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The Doctoral Training Programme at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel

The Doctoral Training Programme – Tailor Made

The Vrije Universiteit Brussel offers its PhD students the opportunity to take part in the Doctoral Training Programme ('Doctoraatsopleiding'). The emphasis of the programme is placed on flexibility and balance. This approach fits the image of PhD students as junior researchers who may need a certain degree of guidance and support, yet are themselves best placed to identify their own particular training needs, issues and concerns. In this way the Doctoral Training Programme, in principle not compulsory, is tailored to the actual needs of individual PhD students.

The Doctoral Training Programme is organised as part of the strategic alliance the Vrije Universiteit Brussel and Ghent University. This co-operation framework facilitates a broader and better-quality programme.

The large number of seminars and workshops on offer as part of the Doctoral Training Programme enables PhD students to develop a wider range of skills. The Programme presents PhD students with a structural framework for acquiring and developing skills which support their research as well as their teaching abilities, but which will also prove valuable outside their discipline and the academic environment. Those who complete the Programme are granted with an additional Certificate.

In concrete terms the Programme is organised in three 'Doctoral Schools':

- Doctoral School of Human Sciences
- Doctoral School of Life Sciences and Medicine
- Doctoral School of Natural Sciences and (Bioscience) Engineering

The Doctoral Schools are interdisciplinary and interfaculty organs of the VUB, founded in 2007, which aim to provide support to PhD students, to stimulate quality in and promote PhD research by organizing, coordinating and recognizing workshops, seminars, master classes and courses.



VUB Doctoral Schools

The three Doctoral Schools of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel were founded when the Board of Governors approved the *Doctoral School Regulations* and the *Decision regarding the Organization of the Doctoral Training Programme at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel* in December 2007. In October 2008, the Schools officially took their start with the appointment of the first Doctoral School directors.

The Doctoral Schools aim to provide a distinctive framework for the Doctoral Training Programme and, in so doing, increase the visibility of doctoral research and enhance its image, both within and outside the academic world. The language of communication and of most activities is English.

Several faculties are associated with each Doctoral School and join forces to organize the Doctoral Training Programme. A Director responsible for the day-to-day management of his or her Doctoral School heads each Doctoral School. The Director consults with the faculties involved, the other Directors, the Central PhD Office and Doctoral School Council in order to determine Doctoral Training Programme policy and content.

Doctoral School of Human Sciences – DSh

Welcome

Our doctoral school is characterized by its diversity together with its broad expertise. To keep in close touch with these resources, we have based our doctoral school on the principle of active interaction. The principle of interaction implies a dynamic model of organizing the doctoral school, with input from diverse resources.

As the doctoral school we offer multiple activities to assist in extending and improving your capabilities, in succeeding in gaining a PhD. We also strongly support PhD students in setting up activities of mutual interest. We offer some predetermined formats (content seminar, master classes, ...) as explained below.

On the basis of cooperation we hope to keep closely in touch with the needs of PhD students. With this brochure we include some basic information. With the monthly newsletter, together with the website, we endeavour to keep you informed and more importantly up to date. (<http://www.vub.ac.be/phd/doctorschools/dsh>)

We wish you every success in your doctoral studies and trust you will appreciate our joint collaboration.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Dr. Karen François
DSh Director



Associated faculties

The Doctoral School of Human Sciences unites mostly PhD students who are connected to 5 associated faculties:

- Faculty of Law and Criminology (RC)
- Faculty of Economic, Social and Political Sciences and Solvay Business School (ESP)
- Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences (PE)
- Faculty of Arts and Philosophy (LW)
- Faculty of Physical Education and Physiotherapy (LK)

Also associated to the Doctoral School of Human Sciences but with a more limited statute:

- Faculty of Engineering (IR)

The great number and diversity of associated core-faculties creates a very specific situation for the DSh, both in regards to policy as well as internal operations.

Policy principles

Apart from the regulatory framework, approved by the VUB Board, the DSh adheres to the following principles.

- **A focus on PhD students:** the Doctoral School of Human Sciences is, above all, at the service of VUB's PhD students or the doctoral community. All DSh activities start at this principle, taking into account as much as possible the interests of the community of VUB PhD students. Guarding the quality of the Doctoral Training Programme and of the PhD's as such is an integral part of the focus on PhD students.
- **An interactive functioning:** based upon the diversity and expertise of its members the DSh will stimulate the PhD students to organise certain training activities themselves. The DSh shall

offer structure, support and financing through a system of "calls" for specific types of activities. These "calls" are one of the basic instruments of the DSh.

- **Subsidiarity:** The DSh will uphold a close cooperation with the Central PhD Office. The Central PhD Office shall organise activities relevant for the entire PhD Community (e.g. English for Academic Research Purposes, Project and Time Management, Presentation and Communication Skills, etc...) while the DSh shall organise more specific activities focused on the PhD student in the Human Science field.
- **Transparency:** the DSh shall communicate its policy and activities as clear and open as possible, through its website a.o. The activities organised by the DSh shall be made available as much as possible for the PhD students of the VUB, the privileged partners of the VUB (UGent and ULB) and for external parties. To the DSh transparency means that the wishes and opinions of the PhD students are heard and appreciated.
- **Good governance:** The DSh shall apply its resources effectively in order to achieve its general and operational goals. In this process the DSh commits itself to ensure the equal and fair treatment of all PhD students. This implies that DSh activities shall be based on fairness and equality, avoiding to privilege individual PhD students.

