD Scholarship Programme. Over a period of 6 years, 1500 PhD scholarship students will start in this specially designed PhD programme. Conditions of the PhD Scholarship Programme include that the PhD candidate has to write his or her own research proposal and that the programme must adequately prepare the PhD scholarship students for their future working practice.

### **1.1 Laws and regulations**

This document concerns the agreements made within the University of Groningen (and the UMCG) for the PhD Scholarship Programme. The underlying legislation concerns the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW) and the Decree on PhD Training Programme Experiment (*AmvB Besluit experiment promotieonderwijs*) of December 2015. As for all PhD students at the University of Groningen, the PhD Regulations apply to the PhD scholarship students.

Payments to PhD students are regulated in the Graduation Fund Regulations. Agreements on enrollment and tuition fees are laid down in the Regulations for Registration and Tuition Fees (RIC), and agreements on the training programme in the Teaching and Examination Regulations (OER) for PhD scholarship students.

### **1.2 Status of the PhD scholarship student**

The PhD scholarship student is a student and not an employee.

## **2 Recruitment and selection**

PhD scholarship students are selected on the basis of their CV and the research proposal they have written. The students are selected by the faculty Graduate Schools, which each have a fixed number of places to allocate. Each Graduate School applies its own procedures and deadlines to the recruitment process. General information about the recruitment, including selection procedure and links to the faculties' own recruitment pages can be found at <http://www.rug.nl/education/phd-programmes/phd-scholarship-programme/>.

### **2.1 The candidate's research proposal**

Candidates who are currently following a UG research or selective Master's programme will write a research proposal as part of their programme. Candidates of other degree programmes can write their research proposal in consultation with a UG primary supervisor (or a supervisor of the UMCG).

## 3 Agreement

Once they have been selected, PhD students will sign an agreement with the University/UMCG, whereby they will be entitled to a scholarship for the duration of the agreement. The agreement states that the UG/UMCG is responsible for the supervision of the student and the provision of the facilities they need to successfully complete their programme. For their part, the student undertakes to follow the PhD training programme and to conduct the associated research to the best of their ability in order to finish their training programme and to gain their PhD certificate within the agreed term.

### 3.1 Duration of the agreement

The duration of the agreement is determined by the Graduate School and will usually be four years. If the PhD project allows for it, a shorter duration can be chosen. In that case, the supervisor has to discuss this with the Graduate School and the supervisor will sign a statement explaining why the standard duration can be deviated from.

### 3.2 Extent of the agreement

PhD scholarship students are generally expected to follow a full-time programme; however a student may also opt to spread their scholarship over a longer period (resulting in a lower monthly scholarship payment) in consultation with the Graduate School.

### 3.3 TSP

Part of the agreement between UG/UMCG and a PhD scholarship student is a *Training and Supervision Plan* (TSP). This plan sets out the goals and deadlines for the PhD scholarship student's training and research. The PhD scholarship student and the supervisors are required to keep to the TSP and the deadlines set out in it. The PhD student carries out the implementation of the TSP independently and at her/his own discretion under the supervision of the supervisors. If the supervisor and the PhD scholarship student agree, the TSP can be adjusted in the meantime (e.g. during a progress meeting, see 5.1).

## 4 Regulations and Intellectual Property Rights

The PhD student adheres to the University of Groningen PhD Regulations and the University of Groningen Regulations for the Protection of Academic Integrity. The PhD student adheres to the Research Data Management Plan of the institute and the faculty, to which the PhD student is attached during his/her PhD training programme.

### 4.1 Intellectual Property

The Intellectual Property (IP) of the results of the PhD scholarship student's research lies with the PhD scholarship student her/himself, unless other agreements have been made. In the event that the IP rests in full or in part with the the PhD scholarship student, agreements can be made with UG/UMCG about waiving or transferring the rights. In that case, the UG/UMCG will bear the costs for applying for the patent under conditions to be agreed upon and the the PhD scholarship student will share in the proceeds in accordance with the UG and UMCG

Intellectual Property Regulations. (see <https://www.rug.nl/about-ug/organization/rules-and-regulations/general/>).

