

Graduate School for the Humanities (GSH)

**Sandwich PhD Programmes  
 at the Faculty of Arts**

**Information and first steps for potential supervisors**

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# 1. What & why?

## What is this about?

This document is intended as a first source of information for members of staff at the Faculty of Arts who

- are generally interested in **internationalization at PhD level**
- are interested in **initiating a Sandwich PhD trajectory** as main supervisors or daily supervisors
- are already in the process of **setting up** such a trajectory

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## Why Sandwich PhDs?

In its [Strategic Plan for 2021-2026](#), the Faculty of Arts has committed itself to **strengthen its international collaborations, also and especially at PhD level**. One key objective in this regard is to double the current numbers of Sandwich PhDs.

Sandwich PhDs can not only contribute to existing research and broaden or deepen existing expertise at the Faculty. Co-supervisions in Sandwich PhD constellations also

- contribute fundamentally to **internationalization** at chair group, Faculty, and University levels
- are often particularly **sustainable in terms of research remit and long-lasting collaborations** with external partners

By establishing Sandwich PhD collaborations, you thus actively contribute to

- the Faculty's strategic vision of an **"inclusive, strongly international" institution**, and
- the University's strategic key objective to **"attract and retain an excellent and diverse community of international staff and students"**

The Faculty actively supports this strategy by providing either tops ups or 50% funding, depending on the funding scheme (see below).

## 2. Definitions

### Sandwich PhD

In this document, the term “Sandwich PhD” will be used as an umbrella term for

- Double Degree PhDs,
- Joint Degree PhDs,
- and some specific cases of Single PhD Degrees in international settings (see the following criteria).

What all these formats, summarized under the term “Sandwich PhD”, have in common is that

- the respective PhDs are **supervised by members of staff from the UG and from an international partner university**,
- the PhDs are **funded**, either partially or fully, by **external** entities (e.g., governmental agencies and/or the respective partner universities). If partially, the UG often contributes either a maximum of 50% or a “top up”,
- they receive a **degree from the UG**
- In any case, the **defense** of the thesis **must take place first at the UG**

For details, see chapter 3. *PhD types & funding formats* below.

### Partner

The partners with which the UG cooperates in cases of Double and Joint PhDs can be universities within or outside the UG strategic partnership scheme. In principle, **any university with which individual staff members have cooperated or would like to cooperate** can become a partner for a Sandwich PhD project.

See the appendix for an overview of our Strategic and current partners.

### 3. PhD types & funding formats

The term “Sandwich PhD” is used in various ways throughout academia.<sup>1</sup> In the context of this document, it comprises the following formats, all of which are registered in Hora Finita, and all of which lead to **the candidate defending their thesis at the UG** and subsequently **receiving a degree from the UG**<sup>2</sup> (degree mobility). In some countries, universities are only allowed to issue a "double degree" or only a "joint degree".

#### Double Degree PhD

A "double degree" program means that two diplomas are linked to the joint program (one performance), and includes joint supervision from supervisors from two universities. One achievement leads to two degrees. A "double degree" program therefore consists of a (single) degree from the University of Groningen and a (single) degree from the other institution, which together produces a "double degree".

A Double Degree either combines elements of two existing programmes or can be based on one integrated training and supervision programme. There are usually two PhD ceremonies, one at each university.

#### Joint Degree PhD

A Joint Degree PhD also includes joint supervision by supervisors from two (or more) universities. In this case, however, the universities jointly award a single PhD degree.<sup>3</sup> Both institutions must share the responsibility for the programme and create an integrated curriculum. The institutions involved are jointly responsible for the entire training and form an integrated curriculum. This is the most extensive form of collaboration, as it involves integration in all areas of the educational program, including the degree or diploma. Institutions must agree on all matters concerning the study program, including the form and contents of the degree.

#### Single Sandwich PhD

The standard Single Degree PhD (candidate solely admitted to the UG’s PhD programme, with one programme and one ceremony) may also fall under our definition of “Sandwich PhD” if the candidate works under international co-supervision and carries out research at a partner institution, leading to a single UG degree. This procedure however, does not require the involvement of the Internationalisation officer. When interested in a Single Sandwich PhD, please contact the GSH director or coordinator.

#### Funding Formats

What these options summarized under the term “Sandwich PhD” have in common is that PhD research takes place in a context of international collaboration.

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<sup>1</sup> In other contexts (outside of the Faculty of Arts), the term is sometimes used to address all cases in which a PhD candidate undertakes their research at two or more institutions; this broad use then also includes e.g. visiting researchers / visiting PhDs (“non-degree mobility”) who are initially not planning to obtain a degree from the UG. Such cases are not included in our definition of “Sandwich PhDs” in this document. However, such visiting PhD students (which are regularly hosted by the GSH) might very well become *interested in* “becoming” a Sandwich PhD, i.e. in obtaining an UG degree, during their stay - see below 5. *Steps & procedures - General tips*.

