

## PhD Survey 2021: Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. Why should I participate in the PhD Survey 2021?

By completing this questionnaire, you can influence the quality of your own PhD programme as well as that of other PhD candidates in the Netherlands. Your participation in the survey will help the The Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, including the VU Faculty of Medicine within Amsterdam UMC (hereafter VU) with the aim of learning and further improving PhD programmes, working conditions, facilities and regulations for current and future PhD candidates.

### 2. What will VU (including the Faculty of Medicine) do with the results of the PhD Survey?

We will use your feedback as an important tool to evaluate the teaching, supervision and services and to decide what we should focus on in the coming years. The previous PhD survey has been held in 2016.

### 3. What has been done with the results of previous surveys?

The Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam conducts surveys every three years to gain insight into the experiences of its PhD candidates of VU and VUmc and to improve the PhD projects offered by our Graduate Schools. The results will be used to improve the training and supervision of all PhD candidates at the Vrije Universiteit, including VUmc.

### 4. What will be done with the results of the national project?

A large part of the questions in this PhD survey is the same as in PhD surveys conducted at other Dutch Universities. These surveys will be combined in a benchmark, to gain insight into work conditions, supervision, educational opportunities, work pressure and career perspectives of PhD candidates at the national level. Therefore some of the answers and some pseudonymized personal data will be compared with the answers and information provided by PhD candidates from other Dutch universities.

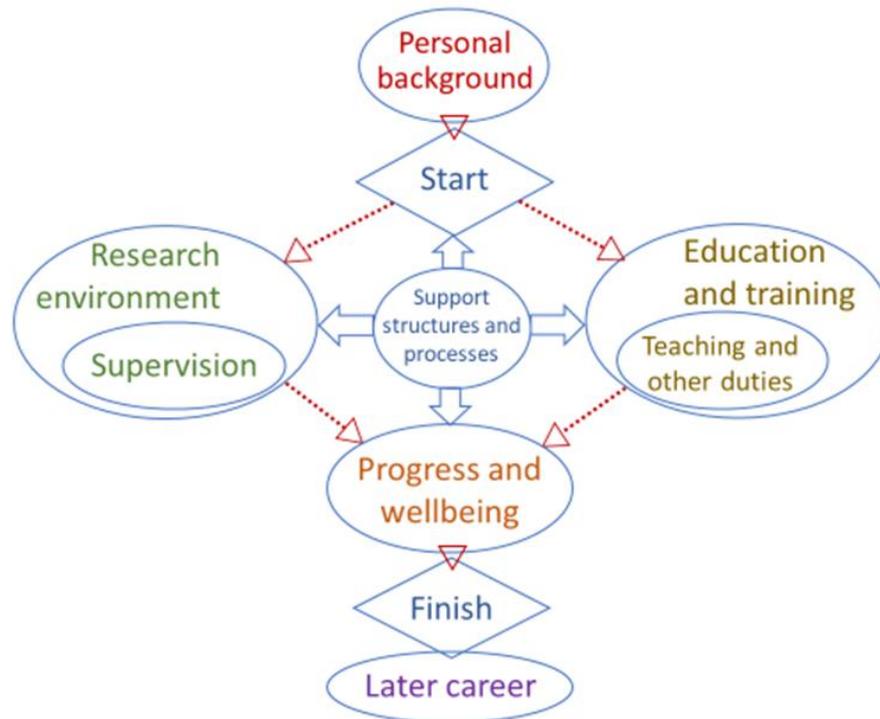
All data processing will take place in a secure environment. By comparing answers, a national picture will emerge of how PhD candidates evaluate various aspects of their programme, such as teaching activities, work pressure and career prospects, as well as their mental health. Nationwide insight into how satisfied PhD candidates are with these aspects and the challenges that PhD candidates and universities face is important to be able to make and adjust government policy. The national results will be shared with the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU: *Vereniging Samenwerkende Nederlandse Universiteiten*), the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW: *Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap*; via VSNU), the Dutch Network of PhD Candidates (PNN: *Promovendi Netwerk Nederland*) and all Dutch universities.

### 5. Who will be invited to participate in the PhD Survey 2021?

All PhD candidates who are registered in Hora Finita will be invited to participate in the PhD Survey.