## **4.2 Compliance**

If at any time the PhD scholarship student suspects that s/he will not be able to comply with the commitments to be undertaken for the programme (or will not be able to comply with them in time), s/he must notify the primary supervisor and the Director of the Graduate School immediately.

The PhD scholarship student must take the initiative to report all changes in circumstances in writing to the Director of the Graduate School, including but not limited to changes which may affect the scholarship, changes of address or workplace, and absence.

## **5 Supervision and facilities**

The PhD scholarship student's primary and day-to-day supervisors monitor the progress of the TSP and provide guidance on the PhD scholarship student's training programme, his/her results and the academic underpinning of her/his research. The primary and day-to-day supervisors support the PhD student in his/her development into a full-fledged academic, resulting in a PhD thesis defence ceremony. The primary and day-to-day supervisors are also the first people the PhD scholarship student will approach if s/he has questions or problems. The faculty Graduate School is responsible for the PhD programme and will ensure that workable arrangements are set out and documented to this end.

Because the PhD scholarship student has student status, s/he has no authority relationship with the supervisors.

### **5.1 Progress Interviews**

There is regular coordination and discussion between the PhD scholarship student and the primary and day-to-day supervisors. Progress interviews are held with the PhD scholarship student after 6 and 9 months, and after 2, 3 and possibly 4 years. In these interviews, progress is discussed using the TSP as guideline. If the supervisor and PhD scholarship student agree on this, the TSP can be adjusted as a result of a progress interview.

### **5.2 Reporting attendance and non-attendance**

PhD scholarship students are not obliged to report attendance or non-attendance. They may distribute their time as they see fit and do not have fixed working hours or holidays. The students are required to draw up agreements on attendance with their supervisors and inform them if they are unable to meet these agreements. If required in order to meet the terms of the TSP, PhD scholarship students will need to adjust their working hours to the operating and working hours of the research group that is hosting their PhD programme.

### **5.3 Facilities**

The UG (or the UMCG) provides all facilities that are deemed necessary in the context of the PhD programme. This concerns research facilities, computer equipment, training modules, costs for conference visits, *etc.*

## **6 Research, training and teaching**

### **6.1 Research**

PhD scholarship students choose their own research theme and elaborate this in their own research proposal. However, the research must always be conducted in consultation with the supervisors and the publication of the research results requires the supervisors' approval. The doctoral student can, in consultation with any co-authors, determine in which journal the research results will be published.

The PhD scholarship student is obliged to keep the research results and all other information provided by the UG (or the UMCG) confidential and to use them exclusively for conducting the research related to his/her PhD project.

### **6.2 Training and following courses**

The PhD student receives training as part of the PhD Scholarship programme. The doctoral student follows the training plan agreed in the TSP and ensures that it is successfully completed before the PhD thesis defense ceremony. Part of the training plan is the Career Perspectives Series, consisting of courses which prepare the PhD scholarship student for the career after obtaining the PhD, within or outside of academia. The Graduate School determines the size of the training plan; for a four-year PhD programme it is generally 30 ECTS. As proof of the completion of the training plan, the doctoral student receives a certificate from the Graduate School.

### **6.3 Participation of PhD scholarship students in teaching activities**

The PhD scholarship student is only allowed to teach if this is part of his/her training. The PhD scholarship student cannot be obliged to teach. In the context of her/his training programme, s/he can follow training courses to learn how to teach ("Start to Teach" and, if desired, more advanced training courses for PhD scholarship students) and can also teach under supervision.

If a PhD scholarship student wishes to do so, s/he can obtain the full University Teaching Qualification (UTQ, in Dutch BKO) during the PhD programme. The PhD scholarship student must make agreements with his/her supervisor for this and record these in the TSP. A prerequisite for following the UTQ training is that the PhD scholarship student participates in all aspects of a complete course (design, teaching, assessment and testing, etc.).

