

Possibilities for departmental policy towards PhD candidates

Draft, October 22, 2021

To enhance the progress in PhD projects and the well-being of PhD candidates require a joint effort of many in our faculty. In this document we describe activities that can be initiated and encouraged within a department, e.g. by the management team (MT; in particular the head of the department and the research director). It is not necessary that all these activities are employed nor necessarily in the form suggested. The important thing is that there is a balanced set of activities that contributes to the achievement of the goals. Therefore, the following list of activities is intended as a set of possible 'best practices' to inspire departments as they develop their PhD policies. We compiled this list using the reports and policy documents of departments named in the 'dept.' column. Each activity is mentioned once, even though some activities contribute to more objectives.

Recruitment and onboarding

Aim, intention or policy	Dept.	What can be done	Evidence and practice
Preparing talented master students for PhD research	SCA	One-year program offers training and supervision	
	SOC	Yearly two student-fellowships (0.2 fte)	
	SOC	Offering internships to external research master students	
Selection	ORG	MT is involved in the hiring of new PhD candidates	
	SOC	Open recruitment if vacancy is free to fill	
	SOC	Nomination Committee consists of team of prospective supervisors supplemented by leader of other research program	
	SOC	Selection of external candidates in a personal interview	
Onboarding	CW	Mentor (staff member) is available	

Dealing with diversity

Aim, intention or policy	Dept.	What can be done	Evidence and practice

A safe work environment

Aim, intention or policy	Dept.	What can be done	Evidence and practice

Scientific and professional embedding

Aim, intention or policy	Dept.	What can be done	Evidence and practice
Scientific debate; valorization	CW	Stimulating to participate in yearly disciplinary conferences	
	CW ORG SCA	Departmental 'PhD club' or reading group: discuss papers, conference presentations, general academic skills, exchange experiences, and provide feedback; chaired by a junior staff member	
	ORG	Annual candidates' event, e.g. with a poster session	
	ORG	Candidates host knowledge dissemination events	
	SOC	Encouraging research presentations at VU and abroad	
	SOC	Permanent and intensive structure of seminars	
Positioning candidates as researchers; Network building	CW	Embedding PhD's in research schools and teaching	
	ORG	Supervisors introduce them to other scholars	
	ORG	Build alliances with other departments and research institutes; Enable candidates to be visiting scholar	
Professional	ORG	'Q&A sessions' with departmental scholars on issues like 'academic life', and on 'writing and publishing journal articles'	

The department as home; social embedding

Aim, intention or policy	Dept.	What can be done	Evidence and practice
Binding of (external) candidates	ORG	Encouraging external PhD candidates to regularly visit the department	
	SCA	WhatsApp group[s]	
	SOC	Occasionally external PhDs have the opportunity to give guest lectures	
	SOC	All are welcome to attend monthly staff meetings; agenda is circulated in English	
	ORG	In (online) staff meetings all (including PhD candidates) may raise their concerns	

Being informed

Aim, intention or policy	Dept.	What can be done	Evidence and practice
Supporting general policy	SOC	Annual meeting PhD candidates and MT to discuss facilitators and	

		restrictions to steady progress of the PhD trajectory, and to update PhD policy	
Supporting general policy or individual interventions	-NA-	Reports of Annual Progress Review (APR; candidates of all types) are sent to departmental management and GS	

Career development

Aim, intention or policy	Dept.	What can be done	Evidence and practice
Life after PhD	ORG	Supervisor discusses strategic approach with PhD candidate throughout entire PhD trajectory	
	SOC	Annually career planning is discussed; option to prepare for VENI-proposal discussed at end of 1 st year; planning of cv-building activities (e.g. spending time abroad, co-authoring with others)	
	SOC	In the final year, PhD candidate is made aware of Exit-route of the Career Center	

Professionalization of supervision

Aim, intention or policy	Dept.	What can be done	Evidence and practice
Compensating time spent on supervision	CW ORG SCA SOC	Supervisor teach less hours	
Limiting work load	ORG	Maximum number of PhD candidates per supervisor	
Intervision	ORG	Informal intervision sessions	
	SOC	Annual supervisor peer review meeting; discussing status of all candidates and what impedes and promotes progress; identification of delays and barriers; solutions are proposed; departmental PhD policy is discussed	

Facilitating PhD candidates

Aim, intention or policy	Dept.	What can be done	Evidence and practice
Financial support	CW	Financing attendance yearly disciplinary conference	
	ORG	Offering material and immaterial support during pandemic	
Mitigating delay	SOC	Hospitality arrangements for candidate who needs extra time to finish their thesis after their formal appointment ends	

	SOC	Extension of PhD contract by being appointed on teaching activities	
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Finishing in time

Aim, intention or policy	Dept.	What can be done	Evidence and practice
Coaching supervisor	B&P	Individual talks with supervisor on coping with delayed PhD candidates	
	CW	Timely recognition of delay; take early action	
	CW	Maintaining regular contact or intensifying supervision	
Scope and form thesis	SOC	PhD candidates are encouraged to submit papers/chapters for publication in scientific journals during project time	
	SOC	GNG paper and conference papers should fit into the thesis	
Realistic time plan	CW	Realistic estimate of (remaining) duration of project	
	CW	Limitation of requirements for dissertation/project	
	SOC	Time plan includes R&R process	
Focus on thesis	CW	Limitation of ancillary work	
	ORG	Standardization of the amount of teaching	