

STEP BY STEP



The route towards a PhD for candidates

Graduate School
Tilburg School of Humanities and Digital Sciences
Tilburg University

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Chapter 1

Categories of PhD candidates Graduate School TSHD

These categories are determined by the Universities of the Netherlands (formerly known as the Association of Universities in the Netherlands/VSNU).

Please check the document [Typen promovendi](#) for more details (in Dutch).

1a Internal PhD candidates

(UNL category 1a)

- PhD candidates selected and financed by a TSHD department
 - employed by Tilburg University
 - embedded in a TSHD department
-

1b Internal PhD candidates, staff with PhD assignment

(UNL category 1b)

- employees of the University who, among other tasks, has the assignment to conduct PhD research within the University
 - embedded in a TSHD department
-

2 Scholarship candidates

(UNL category 2b)

- selected by a TSHD department
 - not employed
 - embedded in TSHD department
 - receives funding from an external scholarship provider
-

3 Externally financed candidates

(UNL category 3)

- selected by a TSHD department
 - not employed
 - embedded in TSHD department
 - receives time or funds from own employer to pursue a PhD under the guidance of a supervisor at TSHD
-

4 External self-funded PhD candidates

(UNL category 4)

- selected by a TSHD department
 - not employed
 - embedded in TSHD department
 - pursues a PhD in their own time, supported by their own resources
-

Chapter 2

Start PhD – Registration procedure (0 - 1st year)

Registration procedure

Actor

1 Selection procedures

- a Internal PhD candidates (UNL category 1a): Selected by an application committee in response to a vacancy.
- b External PhD candidates (UNL category 2b, 3, 4): External PhD candidates must secure the commitment from the relevant department by submitting a research topic, research description, and curriculum vitae to a Tilburg University professor (this can be an assistant, associate, or full professor). Candidates with a scholarship must be able to prove that they are in possession of a scholarship. If the TiU professor approves to act as supervisor, they will inform the Graduate School. The Graduate School will ensure that the candidate complies with legal and formal requirements as described in the [Tilburg University PhD Regulations](#). Following the [appendix to the PhD Regulations](#), external PhD candidates have to complete the PhD program successfully within a maximum of 8 years.
- c All PhD candidates are required to have a Master's degree: If a candidate has obtained a Master diploma from outside The Netherlands, the Graduate School will submit the documents to NUFFIC (the Dutch organization for internationalization in education) for a diploma recognition assessment. They report to the Graduate School whether the diploma is generally acceptable for access to Dutch higher education. The NUFFIC check may delay or end the registration process.

PhD candidate

Supervisor(s)

Graduate School TSHD

2 Registration in Hora Finita (within 2 weeks after start)

Once the Graduate School has been informed of enrollment by Human Resources (internal PhD candidates) or the supervisor (external PhD candidates) and the PhD candidate meets the admission criteria, the Graduate School contacts the candidate for registration in Hora Finita.

All PhD candidates need to register in Hora Finita, among other things, their personal details, (co-)supervisor(s), and previous education. The Graduate School will contact you if more information is required regarding the registration in Hora Finita.

The manual for Hora Finita can be found [here](#). Please note, the emails from Hora Finita sometimes end up in the spam folder. Should you have any questions regarding Hora Finita or experience any problems, please contact the [Graduate School](#).

PhD candidate

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3 Deficiencies

Some documents and/or information can be submitted after the registration in Hora Finita, such as the research proposal, the Training and Supervision Plan (TSP) and the original diploma. Internal PhD candidates need to resolve these deficiencies within 6 months of the start of the employment contract. External PhD candidates must resolve them within 1 year after enrollment in the PhD program, with exception of the TSP, which also has to be submitted within 6 months.

If you do not submit the documents after the deadline has passed, the Graduate School and/or the Doctorate Board will send you reminders and inform the (co-)supervisors as well. It is important to know that not handing in the requested documents on time can be a reason for the Doctorate Board to terminate the PhD program prematurely (Article 3.4.3).

PhD candidate

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4 Appointment for an intake meeting (within 6 weeks after start)

The Graduate School welcomes you by email and plans an intake meeting with you and a representative of the Graduate School. During this meeting, you have to show the original Master diploma and transcript, and a passport or ID. The Graduate School representative checks the registration in Hora Finita with you and explains the procedures of the Graduate School.

