Welcome to Radboud University
We are glad you opted for a PhD programme at our university.

Below you will find the vision of the Executive Board and the Board of Deans in regard to PhD candidates working at Radboud University.

PhD candidates and research institutes at Radboud University

The PhD candidate: an employee, not a student

There is a Europe-wide discussion on the status of the PhD candidate: from the third study phase to a job position after studying.

Radboud University chooses to view PhD candidates as employees – employees with limited job experience who, as in all industries, still have a lot to learn. In this respect, they are supervised by their employer (both financially and through a range of courses), but this also requires personal commitment and ambition from the employees. Employees must take charge of their own career, while the employer facilitates it.

A PhD candidate is appointed to demonstrate competence in setting up and conducting academic research. The ultimate test of this competence is in the completion of a dissertation. As such, a PhD candidate is not a student.

Education and courses for PhD candidates are funded from the research fund and are not part of the education funding Radboud University receives. These are employer’s expenses.

The education of PhD candidates is for the purpose of furthering their professional development. Agreements are made and documented in the training and supervision plan (see Supervision for PhD candidates), which provides PhD candidates with access to the entire university course selection.

Induction programme for PhD candidates

In every organisation, new employees receive some form of induction programme. When PhD candidates are appointed, they will be notified about who is responsible for their induction. All new employees are given the opportunity to take part in a general university induction programme, including PhD candidates. PhD candidates can view when the next induction day will take place here [weblink].

Given the typical tasks of PhD candidates and the organisation of research at RU, the research institutes are the most suitable entities to provide PhD candidates with an introduction to the specific institute. This introduction is supplemented by this document as well as by information on the existing regulations and facilities at the institute, faculty and university level. Preferably, all the information should be easy to find and located in one place.

University agreements are included in the ‘PhD Scheme’ document.

Supervision of PhD candidates

1. The training and supervision plan
   For each PhD candidate, a tailored training and supervision plan is drawn up according to the individual and the research project. This plan states:
   a) the PhD candidate’s prior education, tailored to the specific research and teaching tasks;
   b) the supervisor(s) and provisional PhD supervisor are;
   c) the manner and scope (in hours per month) of the supervision; and
   d) the number of meetings between the provisional PhD supervisor and PhD candidate, provided the supervisor and provisional supervisor are not the same person, with a minimum of three times a year.

2. Annual appraisal interview
The annual appraisal interview is a bilateral meeting between an employee and his/her supervisor and covers topics such as performance, supervision and personal development of the PhD candidate. The training and supervision plan is evaluated and updated in every annual appraisal interview. This meeting is not an administrative formality.

3. Relationship between bilateral PhD supervisor and PhD candidate
This relationship par excellence is that of master-apprentice. A fully equal relationship is too vulnerable for various reasons. In addition to a bilateral PhD supervisor, each PhD candidate must have a second staff member as a supervisor, who is very well versed in the research topic. The bilateral PhD supervisor and other supervisors have two roles in relation to the PhD candidate: (a) as academic assessor and (b) as mentor/coach. The first role is primarily aimed at offering feedback on the required quality of a dissertation, while the second role is more focused on the PhD candidate’s own personal development. PhD candidates meet with one of their supervisors at least once a week. To ensure the quality of this contact, bilateral PhD supervisors only supervise the number of PhD candidates they believe they can capably manage.

4. Confidential advisors/mentors
In addition to the direct supervisors, all faculties also have confidential advisors for PhD candidates. In order to ensure the quality of the supervision, independent third parties from the faculty regularly meet with PhD candidates.

5. Code of conduct
Radboud University subscribes to the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Scientific Practice. Provisional PhD supervisors and PhD supervisors are expected to train and supervise their candidates in adherence to this code of conduct.

Research institutes
The research institutes are responsible for the training and supervision of PhD candidates. The research institute offers PhD candidates a wide range of opportunities for interaction with fellow researchers at the institute. The research institute is responsible for a quality assessment of the research proposal prior to the start of a PhD programme. The research institute offers courses that are pertinent to the field in question (such as data management, scientific integrity, techniques, and methods).

The research institute has designed a system to monitor the progress of the PhD programmes. The PhD candidates meet with their supervisors at least once a year to discuss the progress of their PhD programme. In addition, the PhD candidates will be invited to a meeting before the end of their first employment contract (often after 1.5 years) to discuss the continuation of the PhD programme and related contract extension.

PhD candidates of Radboud University may gain international research experience during their PhD programme, and are facilitated and encouraged in this regard. This international research experience ideally consists of a period of several months spent at a university or research institute abroad.

Research institutes may organise the above activities in cooperation, where appropriate.

Awarding the PhD
A PhD is awarded on the basis of a completed dissertation. This dissertation must be approved by the provisional PhD supervisor and receive a positive assessment from the Manuscript Committee.

When evaluating a dissertation as proof of competence, the number of published, accepted or submitted articles does not play a leading role.

Evaluation of the quality of the PhD research is not dependent on the outcome of the research. The chair of the manuscript committee will provide an independent and motivated assessment of the dissertation. This assessment and motivation must in all cases address the importance of the research topic, the clarity of the research problem, the way in which the research data have been organised, analysed, processed and stored, the methodology, and the conclusions in relation to international academic discourse.
Completed courses shall not influence the decision regarding whether to award the PhD.

Good academic research is only possible through public, academic debate. This is why the research data must be publicly accessible after completion of the dissertation. This is subject to the ‘made public, unless...’ principle.

Orientation to post-PhD period
With a view to their personal development, it may be desirable for a PhD candidate to already gain some experience in a teaching role. This is to be funded through educational funding. PhD candidates may use their acquired teaching experience to build a file for the purpose of obtaining a University Teaching Qualification (UTQ). The training and supervision plan contains agreements on possible additional activities that are needed to obtain the UTQ, including the method of funding it. This is one of the ways in which PhD candidates take control of their own careers.

Supervisors facilitate preparation and orientation for a career in and outside academia. Since a significant portion of PhD candidates will find employment outside of academia, orientation and preparation for such a career is important. This includes the employer offering (and funding) courses that are not solely focused on the PhD. The personal development of PhD candidates (in or outside academia) is also expressly discussed during the annual appraisal interview.

Other
As the PhD programme at Radboud University is not formally seen as a degree programme - after all, the PhD candidate is an employee - there is no chance of a PhD programme being downgraded into a research Master’s programme. It goes without saying that the knowledge and skills acquired in a research Master’s can be very relevant to the successful completion of a PhD programme. Also, there are no other final criteria for the PhD programme other than the completed dissertation.

An exit interview will be held with each PhD candidate before the end of their employment.