



VRIJE  
UNIVERSITEIT  
AMSTERDAM

VU Graduate  
School of  
Social Sciences

**Application, admission, registration to the PhD program**

Approved by the Faculty Board at July 16, 2018

This version is from March 11, 2022

General information is provided on the VU website. Please visit <https://vu.nl/en/research/more-about/application-and-admission>.

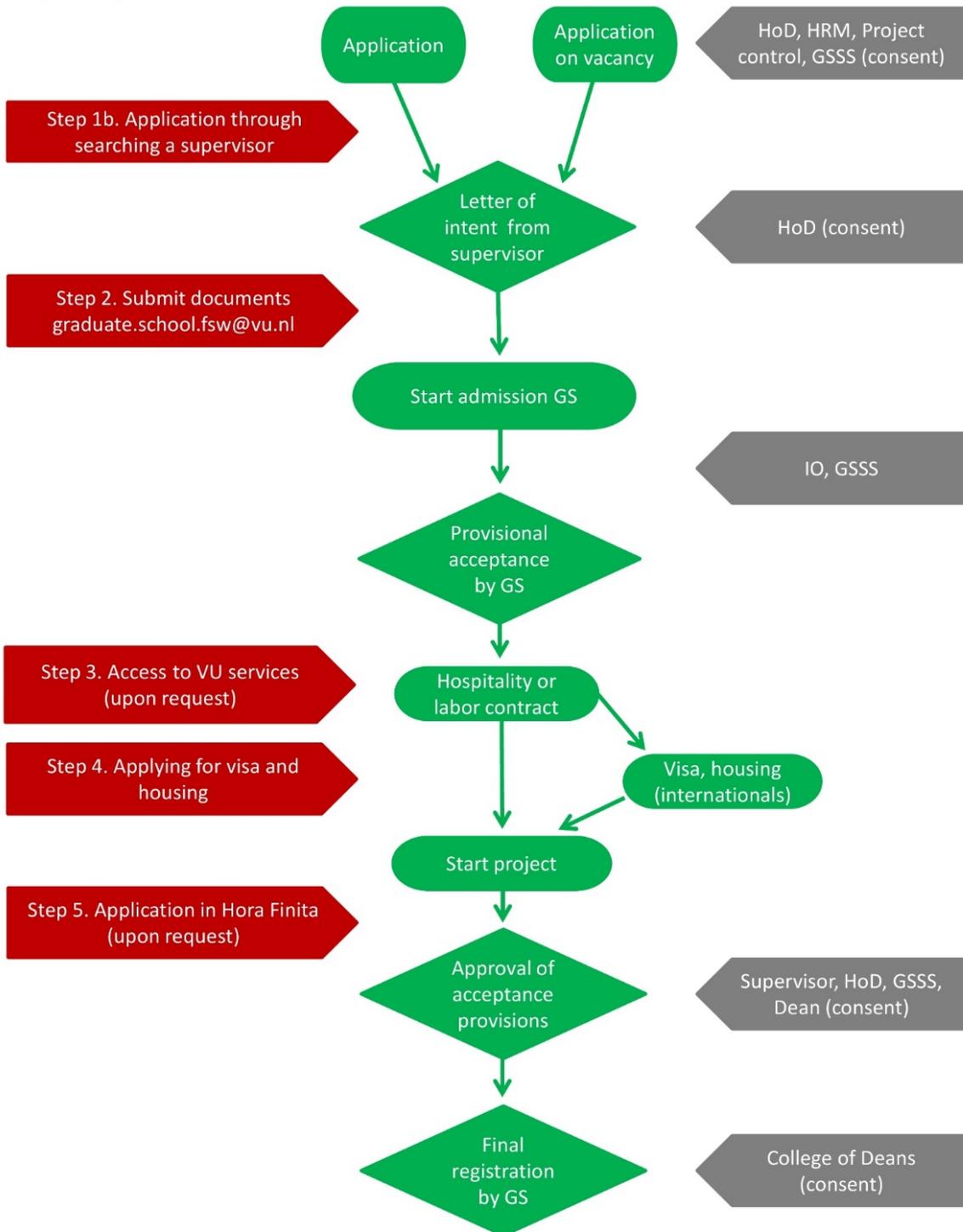
This information is for everyone, but for a potential PhD candidate in particular

## 1 Five steps to become a PhD candidate

The GSSS admission procedure is illustrated in the Figure below. Procedures in red are initiated by the PhD candidate, in grey by VU staff. Milestones in the process are in green.

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam  
 Graduate School of Social Sciences  
 Application, admission, registration to the PhD program  
**Red:** steps to be taken by applicant  
**Green:** milestones in the application process  
 Grey: advise, consent or co-decision VU staff

Version: October 22, 2021  
 HoD = Head of Department  
 GSSS = Graduate School  
 IO = International Office



### *Step 1a: Application through recruitment as an employee PhD candidate*

Contact person for the applicant in this step: the staff member mentioned in the advertisement.

You are interested in conducting PhD research and reviewed a vacancy.