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5 Onboarding (within 6 months after start)

All PhD candidates are invited to attend an introductory meeting (onboarding). This event is organized twice a year by the Dean and Vice-Dean of TSHD as well as the PhD coordinator, the PhD Council members, and a HR representative. The purpose of the onboarding is to walk you through the formal milestones of a PhD trajectory, inform you about the available tools, the Training and Supervision Plan and the support systems of TSHD and Tilburg University. The meeting also focuses on getting to know other PhD candidates.

PhD candidate

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6 From registration to admission under certain conditions (within 3 months after start)

After the intake meeting (step 4), the Graduate School checks your data in Hora Finita and sends an admission request to the Director of the Graduate School and the Doctorate Board. The Director assesses the request for admission to the PhD program before referring it to the Doctorate Board. The Doctorate Board confirms the admission of the candidate.

You are admitted under certain conditions (see step 8 for internal PhD candidates and step 9 for external PhD candidates). Please note, if you are a PhD candidate UNL category 3, meaning that external parties such as an

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Director Graduate School

employer provide you with the time and means to do the PhD, a contract between the external party and Tilburg University has to be signed. During the registration phase, the Graduate School will arrange together with the (co-)supervisors the contract.

After the admission, you are expected to continuously update Hora Finita. A change of personal data, such as home address, telephone number (including mobile number), or e-mail address, must be recorded in the Hora Finita system as soon as possible.

7 English assessment (internal PhD candidates) (within 6 months after start)

New academic staff, including PhD candidates, are required to do an English assessment at the Language Center. The results of the assessment, indicated as a CEFR level, reflect your level in the different skills that have been tested. You will also receive advice about the possible courses suitable for your level and specific needs. To find more information and sign up for the assessment, please click [here](#).

PhD candidate

8 First year assessment (Internal PhD candidate, 10 months after start)

Internal PhD candidates are invited by the secretary of the department for the first-year assessment. Depending on the outcome, HR will extend the employment. You may be requested to fill in the Performance & Development form (available in My Employee Portal), in which the Training and Supervision Plan can be adapted.

PhD candidate

Human Resources

9 First year assessment (External PhD candidate, 10 months after start)

After 10 months, external PhD candidates (UNL category 3/4) and their (co-)supervisors will evaluate the progress of the PhD project. Both can decide to either start the formal enrollment procedure for the candidate in the Graduate School or discontinue the project. Should the outcome of this meeting be positive, then you have to submit the following documents to the Graduate School:

- CV of PhD candidate.
- A concise research plan (to assess the quality and feasibility of the proposed PhD project).
- An annual planning (including the number of hours per week the PhD candidate will spend on the PhD project) to check whether the project can be completed within the maximum period of eight years.
- Proof of submission to the [Research Ethics and Data Management Committee](#) to confirm the ethical assessment/ clearance for the project, if applicable (see step 17).
- A short explanation of the connection between the content of the research proposal with one of the existing research programs of TSHD, to assess the degree of embeddedness in the department to which the supervisor belongs.

PhD candidate

Supervisor(s)

Graduate School TSHD

- A short reflection on what kind of courses or PhD training may be needed to improve the skills necessary to complete the PhD program successfully within 8 years. The Training and Supervision Plan can be used to write this reflection. (This applies only for PhD candidates who started after July 1, 2023.)

The (co-)supervisors will suggest two independent researchers who will assess the documents. Should their assessment be negative, the Graduate School will coordinate the administrative termination of the PhD project. If the researchers are positive, you will be officially admitted to the Graduate School.

Chapter 3

During PhD – Research stage

Research stage

Actor

10 Supervision

The Graduate School has designed ‘Guiding principles for (co-)supervisors’ that outline the responsibilities of the (co-)supervisors as well expectations of PhD candidates. [To be added]

PhD candidate

Supervisor(s)

11 Preparing for the defense throughout the PhD trajectory

Following Article 4.3.5 of the PhD Regulations, you are expected to prepare yourself for the defense ceremony during the PhD project. This means that in discussion with the (co-)supervisors, you need to receive sufficient substantive feedback moments on the PhD research by the (co-)supervisors themselves and by other academic colleagues. You will also need to present your PhD research at least twice in the PhD program during a research meeting of the school and/or department.