<sup>2</sup> As a rule, students must stay at the UG for a minimum of 6 months in order to obtain a degree.

<sup>3</sup> The actual documentation of Joint PhD awards can take different forms - it can also include the issuing of two certificates, which then refer to each other and mention the *joint degree* award.

The PhDs are usually **funded**, either partially or fully, by **external** entities. In case of collaboration between the UG and a (strategic) partner, the Faculty of Arts may provide up to 50% funding in case of approved projects. Candidates may also fund their PhD trajectory at the Faculty of Arts with scholarships from **a foreign national research council** (e.g., CSC, LPDP, CONACYT, ANID, MINCIENCIAS). From the UG side, this external funding can be complemented with a “top-up” - this is the more common form of co-funding, for which many Sandwich PhDs qualify. The UG complements the difference between the amount received from external partners and the standard amount for PhDs at the UG, for the time the PhD is doing their research at the UG (meaning being physically present and living in the Netherlands).

## 4. Example testimonials

At the Faculty of Arts, Sandwich PhD projects often co-evolve with collaborations between UG scholars and important strategic partners. The following exemplary testimonials from a supervisor with ample experience in supervising externally funded and Double Degree candidates and from a PhD candidate with external funding will provide an impression of practical experience with the process.

### The supervisor's perspective: Prof. Dr. Pablo Valdivia

is Chair of European Culture and Literature and has ample experience in supervising Double PhDs and other externally funded candidates. In his [testimonial, accessible here](#), Professor Valdivia discusses his collaboration with the [Universidad de Antioquia](#).

### The PhD's perspective: Leonardo Salvador Arriagada Beltrán

is a PhD candidate at the Graduate School for the Humanities and University of Chile:

*I will always look back with joy on my time at GSH. It was a place where I found unparalleled human support from my supervisors and mentor. Entering UG through the PhD sandwich program allowed me to compare the development of my doctoral research on art and AI both outside and within GSH. The transformation upon entry was absolutely positive. My work gained significantly more visibility at UG. Shortly after arriving in Groningen, I received dual distinctions for my research—a prize for the best scientific article and a people's choice award at the Nederland Digitaal Conference in 2021. Both honors were bestowed by the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy. UG provided extensive coverage of this recognition, leading to numerous invitations to international conferences, press interviews, and requests for talks in study groups. The university's rector personally congratulated me. Such details value your work and bolster the confidence of a young researcher. I am deeply grateful for that.*

*I recommend everyone who hesitates to join this program go ahead. You won't regret it. It's even an excellent platform for future career projection. Indeed, two weeks after receiving my PhD, I was invited to a postdoctoral project at UG, which I hope secures funding for my return to my beloved university. Speaking of numbers, my productivity at GSH includes 7 scientific articles, 3 book chapters, 2 awards, 18 academic and outreach presentations, and 17 media appearances and interviews. I hope you, too, can have a similar or even better experience.*

### The PhD's perspective: Rebecca Pitt

PhD-candidate (Theoretical Linguistics), University of Groningen and Stellenbosch University.

I decided to pursue my PhD jointly with the University of Groningen and my home university (Stellenbosch University, South Africa) given the opportunities the track opens, which are not as readily accessible in my local context alone. In particular, I am able to produce research that is valuable to my local community, while also sharing and nurturing my research within the greater international research community. As a trainee-researcher, learning to produce research on these two levels is vital as it sets the foundation for meaningful research. This is, however, a challenging endeavour – even more so without community. Gaining a research community at RUG has been the most rewarding part of my RUG-experience: sharing in the ups and downs of PhD life with peers, in the same boat as you, is invaluable. It is also through a lively research environment that I have grown exponentially as a researcher through robust

training programmes, active research groups, and continuous opportunities to engage with seasoned academics – all ingredients for a fruitful candidacy!

## 5. Steps & procedures

### General tips: How to attract externally funded PhDs

- Contact peers who supervise externally funded PhDs and learn from their experience
- Attend the matchmaking events which are regularly announced by GSH
- To learn more about specific strategic partner universities and existing UG contacts there, get in touch with the [policy officers for international strategy and relations](#). The policy officers can also put you in contact with region-specific Academic Ambassadors at the University of Groningen
- Candidates for Sandwich PhDs are often recruited from MA programmes at strategic partner universities; UG contacts at these universities can be of help with the search. For Double Degree PhDs, existing PhD programmes in the strategic partner network are promising sources
- Visiting doctoral researchers (students enrolled in a PhD programme at another university, who have usually acquired a competitive scholarship to spend a period of research abroad as a visiting PhD student, initially *without* the explicit intention to obtain their PhD at UG) might, during their stay in Groningen, develop the ambition to “become” a Sandwich PhD. Such students can be particularly promising candidates for the application procedure below, as they are already familiar with the UG and (potential) supervisors. As all other candidates, they need to fulfil the requirements set out in the following

### Application Double and Joint PhDs - Procedure on the UG side

The following steps address procedures at the UG. The steps to be taken on the side of the partner institution need to be inquired by the candidates and supervisors with the respective partner institution.