## 7 The scholarship

The scholarship is paid in monthly instalments in accordance with the Netherlands taxation scheme. The UG/UMCG withholds income tax and social security contributions. The amount of the scholarship is set so that PhD scholarship students receive approximately € 2253 net per month (amount as of September 2023). This amount is adjusted annually on the basis of the "CBS consumer price index". No periodic increases or secondary benefits are applied (as in an employment contract), nor will the PhD scholarship student receive an end-of-year bonus or holiday pay. The UG/UMCG does not pay pension premiums for the PhD scholarship student.

The scholarship is personal and, in consultation with the Graduate School, the PhD scholarship student can take it to another supervisor at the UG or the UMCG.

The scholarship payment for all PhD scholarship students from the University of Groningen and the UMCG is made via the UMCG. As a result, the PhD scholarship student receives correspondence from the UMCG during the PhD programme.

Payment of the grant can be discontinued if the PhD scholarship student is unable to fulfill his/her obligations under the agreement signed with the UG / UMCG for more than 6 months.

### 7.1 Supplementary scholarship for international PhD students

International students who have been awarded a competitive scholarship in their country of origin are eligible for a supplement ("top up") up to the level of the standard scholarship for regular PhD scholarship students (see above under 'The scholarship'). This supplement is subject to the same Dutch taxation scheme as the regular scholarship.

### 7.2 Sandwich: two years at UG/UMCG, two years elsewhere

A 'sandwich' arrangement allows a student to carry out part of their PhD programme at the UG/UMCG (and be entitled to a scholarship) and part at another university (or research institution or societal partner). The same conditions apply for the period spent at the UG/UMCG as apply to regular PhD scholarship students.

### 7.3 Employment elsewhere

PhD scholarship students are permitted to do paid work for other organizations alongside their PhD programme. However, they are not permitted to work for the UG/UMCG (e.g. as a teacher). In all circumstances, the PhD scholarship student is required to give precedence to the terms of the TSP and applicable deadlines.

Certain paid work that is carried out in addition to the PhD Scholarship Programme may have consequences for income tax contributions, rent and healthcare allowances, etc. Students should make sure to inquire about the consequences of any paid work they wish to do in addition to their PhD Scholarship programme. The UG and UMCG are not responsible for any claims for repayments or other consequences.

## **7.4 Premature termination of the agreement**

Both the PhD scholarship student and the UG/UMCG may terminate the agreement prematurely. PhD scholarship students have a notice period of one month and the UG/UMCG has a notice period of three months. Should the UG have the intention to terminate the agreement due to unsatisfactory performance, the student will be sent a written warning and allowed an additional opportunity to achieve the required results within a reasonable period. The results expected of the student will be described as precisely as possible.

## **7.5 Unforeseen circumstances**

Should a PhD scholarship student be unable to finish his/her PhD programme within the specified term due to unforeseen circumstances, then the term of the agreement may be extended, on condition that the student can reasonably be expected to finish his/her PhD programme with satisfactory results within this extra term. Examples of unforeseen circumstances include pregnancy, unexpected absence due to illness, or death of one of the PhD scholarship student's parents. The PhD scholarship student can submit a request for an extension to the Graduate School in consultation with their primary supervisor. If a PhD scholarship student expects to require an extension, it is important to contact the primary or day-to-day supervisor in good time and explain the reason for the request.

## **7.6 Reimbursement of costs**

For all research and training-related costs (travel costs, conference attendance, purchase of materials, *etc.*), the PhD scholarship student can receive a reimbursement from the faculty or institute upon presentation of invoices/receipts s/he has paid for. The Graduate School provides for the costs of attending training/courses, *e.g.* in the form of an Individual Training Budget (ITB).

For the travel costs at the start and end of the PhD programme, the PhD scholarship student can receive a reimbursement from the faculty or institute upon presentation of invoices/receipts.

PhD students can borrow a laptop from their faculty or institute for the duration of their PhD programme.