- Usually an available PhD position has an elaborated research question and research plan. A position is advertised in different ways, including on the VU website and as an internationally advertised call on Academic Transfer on behalf of an already determined supervisory team.
- **Apply for the vacancy**; instructions are provided in the announcement.
- The application procedure consists of various actions, and is concluded with being selected by the search committee. The search committee (headed by the supervisor) assesses whether you have excellent scientific quality and the capacities to finish your PhD dissertation in time.

You are selected as candidate for the vacancy.

Before you are hired by the university, you ask for admission to the GSSS.

Continue with step 2.

### *Step 1b: Application through searching a potential supervisor*

Contact person for the applicant in this step: International Office, email [phd@vu.nl](mailto:phd@vu.nl); the GSSS program manager, email: [graduate.school.fsw@vu.nl](mailto:graduate.school.fsw@vu.nl).

You have a research topic, or possibly your own research question and research plan, and want to develop your research in collaboration with a supervisor. For finding a supervisor, please visit <https://research.vu.nl/>. The application procedure consists of the following actions:

- Visit [https://fd20.formdesk.com/vu-onlinepayment/IO\\_Application\\_for\\_PhDs](https://fd20.formdesk.com/vu-onlinepayment/IO_Application_for_PhDs). You upload your personal information and your ideas. Indicate whether you have already contacted a potential supervisor or whether you are looking for someone to supervise your PhD research.
- Please note that your application implicitly includes the statement that you have sufficient time available (see Appendix 1). Furthermore, you have sufficient financial means to complete a PhD dissertation trajectory, either by your own means or means through another party, e.g. employer or scholarship. Costs might include a tuition fee. Note that a (partial) fee waiver might be granted, and that self-funding candidates also might be accepted.
- **Your application is being processed.**
- The data are reviewed by the International Office staff member and are sent to the GSSS program manager. They conduct a preliminary check on your profile and signal particularities. However, passing this phase does not guarantee that the candidate is accepted by the GSSS. The GSSS program manager proceeds the application to the preferred supervisor and the Head of Department, or she or he starts a procedure to find a supervisor. The application can only proceed if supervisors have been found (i.e., if they have agreed in principle to act as supervisors).
- The supervisor consults the Head of Department (and the research program leader) on the application. Head of Department's consent is required to proceed.
- The supervisor assesses that you have excellent scientific quality and the capacities to finish your PhD dissertation in time, and that the research topic fits with her or his expertise.
- When this step is completed the supervisor confirms the 'handshake', i.e. her or his willingness to supervise the doctoral dissertation process, by mailing a letter of intent to you with copy carbon to the GSSS program manager. Please note that this 'handshake' does not guarantee acceptance to the PhD trajectory.

You have a letter of intent from the supervisor.

Please proceed with step 2.

### Step 2: Admission by the GSSS

Contact person for the applicant in this step: the GSSS program manager, email: [graduate.school.fsw@vu.nl](mailto:graduate.school.fsw@vu.nl).

In this step formal requirements for membership of the GSSS are checked.

- **Please submit the following documents through [graduate.school.fsw@vu.nl](mailto:graduate.school.fsw@vu.nl):**
  - Copy of the page of the passport with ID information
  - Curriculum Vitae
  - Copy of your Master diploma and supplement (with grades)
  - Proof of English level; minimum requirement is TOEFL 600 (internet based); TOEFL 100 (paper based); or IELTS 7.0
  - A preliminary research proposal including a time plan and budget plan
  - Proof of scholarship (if applicable)
  - Supervisor's and Head of Department's letter of intent (including statement on payment of costs for supervision or guest status)
- **Your admission is being processed.**
- The Director of the GSSS decides on provisional admission. In case of questions or deficiencies she or he may consult International Office or the GSSS Assessment Board for advice on admission.
- The GSSS informs you, the supervisor and Head of Department about the decision. In case of a labor contract, the personnel manager is informed that you have passed this step.

Provisional admission gives you the possibility to start the project. It also gives you access to the procedure to be hired as employee, the application for housing of international candidates, the library (books and journals), software, use of office space, supervision, and participation in the GSSS Doctoral training and other GSSS activities.

To get access to VU services, proceed with step 3.

### Step 3: Access to VU services

Contact person for the applicant in this step: the supervisor.

In this step you acquire an agreement or contract with VU, which gives you access to VU services.

- The Head of Department (or her or his replacement, i.e. the managerial staff member or in Dutch 'leidinggevende') invites you to register at the VU personnel administrative system.
- **Please follow the instructions in the email you received from the Head of Department (or her or his replacement) to start the procedure for a hospitality agreement (in Dutch 'gastvrijheid'; for a candidate without a VU employment contract) or a labor contract (for an internal candidate) with VU.**

This step is completed when you have a personal account (a VUnet-id).

If you are already in the Netherlands, you can start with your research and proceed with step 5. If you are abroad and need a visa and housing, please proceed with step 4.

### Step 4: Applying for a visa and housing (international candidates only)

Contact person for the applicant in this step: International Office, email [phd@vu.nl](mailto:phd@vu.nl).