### 6. Which topics will be included in the PhD Survey 2021?

The survey will cover all your experiences with the VU. There will be questions about training options, the supervision you are receiving, the progress of your PhD trajectory, your work environment, and whether you are involved in teaching and supervising students. You will also be asked several questions about your health and well-being. The final topic is what you plan to do after you obtain your PhD. The figure below provides an overview of the topics discussed in the survey.



### 7. Which questions will be compared with other universities?

Please send an email [phdmonitor@vu.nl](mailto:phdmonitor@vu.nl) if you would like to receive an overview of the questions that are also asked in the surveys held at other universities (shared questions).

### 8. Which personal data will be compared with other universities?

The answers to the shared questions will be compared for a number of categories, namely gender (male, female, other/prefer not to say), age group (<30, 30–40, >40) and nationality group (Dutch, EEA, non-EEA). In addition, the answers will be compared between the various phases of the PhD programme (starter, medior, senior), different research fields (according to the ISCED categorization) and type of appointment (according to the VSNU criteria).

### 9. How will VU safeguard my privacy?

All names and email addresses will be deleted before the answers are analysed, so your answers cannot be traced back to you as an individual. Within VU the results will only be processed by people who need access to them in the context of conducting this survey, drawing up a report of VU. For conducting and analysing the survey, the VU uses the services of RuigrokNetpanel. Results will be presented for each group, with a minimum group size of 15 people. No results will be presented for smaller groups.

### 10. How will my privacy be safeguarded in the national project?

The answers to the shared questions (excluding open answers) and some pseudonymized personal data (see 8) will be combined in a benchmark, to gain insight into workconditions, supervision, educational opportunities, work pressure and career perspectives of PhD candidates at the national level. Personal data will be converted into categories, so that it will be virtually impossible to trace information back to individuals. Within the national project, no more than three policy officials will have access to the secure work environment of the University of Groningen in which the national database will be analysed. Results will be presented for each group, with a minimum group size of 15 people. No results will be presented for smaller groups.

**11. Can I withdraw my participation after I have completed the survey?**

Yes you can, until a certain date. A unique key code (Hora Finita registration code) will be stored in the VU database to enable participants to exercise their right to be forgotten. The VU/ Amsterdam UMC, location VU can trace your answers back to you using this code. The Hora Finita registration code and your name will be stored in a secure environment, separate from your survey answers. If you want your details to be removed from the survey database, please submit a written request to this effect to the Data Protection Officer ([functioarisgegevensbescherming@vu.nl](mailto:functioarisgegevensbescherming@vu.nl)) no later than 1-8-2021. After this date, your answers to the shared questions will be included in the national PhD database, without your unique code. It will then no longer be possible to remove your answers.

**12. Until what date can I complete the survey?**

The survey will be available until 19 July 2021.

**13. How long does it take to complete the survey?**

Depending on your situation, it will take you anywhere between 25 and 40 minutes to complete the survey.

**14. Can I save my half-completed survey and return to it later?**

Yes, this is possible. If you click on the link again, you will automatically go back to where you left off.

**15. Can I complete the survey on my smartphone or tablet?**

Yes, this is possible, but we recommend using a laptop or desktop.

**16. What should I do if I have not received an invitation email?**

All PhD candidates who are registered in Hora Finita will be invited to participate in the PhD Survey. If you fall into this category but have not received an email, please send an email to [phdmonitor@vu.nl](mailto:phdmonitor@vu.nl) to request a link for participation. In this case your response will not be linked to a unique key code and therefore you couldn't withdraw your participation after you have completed the survey.

**17. Why is the PhD Survey 2021 only available in English?**

The VU PhD Survey is a tool to measure the experiences of all VU PhD candidates, some of whom have an international background.

**18. Who manages the PhD Survey 2021?**

The PhD Survey is managed by the Department of Institutional Affairs of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

**19. Is participation in the PhD Survey 2021 confidential?**

Yes, participation in the VU PhD Survey is confidential. Your feedback will be combined with that of all the other VU PhD respondents, and your name and email address will be removed before the data is analysed. The details that are included in the national PhD database will be analysed in categories, and no open answers will be displayed. The results of the survey will be discussed in reports, but can never be traced back to individuals. See the privacy statement for more information.

**20. Where and when will the results be presented?**

The results of the VU PhD Survey 2021 will be made available at: <https://vuweb.vu.nl/en/research/phd> in late 2021. The national results will be presented in Spring 2022.