# **8 Social Security and Insurance**

The UG and the UMCG apply all applicable social security legislation to PhD scholarship students. PhD scholarship students can apply for rent, healthcare and childcare allowances and the Dutch child benefit if they meet all the applicable conditions (see below). PhD scholarship students are legally required to take out a health insurance policy. These students are also strongly advised to take out third-party liability insurance.

Income tax, social security contributions (AOW, Anw and Wlz) and employee insurance schemes (WW, WIA and ZW) are withheld and remitted for PhD scholarship students, but no pension premiums. For PhD scholarship students with a gross scholarship less than 40% of the minimum wage, so most PhD scholarship students with a supplementary scholarship (top up), no employee insurance

contributions are withheld. For this group, however, the income-dependent contribution to the Care Insurance Act (Zvw) is withheld and remitted.

Before applying for rent, healthcare and childcare allowances during their stay in the Netherlands, PhD scholarship students must make sure that they meet the applicable conditions for such allowances. All allowances are income dependent. Childcare allowance also depends on the family situation, a side job and any work or study of a partner. For PhD students with a supplementary scholarship (top up), the allowance is determined on the basis of the worldwide income (own scholarship plus gross supplementary scholarship from the University of Groningen / UMCG). The tax authorities may demand repayment of allowances received in error even after many years have passed and regardless of whether the person still lives in the Netherlands. This can amount to thousands of euros. The UG and the UMCG accept no responsibility in these instances. For more information, visit <http://www.belastingdienst.nl/toeslagen/>. International PhD scholarship students are advised to contact the *International Welcome Center North (IWCN)*, which offers a free walk-in consultation hour (see 11.2).

PhD scholarship students with children are, under certain circumstances, entitled to child benefit. For more information, visit <https://www.svb.nl/int/nl/kinderbijslag/>.

PhD scholarship students from within the EU must take out Dutch basic health insurance. The (cheaper) AON student insurance policy is not an adequate health insurance for them. They can take advantage of the collective discount offered by health insurance company Menzis. The RUG collective number is 58012, that of the UMCG 40414.

Non-EU PhD scholarship students do not automatically qualify for the basic health insurance. Which kind of insurance they need, depends on their personal circumstances. At the start of their PhD programme, non-EU PhD scholarship students are requested to do an assessment from the Dutch SVB (*Sociale Verzekeringsbank*) whether they fall under the Wlz: <https://www.svb.nl/en/the-wlz-scheme/manage-your-affairs-online/request-an-assessment-of-your-Wlz-insurance-position>. PhD scholarship students whose Wlz assessment turns out negative cannot take out basic health insurance. In that case, they can keep the health insurance from their home country (provided it has adequate coverage for the Netherlands) or take out a student/international insurance from for example AON, OOM or JOHO. More information is to be found here: <https://www.studyinholland.nl/plan-your-stay/insurance>.

## **9 Illness and Pregnancy**

### **9.1 In case of illness and problems with research progress**

PhD scholarship students can be supported in the event of illness or problems with the progress of their research. The PhD scholarship student reports to the supervisor or Graduate School for this. If desired, the PhD scholarship student can receive support from a PhD counsellor, PhD psychologist, confidential advisor, UG/UMCG company doctor or

UG/UMCG company social worker. For the support that is offered, see:  
<https://www.rug.nl/phd-support>.

The PhD student is advised to register with a general practitioner. The UG general practitioner post is located on the Zerniketerrein especially for staff and students of the University of Groningen.

In the event of a short absence due to illness, the PhD scholarship student does not have to report sick. In the event of a long absence, s/he will contact his/her supervisor within four weeks. After four weeks, the supervisor or Graduate School will report to the PhD Scholarship Desk (see below). The PhD scholarship student can discuss with his/her supervisor whether an extension of the PhD programme is desirable. The PhD scholarship will continue to be paid during absence.

## 9.2 Pregnancy

The statutory periods for maternity leave apply to female PhD scholarship students. The scholarship will continue to be paid during this period. After the maternity leave has expired, the scholarship agreement duration will be extended by the relevant term.

