

# Defending your PhD proposal before the Scientific Advisory Committee

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## THE SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE ('WETENSCHAPSCOMMISSIE')

- Fifteen members representing different disciplines.
- Chair: Dr. Max Visser; Secretary: Anneke Verbogt.
- Advising the Faculty Board on research strategies and policies of the Institute for Management Research:
  - ✓ review of research proposals co-funded by the IMR
  - ✓ review Christine Mohrmann Stipendium proposals (scholarship for female PhDs)
  - ✓ advise on new Hot Spots and the continuation of existing ones
  - ✓ advise on research policies in general.
- Assessing and evaluating the PhD research proposals of all PhD researchers (internal and external).

# REVIEW PROCEDURE

- Internal / external PhD researchers...
- Seven / thirteen months from start:
  - ✓ promotor receives invitation from Hora Finita
  - ✓ PhD researchers prepare proposal in cooperation with supervisor(s) / promotor(s).
- Nine / sixteen months from start:
  - ✓ PhD researcher/promotor submits the PhD research proposal form to the secretary of the Scientific Advisory Committee (Anneke Verbogt)
  - ✓ Scientific Advisory Committee appoints two reviewers
  - ✓ Anneke Verbogt plans a meeting with the PhD researcher, supervisors and reviewers.

## Timing SAC Defense

*Months after start date*

4-year Internal & IPS	
- Hora Finita Call:	7
- Deadline proposal:	9
- Defense:	12
6-year Internal	
- Hora Finita Call:	13
- Deadline proposal:	16
- Actual defense:	18
External	
- Hora Finita Call:	13
- Deadline proposal:	15
- Actual defense:	18



## THE PHD PROPOSAL DEFENSE

- Presentation of PhD research proposal for about 15 minutes. Focal points of the presentation: the research problem and approach; planning, outputs and progress of the project; embedding of the research.
- Discussion or 'defense' for about 30 minutes: the PhD researcher responds to reviewers' questions and remarks. Promotor/supervisor(s) must remain silent...
- The researcher leaves the room for about 10 minutes; assessment of the discussion by reviewers in deliberation with promotor/supervisor(s).
- Reviewers use standardized review form, with four possible outcomes: Accept; Minor concerns; Major concerns; Reject.
- Between 2017-now: 90 Accepts, 49 Minor concerns, 26 Major concerns, 2 Reject (after a Major concern)...
- In practice: we are here to *help* as 'critical friends' and to provide valuable feedback!

# EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR PHD PROPOSALS

1. *Research problem and approach* (max. 3000 words) - This section provides an overview of the scientific field and the project's contribution(s) to it. Further, it explains the setup of the project. It includes:

1a. The theoretical and/or empirical puzzle(s), debate(s) or gap(s) underpinning your project.

1b. A clear (set of) research question(s).

1c. The scientific and practical contribution(s) of the project.

1d. The research approach and/or methodological design, including data collection (if applicable).

If you are employed on a research project for which your supervisor(s) received external funding from NWO or the EU prior to you being involved, please address how your own part of the project meets the four criteria 1a-1d.

2. *Planning, outputs and progress* (max. 2500 words) - This section requests a work plan, consisting of:

2a. A timetable of the project.

2b. In case of an article-based project: planned articles, contents and outlets (in relation to section 1 of this proposal).

2c. Other possible outputs that may contribute to the valorization of the project.

Further, this section describes (possible) major issues (theoretical, methodological and/or practical) you have faced or expect to face in following this work plan. Please elaborate on potential solutions to and/or analyses of these issues.

3. *Embedding of the research* (max. 1000 words) - This section embeds your project in the (IMR) scientific community and outlines the resources you may need. Please indicate:

3a. To which department(s), disciplinary group(s) and/or Hot Spot(s) your project belongs within the faculty.

3b. Whether there are links with projects/programs elsewhere that are useful in implementing the project.

3c. How you may access the necessary resources you need for the project. Please focus on key resources, which are essential to prevent delay of the project, e.g., access to crucial databases, testing environments, contacts with vital research partners, budgets and contacts for research abroad.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

- Please formulate a clear and steering research objective and set of research questions.
- Embed the research objective in a clearly delineated academic debate, describing a clear and relevant contribution to scholarly knowledge.
- Take care of the coherence between research questions, research strategy, operationalization and methods of data collection.
- Provide a detailed and feasible planning focused on research output.
- More information:
  - ✓ <https://www.ru.nl/nsm/imr/imr-doctoral-school/imr-doctoral-school/phd-guide-current-phd-candidates/your-phd-project-formal-milestones/>
  - ✓ <https://www.radboudnet.nl/nsm/research/scientific-advisory-committee/>

# **SAC proposal**

# **The PhD researcher perspective**

Gisela Otto

- Defended proposal in 2021 (online)
- Internal PhD candidate
- Used project description that my supervisors had written as a basis
- Clear to me that feasibility was important
- Minor revisions
  - helped to dig deeper into the literature
  - practice for writing a revision (e.g. also needed when submitting an article to a journal)



## TIPS & TRICKS

- Use the time you have
  - Just start writing...
- Discuss your ideas with your supervisors
  - And also your peers!
- Focus and don't try to overcomplicate
- Highlight any progress you have made so far
  - Established contacts with stakeholders? Early data collection? Conference submission? Presentation?
- Remember: it is a proposal

