

Doctorate Regulations - Implementation guidelines

Approved by the College of Deans at July 12, 2018

Referring to the VU Doctorate Regulations dated January 1, 2018

This version is from November 10, 2021

As a complement to the new VU Doctorate Regulations, the FSS has formulated implementation guidelines on three issues:

- A. the assessment procedure for assigning the 'ius promovendi' to an UHD;
- B. the pool of professors to be consulted upon appointing promotors, co-promotors and the promotion committee;
- C. some practical arrangements for the promotion ceremony.

A. Assessment procedure for assigning the 'ius promovendi' to an UHD

Background considerations

Article 10 in the Doctorate Regulations provides that the 'ius promovendi' can be assigned to an Associate Professor (UHD). This decision is to be taken by the faculty's Dean on behalf of the Board of Deans and on the basis of the criteria that the Board has defined for this purpose. In Article 8 of the Procedural Regulations, these criteria are defined to be twofold:

- a) The Associate Professor is a high quality researcher, as demonstrated by positive assessment and recognition by peers, such as acquired grants, external funding for research projects or applications that received the assessment 'excellent', and multiple peer-reviewed publications in journals or as books of excellent scientific quality.
- b) The Associate Professor is a high quality Supervisor, as demonstrated by at least two successfully completed PhD trajectories that she or he has supervised in the formal role of Co-Supervisor. Both the process of supervision and the quality of the supervised dissertation are taken into account.

Procedure

1. An Associate Professor who desires to act as the promotor for an (incoming) PhD candidate can submit a request to be granted the 'ius promovendi' at the secretariat of the Graduate School of Social Sciences (GSSS).
2. For this request a brief survey has to be filled out, in which the envisaged promotor provides information on the following:
 - A short description of the relevant doctorate position(s) and a justification for why the Associate Professor should act as their promotor.
 - A short description of past (at least two completed) promotion trajectories in which the envisaged promotor has been involved from the start as co-promotor, including a description of the exact role played by the Associate Professor.
 - References (if available) to major successful grant applications or applications that at least were marked as 'excellent'.
 - A list of scientific, peer-reviewed publications, with the three most prestigious ones marked.
3. On the basis of the survey responses, the Director of the GSSS checks whether the Associate Professor meets the relevant criteria of being a high quality researcher and a high quality supervisor, and advises the Dean whether to grant the 'ius promovendi'.

4. The Dean decides on the application for the 'ius promovendi', taking the advice of the Director of the GSSS into account. In case of a positive advice, the Dean will submit a motivated proposal to appoint the Associate Professor as promotor to the Board of Deans, in accordance with Article 11.7 of the VU Doctorate Regulations.
5. Once an Associate Professor has been granted the 'ius promovendi', she or he can act as promotor for any subsequent number of doctoral candidates.

B. Pool of professors for consultation on doctoral appointments

Background considerations

The VU Doctorate Regulations require the Dean to decide on the following issues after having heard 'a substantial number of professors from the faculty': the appointment of the Supervisor (Art. 11.5), the appointment of Co-Supervisors (Art.13.2), the appointment of the Doctorate Board (Art. 14.2), and the decision to change Supervisors (Art.23.5). The proposal is to develop a standard information and consultation procedure on these issues.

Procedure

1. A pool of FSS full professors is established for the purpose of advising the Dean on the relevant decisions in the Doctoral procedure. It is composed of the following members:
 - the five Heads of Department in the faculty,
 - the portfolio holders for Education and Research in the Faculty Board, and
 - the Director of the Graduate School,
 - the three members of the FSS Science Committee.

If a Head of Department is not a full professor, she or he appoints a full professor from the department to join the pool instead. A Head of Department might ask the Dean to replace her or him with a full professor from the department.

2. The secretariat of the Graduate School notifies the members of the pool by e-mail of any envisaged decision concerning:
 - the appointment of Supervisors (Art. 11.5) and of Co-Supervisors (Art.13.2);
 - the appointment of the Doctorate Board (Art. 14.2), and
 - the change of Supervisors (Art.23.5).
3. After having received the notification, the members of the pool have the opportunity to communicate any objections or reservations to the proposed decision for five working days. If they have no objection or reservation, there is no need to respond.
4. Once the period of five working days after the notification has elapsed, the decision is confirmed by the Dean.

Responsibilities in the two procedures (added November 10, 2021)

Appointment of promotors (at the start of the project, or when changed)

- The director of the GSSS gives preliminary approval of supervisors
- The GSSS, on behalf of the Dean, consults the professors of the faculty; for FSS this is the Pool of Professors
- If the Pool of Professors members advise positively (by not responding), the director of the GSSS and then the Dean decide and this is formalized via Hora Finita

Composition of a promotion committee

- The Dean gives preliminary approval of the composition of a doctoral committee.
- It needs approval from the professors of the faculty; for FSS this is the Pool of Professors
- If the Pool of Professors members have agreed (by not responding), the Dean's decision is irrevocable and is formalized through Hora Finita

The Faculty Board is not involved in these procedures; these are decisions of the Dean and the professors; if advice is sought within the Faculty Board, this plays no formal role.

C. Practical arrangements for the PhD Ceremony

Background

The Doctorate Regulations also include some provisions on the PhD Ceremony (Art. 27-29) that are not necessarily new but do invite some clarifications on the side of the faculty. One of these is Article 27.2 that restricts the right to chair PhD Ceremonies to the Rector, a Dean or former Dean, a deputy of the Dean, a professor who is chair of a department of the faculty, or other professors or emeritus professors who have been approved thereto by the Board of Deans. As FSS does incidentally also rely on the latter category, we need to ascertain that these professors are indeed approved by the Board of Deans. Another relevant provision is included in the implementation instructions, which stipulate that “at least three members of the Promotion Committee need to be present (at the defence ceremony) and that there are at least five opponents present, one of whom can participate through Skype”.

Procedure

1. Promotion ceremonies at the FSS can be chaired by the Rector, a Dean or former Dean, a deputy of the Dean, or a professor who is chair of a department of the faculty. They can also be chaired by other professors or emeritus professors from the faculty who have received prior approval thereto by the Board of Deans (Art. 27.2).
2. The opposition at a promotion ceremony involves at least five members, at least three of which have been member of the Doctorate Board that has approved the dissertation. At most one member of the opposition can participate in the ceremony through Skype.
3. If members of the Doctorate Board are unable to participate in the ceremony, the promotor will ensure suitable and qualified replacements. All members of the opposition participate on their own authority.
4. The opposition can be extended by anyone who has been given permission to do so by the Rector Magnificus (Art. 28.1).
5. The Promotor will inform the chair of the ceremony in due time about the exact composition of the opposition, and the names, titles and affiliations of its members.
6. The decision to grant the degree of Doctor or Doctor of Philosophy is taken by a simple majority of the members of the Doctorate Board present (in person or (at most one) through Skype) at the meeting of the Doctorate Board subsequent to the defence. The other members of the opposition and any other professors of the university present have an advisory role (Art. 29.5).