## 9.3 Birth leave

Partners can take a one-month leave after the birth of a child. At the end of the leave, the scholarship agreement duration will be extended by one month.

# 10 Enrolment and access to UG/UMCG facilities

PhD scholarship students are enrolled as students with the UG, and they are issued an s-number (student number) and provided with a student card. Besides, they are issued a p-number that provides access to the same systems as all other PhD students, such as the Hora Finita PhD registration system and the Pure research information system.

In order to access UG (or UMCG) facilities such as buildings, the library, photocopy machines, coffee makers, etc. they are provided with a PhD and/or UMCG card. UMCG PhD scholarship students receive a UMCG-number and a UMCG card.

The p-number is assigned at the start of the PhD project. The PhD student can activate their account and create a password via <http://account.rug.nl/sspr/public/activate>. For UMCG PhD students, the UMCG e-mail address should be given here (not the private e-mail address).

To apply for a PhD card, the PhD scholarship student must upload a passport photo via the link below. After these data have been processed, the PhD card will be sent to the home address (in the Netherlands). For more information, see:

<https://myuniversity.rug.nl/infonet/medewerkers/werk-en-carriere/aanstelling/university-pass/>.

UMCG PhD scholarship students can collect a UMCG card from the Personnel Shop in the UMCG 48 hours after processing the UMCG number.

## 10.1 University Profile Page (MePa)

All University of Groningen employees and PhD students have a personal profile page (MePa) on the University of Groningen website. This also applies to PhD scholarship students.

On the personal profile page, the most important personal and accessibility data from the staff registration system (AFAS) is shown as standard. It is appreciated when the PhD scholarship student adds the other information (such as photo, field, expertise, workplace, etc.). A simple guide can be found at MyUniversity:

<https://myuniversity.rug.nl/infonet/medewerkers/ict/servicedesk/handleiding/handleiding-mepa>.

# 11 Participation, Sports and Culture

## 11.1 Consultative participation

PhD scholarship students are represented by the student factions of the University Council and the Faculty councils. They have active and passive voting rights as a student and can vote for and be elected to the student factions of the councils mentioned. The scheme for compensation of PhD scholarship students for their service as a member of the University and Faculty Council is included in the Graduation Fund Regulations.

## 11.2 Sports

A PhD scholarship student can make use of all sports facilities offered to UG students and can become a member of the student sports association ACLO. For this purpose, the PhD scholarship student must use the s-number and student card. For more information see <http://www.aclosport.nl/>.

## 11.3 Culture

PhD scholarship students can participate in student activities at the Cultural Student Center Usva for student rates. For this purpose, the PhD scholarship student must use the s-number and student card. For more information see <https://www.usva.nl/>.

## 11.4 Language Centre

PhD scholarship students can take part in activities at the University of Groningen's Language Center for student rates. For this purpose, the PhD scholarship student must use the s-number and student card. For more information see <https://www.rug.nl/language-centre/>.

## **11.5 Registration UG courses**

A PhD scholarship student can generally register for courses at the University of Groningen with his/her p-number. For courses for which special rates apply to PhD scholarship students, they are asked to register with their s-number.

## **12 Complaints and Questions**

### **12.1 Dispute settlement**

The current dispute and complaints regulations of the University of Groningen apply to complaints. Any conflicts relating to the PhD scholarship agreement will be referred to court with jurisdiction of the Northern Netherlands District.

### **12.2 Help with questions regarding taxes**

International PhD scholarship students can contact the International Welcome Center North (IWCN) for questions about tax (declaration) and applying for allowances. A free walk-in consultation hour is offered for these questions. The IWCN can be reached via <http://iwcn.nl/> and [info@iwcn.nl](mailto:info@iwcn.nl). Dutch PhD students can find information on the website of the tax authorities and at the telephone service of the tax authorities.

### **12.3 General helpdesk**

For all questions for which the PhD scholarship student cannot go to the supervisors or the Graduate School, s/he can contact the PhD Scholarship Desk: [phd-scholarship@rug](mailto:phd-scholarship@rug)