[Via this link](#) (only accessible for UG staff) you find templates of Joint or Double Doctorate agreements and the Graduate School contact persons.

#### 1) Pre-application phase:

- a) PhD students first need to **contact the Graduate programme coordination of their home institution** in order to get the **approval** to apply for the Double or Joint Degree Programme.
- b) The candidate then needs to **find supervisors** both at the UG Faculty of Arts and at the partner university.

#### 2) Application at GSH: The following needs to be **submitted to the Director of the GSH** ([directeurgsh@rug.nl](mailto:directeurgsh@rug.nl)) with the GSH Sandwich PhD Coordinator in cc (via: [m.m.harmsen@rug.nl](mailto:m.m.harmsen@rug.nl)):

- a) [A Personal Data/Application form](#), filled in (in English language) and signed,
- b) [Research proposal, including a motivational statement \(form\)](#),
- c) Support letter by the UG supervisor,
- d) CV (incl. educational/professional history, publications & prizes/awards),
- e) Copy of diploma (highest academic degree obtained),
- f) [Financial statement \(template\)](#).
- g) Proof of English language proficiency, if you intend to write your thesis in English (exemptions possible - contact GSH for details),
- h) In addition, in case the structure of the sandwich PhD is such that the final year(s) will be spent at the partner university: Letter of commitment signed by the relevant authority at the partner university, in which supervision and



funding are guaranteed for the period of PhD research spent at the partner university.

Applications will be assessed and decided upon by the GSH. The GSH's decision whether or not to admit a candidate will be based on the quality and feasibility of the proposal, the academic record and motivation of the applicant, the agreement of the relevant authorities at both institutions, and the availability of funds. The GSH accepts applications throughout the year.

- 3) **Contract phase:** If the candidate is admitted to the GSH PhD programme, a Joint or Double Degree Contract will be set up.
- If the partner university is a Strategic or current Partner, the UG supervisor contacts the GSH Sandwich PhD Coordinator ([m.m.harmsen@rug.nl](mailto:m.m.harmsen@rug.nl))
  - If this is not the case, the UG supervisor first fills [this template](#) and sends it to the GSH Sandwich PhD Coordinator ([m.m.harmsen@rug.nl](mailto:m.m.harmsen@rug.nl)), who oversees the process with legal affairs.

**Please note** that drafting the contract will be a minimum of 2 months and can take up to 18 months, depending on the laws and regulations regarding higher education, such as the duration of the educational program and graduation requirements, from both universities. These differ from country to country and it can be a challenge to find common ground.

### Registration - Procedure on the UG side

If a candidate's application was successful, they will need a number of documents for **registering** with the UG before coming to Groningen. Please note that the preparation of documents might be time-intensive, especially for students from outside the EU who need a visa; therefore, students are advised to **start preparation as early as possible**. The GSH Coordinator **Rachael Fletcher** ([r.l.fletcher@rug.nl](mailto:r.l.fletcher@rug.nl)) is the contact person for registration at the UG (e.g., contract and visa).

Non-EU citizens will need a long-stay visa for over 90 days (called MVV). **Visa procedures for non-EU citizens must never be initiated by the students themselves, but always by the UG.** As soon as the candidate's application was approved, they must contact the GSH Coordinator Rachael Fletcher ([r.l.fletcher@rug.nl](mailto:r.l.fletcher@rug.nl)) about the visa.

Further necessary **documents for registration** are:

- a) The documents handed in for application, see above; and in addition:
- b) **Proof of financial means** (if the original proof is in any other language than English, it must be translated into English by a sworn translator). Applicants can provide this proof in three ways:
  - Scholarship letter: a scholarship agency provides a letter that the student is awarded amount X per month for the period from DD-MM-YYYY to DD-MM-YYYY;
  - Loan: you have an official loan statement from a known loan-provider (e.g. a bank). Note that loan statements from family members are not accepted;
  - If you are self-funded and need a visa, you are required by Dutch law to have the financial means *for the entire period of your projected stay* at your disposal.

For a first orientation and example calculations, see [this webpage](#) by UMCG.  
Details for the case of the Faculty of Arts must always be discussed with GSH.

- c) A copy of the student's passport;
- d) The student's private address in their home country;
- e) An English translation of the diploma (highest degree obtained), issued by a sworn translator;
- f) A Training and Supervision Plan (TSP) - the template will be provided by GSH.

