

CHARTER FOR DOCTORAL STUDENTS AND SUPERVISORS

(approved by the Executive Board on 26 May 2015)

The charter is in line with the prevailing Ghent University regulations and policy plans, and observes the principles included in the European Charter for Researchers (European Commission, 2005).

Drafted on the initiative of the Doctoral Schools Steering Committee, the charter is based on the good practice guidelines derived from a broad stakeholder consultation at Ghent University.

The commitments included in the charter are not legally binding (except for those that are a translation of legal or other regulations).

Introduction

The relationship between doctoral students and supervisors is subject to the provisions of:

- the [Ghent University Labour Regulations](#)
- the applicable directives of the funding bodies
- the [Regulations concerning UGent PhD scholarships](#) (with regard to recipients of Dehousse scholarships, see article 1 of the relevant regulations)
- the [Education and Examination Code of Ghent University](#) and its [faculty additions](#).

The academic framework and the supervisors in particular create the scientific environment needed to successfully conduct doctoral research.

Doctoral students in turn affirm commitment to [integrity in research](#) and deliver results which benefit both Ghent University as well as themselves.

The prerequisites for achieving this are reciprocity as well as healthy working conditions which also take into account [workplace well-being](#). Open communication and a willingness of both parties to reach a constructive solution in case of conflict are essential.

This charter relates to all kinds of collaboration involving a doctoral student, his/her [supervisor](#)(s) and the [doctoral advisory committee](#) (DAC; if appointed), and the chairman of the department to which the doctoral student is affiliated, or to which the main supervisor is affiliated if the doctoral student is not on the payroll of Ghent University.

Agreements/planning

A good start of the doctoral project involves clear (written) agreements concluded between the doctoral student and the supervisor(s). These agreements concern the research design, financial and practical preconditions, the research plan, the supervision of the research, the integration into the research environment, training and mobility needs, and career expectations.

The agreements involve:

- the research design and the (substantive, practical and financial) conditions necessary to effectively carry out the research within the prescribed time;
- the research plan (successive research phases, key deadlines);
- the format of the dissertation (book form or compilation of articles)
- the [publication](#) and / or valorisation of interim results;
- the manner and frequency of reporting to, and guidance and feedback by, the [supervisor\(s\)](#);
- the schedule of meetings of the [doctoral advisory committee](#) (DAC; if appointed);
- the (co-) authorship of publications resulting from the doctoral project or any joint research activities. The premise is that each co-author has made a full contribution to the publication and, equally, that everybody who has fully participated in the work is formally recognized as a co-author;
- the expectations of, and availability within, the department or research unit regarding education support, research and service delivery, administrative tasks, participation in various activities, and use of infrastructure;
- the training and / or mobility programme linked to the doctoral project (including a financial plan, if applicable).

It is the doctoral student's responsibility to provide a research plan and if necessary amend it throughout the course of the doctoral project, unless other arrangements are agreed upon.

The supervisor(s) and the DAC support the doctoral student in drafting the research plan, timely highlight any inconsistencies, and may optionally require realistic adjustments.

The supervisor(s) and the DAC paint a realistic picture of what supervision will entail and draw attention to the doctoral student's responsibility regarding the progress of the research.

The doctoral student and the supervisor(s) are aware of the [administrative](#) and [regulatory](#) framework within which the doctoral project and any associated employment of the doctoral student are situated: the [Education and Examination Code](#), the (additional) [regulations concerning education and research](#), the [faculty requirements](#) concerning the submission of the dissertation (publishing criteria, compulsory doctoral training programme), the rules and regulations concerning the [professional status](#) of the doctoral student.

This framework is discussed by the supervisor and the doctoral student at the time of the application for the first enrolment for the doctorate.

The doctoral student looks into the diverse possibilities of attending specialist or generic courses at Ghent University, of following, with or without the support of the Doctoral Schools, additional training elsewhere, or of taking part in intersectoral (i.e. beyond academe) or interuniversity mobility.

The supervisor(s) and the DAC encourage the doctoral student to attend courses and be mobile in so far as it is relevant to the doctoral student's research or professional development. The supervisor(s) and the (delegate of the) head of department call the doctoral student's attention to the potential financial implications of the study or mobility programme, make clear agreements about possible sponsorship by the department or research unit, and inform the doctoral student about the possibilities to apply for [faculty](#) or other [mobility or research budgets](#).