PhD candidate

Supervisor(s)

12 Training and Supervision Plan (within 6 months)

You have to prepare a Training and Supervision Plan (TSP). This plan is completed in consultation with the (co-)supervisors. The Graduate School expects the TSP to be ready and uploaded into Hora Finita as soon as possible. For all PhD candidates the deadline is 6 months after the start of the PhD.

PhD candidate

Supervisor(s)

Graduate School TSHD

Director Graduate School

When uploading the TSP in Hora Finita, you have to click on ‘submit TSP for review’ so that the PhD coordinator and (co-)supervisors can review the TSP. The Director of the Graduate School will give the final approval. The TSP must be updated and reuploaded to Hora Finita on a yearly basis.

[The TSP format can be found here.](#)

13 Research Proposal (within 6 or 10 months)

You have to upload your research proposal to Hora Finita. Following the PhD Regulations, the proposal has to contain a design for the structure of the PhD research and the proposed methodology, including a description of the problem definition, a description of the importance of the problem, and an overall table of contents of the manuscript.

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The deadline for internal candidates is 6 months after the start of the contract. The deadline for external candidates is 10 months after enrolling in the Graduate School, before the go/no-go moment (see step 9).

14 Research integrity

All researchers at Tilburg University must observe the standards of good research practice and research integrity as expressed in the current [Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#) and are accountable for this.

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There are two types of training: [an online training](#) (all PhD candidates who enrolled in the Graduate School as from September 1, 2020 must complete the training within the first year), and a face-to-face training (all PhD candidates who enrolled in the Graduate School as from September 1, 2021 must complete the training within their second year). For these PhD candidates, the integrity courses have to be followed in order to defend your thesis. For the other PhD candidates both trainings are highly recommended but not compulsory. If you have followed the online training, please register the result in Hora Finita (under the heading 'Research Phase' and then 'Required Courses') or email a screenshot of the result to the Graduate School.

You will receive an invitation for the face-to-face training from the Graduate School. Please note that you will need to have completed the online course before participating in the face-to-face training.

15 Courses for PhD candidates

The Training and Supervision Plan is a tool you can use to discuss with your (co-)supervisors, among other things, what knowledge and which skills are needed to complete your PhD program successfully, and help you improve your career chances in and outside of academia.

PhD candidate

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The Graduate School and Tilburg University offers various types of training for PhD candidates regarding research, impact, education, personal and career development. For an updated overview of courses, please visit the [website of the Graduate School](#).

16 Monitoring

Once a year you are invited to a monitoring meeting with the PhD coordinator. The objective of these meetings is to review the updated TSP, discuss the planning, and evaluate the PhD project so far. The discussion and findings will be treated confidentially. A report of the conversation will be saved in Hora Finita and can only be consulted by you and the PhD coordinator.

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Before the meeting, you need to update and adjust the TSP and reupload it to Hora Finita.

[The TSP format can be found here.](#)

17 Ethical Approval

Within TSHD, the Research Ethics and Data Management Committee (REDC) assesses research proposals involving human participants on the matters of research ethics, privacy, and data management before data collection has taken place. It is your responsibility to check with the (co-)supervisors whether assessment by the REDC is necessary.

Read more about [how to submit an application](#).

PhD candidate

Supervisor(s)

18 National Research School (internal PhD candidates)

All internal PhD candidates can register at a National Research School. As soon as the PhD candidate together with the (co-)supervisors has decided which school to sign in, please contact the [Graduate School](#). For more information, please see the tab [National Research Schools](#) on our website.

PhD candidate

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19 PhD Council

The [PhD Council TSHD](#) is a platform for and by PhD candidates of the School for Humanities and Digital Sciences. The PhD Council has representatives from each department within the School representing the interests of all PhD candidates (internal and external). The main focus of the PhD Council is to offer peer support and listen to the concerns of all PhD candidates, fostering contact between PhD candidates, and represent PhD candidates in various advisory bodies. If you have any suggestions, an idea for a workshop or information topic, or you want to be involved in the TSHD PhD Council Board, please contact the council by sending an [email](#).

20 Support

You can contact your (co-)supervisors and the Graduate School with questions regarding the PhD program, which includes a special need for support, for example due to disability or functional impairment. If necessary, the (co-)supervisors and Graduate School can refer you to the appropriate body within or outside the University.