If the student's partner and/or child(ren) will accompany them, GSH will also need

- a) A marriage certificate and its translation to English, issued by a sworn translator, and
- b) Copies of their passport(s).

## 6. FAQs

### **What is a Double Degree PhD?**

See chapter 3. *PhD types & funding formats*.

### **Will Double Degree PhD students defend their thesis twice?**

That depends on the PhD regulations of the partner university. If a candidate wants to obtain a degree from the University of Groningen, it is required that they defend their thesis at the UG first. Whether a defense is required at the partner institution depends on the legal framework of that institution. The PhD supervisor from the partner institution will be invited to attend the UG PhD ceremony, and the PhD assessment committee should include an external reviewer.

### **Can students who are already enrolled in a PhD programme at their home university still apply for a Double or Joint PhD position?**

In principle yes, however this depends on many factors, such as how far they are in their studies, whether they require funding by the Faculty of Arts, and whether they would be able to find a supervisor at the UG. Students should discuss these options with their primary supervisor first, and then contact a known potential supervisor at the UG and the Graduate School for further steps.

### **What about visas and accommodation?**

The UG needs at least four months between admission and the actual starting date of the student's stay. The main reasons for this are:

- Visa: In case the candidate is not an EU national, the university needs to apply for a long-stay visa for the candidate. (Note that in the case of a stay of more than 90 hours, candidates should never apply for a visa themselves - this must be done via the UG.) For questions about the visa procedure, please contact the Immigration Service Desk.
- Housing: Finding accommodation in Groningen is the student's own responsibility. The university can guide them in this process. Ample time should be allowed for the search.

## 7. Appendix

### Important contacts

For general questions: Mireya Harmsen, GSH Sandwich PhD Coordinator, m.m.harmsen@rug.nl

For questions on specific partners and contacts: [Office for International Strategy and Relations](#)

If you are looking for a model contract, please contact Mireya Harmsen.

### [Strategic Partners of the University of Groningen](#)

<b>Partner full name</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>ISR Coordinator</b>
Stellenbosch University	Africa	South Africa	<a href="#">Anita Veltmaat</a>
Nanyang Technological University	Asia	Singapore	<a href="#">Tim Zwaagstra</a>
Osaka University	Asia	Japan	<a href="#">Tim Zwaagstra</a>
Universitas Gadjah Mada	Asia	Indonesia	<a href="#">Tim Zwaagstra</a>
Universidad de Antioquia	Latin America	Colombia	<a href="#">Joyce Fongers</a>
Universidad de Chile	Latin America	Chile	<a href="#">Joyce Fongers</a>
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México	Latin America	Mexico	<a href="#">Joyce Fongers</a>
Universidade de São Paulo	Latin America	Brazil	<a href="#">Joyce Fongers</a>
Macquarie University	Oceania	Australia	<a href="#">John Falvey</a>

### Examples for the Faculty of Arts' current and past Sandwich PhD cooperations

Universiteit Antwerpen, Belgium
Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg, Germany
Charles University, Czech Republic - Prague
Cyprus University, Cyprus
Emory University, USA - Georgia - Atlanta
Greenwich University, United Kingdom
James Cook University, Australia - Townsville
Johannesburg University, South Africa
Leuven Katholieke Universiteit, Belgium
Lille University, France
Lucca University, Italy
Macquarie University, Australia - Sydney
McGill University, Canada - Montreal
Nantes University, France
Sao Paulo School of Business Administration, Brazil
Sapienza Università di Roma, Italy
St Andrews University, Scotland
Stockholm University, Sweden
Strasbourg University, France
Tartu University, Estonia
Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain
Universidad de Chile, Chile - Santiago
Universidad de La Frontera, Chile - Temuco
University Erfurt, Germany
University of Lausanne, Switzerland

University of Nantes, France
University of Pisa, Italy
University of Roma Tre, Italy
University of the Free State, South Africa - Bloemfontein
University of the Gambia, Gambia
York University, United Kingdom

### Examples for scholarships and bursaries obtained by Sandwich PhDs at the Faculty of Arts

Colciencias Scholarship, Colombian National Research Council
Columbia School Linguistic Society (CSLS)
CONACYT scholarship, Mexican National Research Council
ANID, Chilean National Research Council
CSC, Chinese National Research Council
ERC Research Programme 'ArchSci2020', European Research Council
ESR Research Programme SeaChanges
Fellowship Rijksmuseum A'dam
IDEALAB, International Research Consortium
LPDP, Indonesia Endowment Fund for Education Agency
Volkswagen Stiftung, Germany

### Grantfinder Database

On [this webpage](#) you can find more information about obtaining a grant to finance your research. An overview [can be found here](#).