Monitoring/publication/valorisation

A careful interim follow-up and evaluation of the research and the progress of the doctoral student as a researcher offer the best guarantee for a successful and timely completion of the doctoral project as well as for the development of the doctoral student from a junior to an experienced researcher.

The doctoral student is committed to report timely and exhaustively to the supervisor(s) and the doctoral advisory committee (DAC; if appointed) and to ask for feedback on the progress of all aspects of the doctoral project. This commitment includes the following:

- the doctoral student submits the compulsory annual [progress report](#) and takes into account the feedback given;
- the doctoral student reports on the interim results of the research according to the agreements made, and takes into account the feedback given;
- the doctoral student reports any desired adjustments to the research plan, whether for personal or research-related reasons, takes into account the feedback given, and follows a remediation process if necessary.
- in the event of possible breaches of the regulatory framework within which the doctoral project and any associated employment is situated, the doctoral student reports these to, or has them dealt with by, the authorised competent persons or bodies;
- in the event of protection or valorisation of research results, the doctoral student fully cooperates with, and provides the necessary information to, Ghent University's Tech Transfer Office or any persons authorised by [Ghent University's Tech Transfer Office](#);
- the doctoral student reports to the supervisor(s) every intention to make (interim) research results public (in, amongst others, scientific and popularizing publications and at conferences), to this end makes available upon request all preparatory texts and presentations, and takes into account the feedback given. In any intended disclosure the protection of intellectual rights and possible contractual obligations vis-à-vis third parties need to be guaranteed (amongst others with regard to confidentiality and patent protection);
- in consultation with the supervisor(s) the doctoral student monitors where necessary the confidentiality of certain research results and of the expertise that is made available by Ghent University to conduct the doctoral research.

The doctoral student, the supervisor(s) and the DAC act constructively in case problems arise within the collaborative relationship. The [faculty ombudsperson](#) for doctoral students can be called upon for mediation in case of conflicts between the parties involved and alleged regulatory violations.

In case of internal conflicts and alleged regulatory violations the (delegate of the) head of department is committed to listening to all parties involved and informing them about possibilities for remediation or follow-up.

In case of conflicts (of an academic or personal nature) which cause a negative work environment, a conflict resolution process will be followed.

Examination/career

Careful monitoring of the completion of the doctoral project offers the best guarantee for successfully passing the doctoral examination as well as for a smoother transition to a further personal or professional challenge.

The doctoral student timely initiates the planning of the doctoral examination and completes the (optional/compulsory) doctoral training programme. This commitment includes the following:

- the doctoral student reports to the supervisor(s) and the doctoral advisory committee (DAC; if appointed) the intention to submit the dissertation for the [doctoral examination](#) and takes into account the feedback given on the final stage of the research;
- the doctoral student submits the final draft of the doctoral dissertation to the supervisor(s) and the DAC and takes into account the feedback given;
- the doctoral student follows all administrative procedures imposed by the faculty or the central administration with regard to the submission of the doctoral dissertation, the completion of the (optional/compulsory) doctoral training programme and the doctoral examination.

The supervisor(s) and the DAC commit to promptly and constructively respond to any questions concerning the completion of the dissertation and the planning of the doctoral examination, to take the administrative steps theretofore required, and seek solutions if the completion is being delayed. This commitment includes the following:

- the supervisor(s) and the DAC give the doctoral student permission to submit the dissertation for the doctoral examination or mutually agree on postponement thereof;
- the supervisor(s) and the DAC respond to questions for feedback on the final stage of the research and / or the final draft of the doctoral dissertation;
- the supervisor(s) and the DAC follow all administrative procedures imposed by the faculty or central administration with regard to the submission of the doctoral dissertation, the completion of the (optional/compulsory) doctoral training programme and the doctoral examination;

- in the event of a possible breach of the grant period or the period of appointment the supervisor(s) and the DAC point out further financing possibilities or alternative employment and / or assist the doctoral student in adjusting the research plan.

The doctoral student is responsible for timely exploring career opportunities beyond the doctoral degree.

The supervisor(s) and the (delegate of the) head of department make the doctoral student aware of this responsibility, paint a realistic picture of career opportunities in academia and beyond, inform the doctoral student about the possibility of obtaining a postdoctoral fellowship or any other academic or non-academic position at home or abroad, and to this end consult their networks.