21 Confidential advice & conflict

You may seek confidential advice on challenges, issues and conflicts related to the PhD project through the [PhD coordinator](#) or the [confidential advisers](#). In case of problems or issues that are beyond the Graduate School's mandate, you may contact HR, [the general confidential advisor](#) or [the confidential advisor for scientific integrity](#).

Supervisor(s)

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Chapter 4

Finishing PhD – Final stage

Final stage

Actor

22 Assessment criteria of thesis

Following the PhD Regulations, your thesis and the defense of the thesis show that you have:

PhD candidate

- Contributed, through original research, to the shifting of the boundaries of knowledge.
- Systematic understanding of a substantial knowledge domain and has mastered the skills and methodologies.
- The ability to design, develop, implement, and adapt a substantial research project.
- The ability to critically analyze, evaluate, and synthesize new ideas.
- The ability to communicate with peers and the wider academic community.

For more details about the assessment criteria of the thesis and defense ceremony, please see Article 7.2 of the PhD Regulations.

23 Explanation administrative procedures (last half year)

During the final stage of a PhD, you will be invited to a meeting with a representative of the Graduate School to explain the administrative procedure and prepare for the PhD defense.

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24 Practice your defense

Twice a year, Tilburg University offers PhD candidates the opportunity to practice the defense of the thesis in the Auditorium. This allows you to get familiar with the protocols and practice your speech on stage. A representative of the Language Center will be present to give you feedback. The Beadle will explain more details about the defense ceremony. Invitations to this mock defense will be distributed by the Graduate School.

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Doctorate Board

25 Upload manuscript (at least 6 months before the intended defense date)

As soon as the manuscript is finished, you need to request approval from the (co-)supervisors. To this end, you upload the manuscript in Hora Finita by using the 'upload manuscript' tab and selects 'request a review'. You can only upload the manuscript once. The (co-)supervisors must approve the manuscript via Hora Finita.

PhD candidate

Supervisor(s)

26 Feedback Seminar (when uploading the manuscript)

During the yearly monitoring, the PhD coordinator monitors whether you receive enough feedback moments as described in the Training and Supervision Plan. When you upload the final version of the manuscript in Hora Finita at the end of the PhD trajectory, the PhD coordinator will check this again. If you have not received enough feedback, a feedback session will be organized by the Graduate School which will entail:

- Sending a draft manuscript to the PhD committee members with the request to provide feedback regarding omissions and possible improvements of the manuscript.
- Organizing a meeting in which the PhD committee members discuss in detail their comments with the PhD candidate and the (co-)supervisors.
- You will revise the manuscript based on the PhD committee members' feedback.

This procedure applies to all PhD candidates who enrolled in the Graduate School after January 1, 2021.

PhD candidate

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27 Plagiarism check (as soon as the manuscript is uploaded)

The uploaded version of the manuscript will be checked for plagiarism by the Graduate School. The Graduate School informs the (co-)supervisors about the plagiarism report and asks for their approval via regular email. The Graduate School will register the findings of the plagiarism check as well as the approval from the (co-)supervisors in Hora Finita.

Supervisor(s)

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28 Defense date (at least 6 months before the intended defense date)

After consulting the (co-)supervisors, you have to contact the [secretaries' office of the Doctorate Board](#) to set a provisional PhD defense date. It is advisable to do this only after the (co-)supervisors' consent to the manuscript. The secretary of the Doctorate Board records the provisional defense date in Hora Finita.

PhD candidate

Doctorate Board

29 PhD committee (5 months before the reserved defense date)

The (co-)supervisors make a proposal for the composition of the PhD committee by means of the appropriate format sent to them through Hora Finita. This proposal is sent to the Graduate School by e-mail. The Graduate School records the proposal in Hora Finita and requests approval for this proposal from the Doctorate Board via Hora Finita.

Supervisor(s)

Graduate School TSHD

30 Assessment request (4,5 months before the reserved defense date)

As soon as the manuscript is approved and uploaded, the Doctorate Board has appointed the PhD committee members and the plagiarism report is approved, the Graduate School will send the manuscript to all committee members via Hora Finita, requesting them to assess the manuscript within 4 weeks (or 6 weeks during holidays). Neither you nor the (co-)supervisors may approach the committee members about the evaluation of the manuscript during the assessment period.