As an international PhD candidate, you probably need a visa and housing.

- **Please visit <https://vu.nl/en/research/more-about/visa-housing-orientation>.**
- As soon as your supervisor starts the process for an agreement or contract International Office is notified in case of international candidates. They send you all necessary information and asks you to give additional information and to complete your application.
- **Please provide additional information as soon as possible: the visa procedure alone can take up to two months and finding appropriate housing is a challenge.**

This step is completed when you have a visa (if necessary) and housing.

If you have arrived in the Netherlands, you can start with your research and proceed with step 5.

### **Step 5: Registration as a VU PhD candidate (final phase)**

Contact person for the applicant in this step: the GSSS program manager, email: [graduate.school.fsw@vu.nl](mailto:graduate.school.fsw@vu.nl).

You complete this step within a couple of months, while you already have started your research.

- You will be invited to register in Hora Finita ([horafinita.vu.nl](http://horafinita.vu.nl))
- **Please add your personal data**
- **Please upload the following documents:**
  - o Certified copy of Master's certificate
  - o Signed Code of Conduct for Scientific Practice
  - o If relevant, a statement on the distribution of the promotion premium, to be delivered by the supervisor and Head of Department
- To ensure a proper start of the project the PhD candidate and the supervisor come to an agreement on the project details. The involved parties in a PhD project document what is expected from the project in terms of research to be conducted by the PhD candidate, and the support, training and supervision offered. Adjustments can be made at any time; approval follows the same procedure.
- **Please upload information on:**
  - o Name and email of supervisors
  - o The form of the dissertation (monograph or a collection of articles)
  - o The plan for doctoral training, developed in collaboration with the supervisory team; consent of the GSSS Program Director is necessary
  - o Agreement on teaching or other tasks
  - o Project budget (costs and coverage)
  - o Time plan
- This information is reviewed by the supervisor, the Head of Department, the Director of the GSSS, and finally assessed by the Dean.
- **All parts of the registration in Hora Finita have been approved.**
- The final registration is conducted after approval by the College of Deans.

**Finally, you have completed the admission procedure.**

### **2. Date of project start**

The preferential starting date is September 1 in order to facilitate participation in the first year doctoral training. The PhD Induction Conference starts at the beginning of the academic year (i.e., the last week of September or the first week of October). To start September 1, the admission procedure should be initiated before April 1. With a later start it cannot be guaranteed that procedures are completed in time.

A starting date other than September 1 is possible and has implications for the planning of doctoral training. This is discussed when the training plan is composed.

### **3. End of project and premature ending of membership GSSS**

The graduation of the candidate marks the regular ending of the project and membership of the GSSS. The project and membership may also end prematurely by termination initiated by the candidate or the supervisor, an assessment resulting in a No-Go decision, not paying the required fee for membership of the GSSS, or not fulfilling the requirements as laid down in the training and work plan, or other compelling reasons. The supervisor and Head of Department are consulted. The final decision is taken by the Director of the GSSS and reviewed by the Dean.

### *Appendix 1: Time plan of dissertation trajectory*

- The activities of a PhD candidate consist of conducting research (calculated as 5544 working hours; about 1680 hours is the yearly working load we count with), resulting in a dissertation. (If the candidate also does other work, a total of 40-50 workable hours in a week or 1680 -2100 workable hours in a year is assumed). This number of working hours needed to complete the dissertation is a rough indication. Currently many PhD candidates need this time or even more to finish their dissertation. Therefore, the GSSS deviates from the 5544 hour minimum only when work has already been completed that is directly useful for the thesis.
- A project plan needs to take into account the number of 5544 working hours. A reduction is possible when a candidate has completed work and education with a direct relation to the proposed research, for example achieved when conducting a research master in the social sciences. When there is less research time available, there should be an (additional) written agreement between the candidate and the Head of Department on the prospects of the PhD research. This agreement is reviewed by the Director of the GSSS and may be rejected.
- All PhD candidates participate in doctoral training to further educate themselves. This consists of 30 European Credits (EC; 840 hours) for PhD candidates with a 60 EC master program completed. Those with a degree from a 120 EC research master or a 120 EC other master program can apply for a reduction of 20 EC (i.e. from 30 to 10) and of 10 EC (i.e. from 30 to 20), respectively. This exemption is reviewed by the Program Director of the GSSS and may be rejected.
- A PhD candidate with a labor contract as 'promovendus' teaches at the Bachelor or Master level (336 hours). An exception may be made with the approval of the department head and the Director of the Graduate School before the grant application is submitted.
- The project should be completed within 48, 60 or 72 calendar months, depending on the appointment between the candidate and the supervisor made at the start. A time plan shorter than 48 months is possible only when there has been substantial work conducted on the research project previously, for example in a research master. Both a time plan shorter than 48 months and a plan longer than 72 months need justification and approval by the Director of the GSSS.
- Four to eight milestones for parts of the dissertation are defined. The supervisor has approved work to be included in the dissertation on the specified date of the milestone.