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Doctorate Board

31 Final assessment (4 to 6 weeks after sending the manuscript to the PhD committee)

As soon as all PhD committee members have assessed the manuscript and the final assessment is positive, the reserved provisional date of the PhD defense becomes final. The Doctorate Board sends a confirmation of the final date of the PhD defense via Hora Finita. You, the (co-)supervisors, and PhD committee members will receive a copy of the assessments and suggestions. In case of dissenting vote(s), you will be informed by the (co-)supervisors and a predefense meeting will be organized.

Doctorate Board

32 Exit meeting (last 3 months)

You will be invited for an exit meeting with the PhD coordinator after the final assessment of the PhD committee. The aim of the exit interview is to identify problem areas in PhD trajectories in order to see what needs improvement.

PhD candidate

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33 Correcting errors (8 to 5 weeks before the final defense date)

After approval of the thesis by the PhD committee, you may make minor changes (grammatical and typing errors) based on the suggestions given by the PhD committee members, in consultation with the (co-)supervisors. If you make minor changes, you have to send the final version to the Graduate School as soon as possible. The Graduate School will add this version as a document in Hora Finita.

PhD candidate

Graduate School TSHD

34 Summaries (8 to 5 weeks before the final defense date)

You must write a brief academic summary as well as a citizen's summary of the content in English and Dutch. You have to email the summary to the [secretaries' office of the Doctorate Board](#) in order to get an approval. These summaries must always be added to the thesis. In case the thesis is not written in English, a translation of the title in English is also needs to be added to the thesis.

PhD candidate

Doctorate Board

35 Title page (8 to 5 weeks before the final defense date)

The thesis must contain a title page. You have to use the format that is prescribed by the Doctorate Board. The names of the (co-)supervisors and the names of the members of the PhD committee are listed on the reverse of the title page. You upload the title page and reverse page to Hora Finita to get an approval from the Doctorate Board.

[Instructions for PhD candidates](#)

PhD candidate

Doctorate Board

36 Print (immediately after approval title page and summaries by the Doctorate Board)

Once the thesis has been approved by the PhD committee, the title page and the summaries have been approved by the secretaries' office of the Doctorate Board, and a date for the ceremony has been set, the thesis can be printed. Please consult the printer to know the time needed for printing the thesis.

[Instructions for PhD candidates](#)

PhD candidate

37 Support for the defense

If you have a disability or functional impairment (special support need) that may affect the defense ceremony, you shall be given the opportunity to conduct the defense a manner adapted as far as possible to your needs. If this requires changes in the protocol of the PhD defense, the Doctorate Board must decide on this, at your request and with the advice of the Director of the Graduate School. The chair, (co-)supervisors and members of the PhD committee will be informed of this decision.

PhD candidate

Doctorate Board

38 Beadle (4 weeks before the final defense date at the latest)

You need to contact the [Beadle](#) to arrange a reception, photographer, and desired audiovisual equipment. The Beadle takes care of logistical matters like reserving the Auditorium for the guests.

PhD candidate

Beadle

39 Distribution (3 weeks before the final defense date at the latest)

You have to submit 14 hardcopies to room K2, the post room of Tilburg University. You have to send all (co-)supervisors and PhD committee members a hardcopy. You also need to send a digital version of the thesis to the [library](#).

You can ask for a reimbursement of the printing costs of your thesis to a maximum of €1500 to cover the following expenses: editing of the thesis, printing of the thesis, and shipping of the thesis to PhD committee members.

PhD candidate

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An email for the reimbursement of the printing costs can be sent to the Graduate School with a copy of the printing office's invoice and proof of payment. After the Graduate School has checked the documents and obtained the approval of the Head of Department, the PhD candidate has to submit the documents to [Declare](#).

[Instructions for PhD candidates](#)

40 Defense

And then... when all is settled and approved, you can defend the thesis.

Congratulations !!!

Chapter 5

Useful links

Websites

[Circles of support](#)

[Declaree](#)

[Graduate School TSHD](#)

[Hora Finita](#)

[Hora Finita – Manual](#)

[How to submit an application \(REDC\)](#)

[Instructions for PhD candidates](#)

[Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#)

[Online training](#) for all PhD candidates who enrolled at the Graduate School as from September 1, 2020

[Research Ethics and Data Management Committee \(REDC\)](#)

[Tilburg University PhD Regulations](#)

[TSP format](#)

Contact

[Beadle](#)

[Graduate School TSHD](#)

[Library](#)

[Secretaries' office of the Doctorate Board](#)

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