DSh activities

The DSh wields three basic instruments: activities organized through and/or by PhD students through a call system, activities organized by the DSh itself sometimes in cooperation with a third party and the grant system for participation in international doctoral seminars.

Activities through and/or by PhD students are organized by use of a call system that offers PhD students the possibility to propose an activity within

a pre-determined format. The following formats are used:

- **Master classes:** A master class is a workshop based on the presence of an expert in a specific field, giving feedback to a group of PhD students.
- **PhD presentation days:** A PhD Presentation Day consists of a meeting where a reasonably large group of PhD students presents their own work to the research community. There are two sub-formats possible: A PhD poster day and a PhD presentation seminar.
- **Content seminars:** A seminar or small conference aimed to discuss specific content that relevant for a substantial group of PhD students

The activities organized by the DSh itself, sometimes in cooperation with third parties are always announced through various channels, the DSh website, the newsletter for junior researchers and the website of the Central PhD office. Activities that are high in demand will often be organized more than once.

Examples:

Seminars on qualitative research methods:

- Introduction to Discourse Analysis
- Introduction to interpretive (and qualitative) research
- Interpretive Research Design: Concepts and Processes
- Ethnographic research: Introduction
- Narrative studies in social sciences and humanities
-

Seminars on quantitative research methods:

- Introduction to Regression analysis: simple linear regression and multiple regression
- Fundamental measurement in the Human Sciences: Rasch Analysis
- How applied statistics can work against you - the pitfalls

- Analysis of Variance
- Quantitative research in the Human Sciences. How to set up a research design
-

Seminars on more general topics

- Logical Methods
- Introduction to Academic Publishing – the case of Springer
- Writing an abstract
- A plea for slow science
- Labour, Labour Relations and Occupational Identities in Hotels, Restaurants and Cafes (18th-20th centuries)
- McLuhan's philosophy of media
- A Taste of Home: Food, Identity, Place and Memory in Europe from a Historical Perspective
- Creativity and Captivity
-

More information on these seminars can be found at: <http://www.vub.ac.be/phd/doctoralschools/dsh/dshseminars.html>

DSh Travel Grants

The DSh travel grant is an important instrument of the DSh. The Doctoral School of the Human Sciences (DSh) is making grants available to DSh members in order to allow them to attend an event that is specifically targeted at the training of PhD students and that takes place outside Belgium. Through this grant system the DSh wishes to support the PhD-related training of the DSh members, and to stimulate to add an international dimension to their education.

IMPORTANT All relevant information and forms concerning the DSh Call system for activities and grants can be found on the website of the Doctoral School of Human Sciences <http://www.vub.ac.be/phd/doctoralschools/dsh>

Doctoral School of Life Sciences and Medicine – DS LSM

Welcome

The Doctoral School of Life Sciences and Medicine wants to support its members in an interactive way, in their research, their training and their academic activities. Each academic year, our Doctoral School has the ambition to offer structure, support and follow-up to its members. By doing so, it wants to improve the process of achieving a doctoral degree in a defined period of time, but also to improve the experience of being a PhD candidate at our university and avoid a tunnel vision. Doctoral studies in the Life Sciences and Medicine can have various set-ups, from full-time funded four year tracks to part-time activities in our University Hospital combined with clinical specializations for more than 4 years. For this Doctoral School, the key words connecting this variety of pathways towards the doctoral degree are "good guidance and support", "ownership" to make better programmes together with our doctoral candidates, and "community" to allow doctoral candidates to meet each other and share ideas and inspirations.

With this brochure, we hope to put you on the right track to our activities. The DS-LSM website is the place where all activities are announced and registered. Its home page is updated three times per week. If you want to become part of our growing DS community, then visit the website regularly and see what it has to offer. Your ideas and proposals for new activities are very important for us. Meet us at the weekly research seminars at 1 pm on Friday!

Yours Sincerely,

Prof. Dr. Chris van Schravendijk
DS LSM Director



Associated faculties

There are three faculties associated with the Doctoral School of Life Sciences and Medicine:

- Faculty of Life Sciences and Medicine (GF)
- Faculty of Physical Education and Physiotherapy (LK)
- Faculty of Sciences and Bio-Engineering Sciences (WE) (advisory role)

General aims

The Doctoral School of Life Sciences and Medicine aims to provide a structural framework for the PhD process, to enable PhD students to develop a wider range of skills and to enhance the position of PhD's on the labour market.

More specifically the aims of DS LSM are:

For the PhD student:

- A structure for follow-up, guidance and support
- Encouragement of generic knowledge/skills
- Improved access of PhD to the labour market
- No extra obligations/roadblocks towards doctorate
- Network of PhD students (social/professional)
- Financial support for tailored training of doctoral students

For "the PhD process" ("the third cycle"):

- Increased attractiveness for current and future students
- Improved visibility, announcement, PR
- Contact person per discipline
- Forum for students and researchers
- Better link to industry, government and labour market

For the Doctoral School:

- Courses, workshops
- Activities with a generic quality (writing skills, SPSS, Graph Pad etc)
- Thematic days, LSM seminars both disciplinary and interdisciplinary

DS LSM activities

The activities of the Doctoral School of Life Sciences and Medicine are structured in the Doctoral Training Programme according to a credit system. Several parties can organize DS LSM activities:

- The university, as regular courses
- DS members (staff and students)
- Partner University of Ghent, especially its DS-LSM
- External partners of the DS-LSM (for example: VIB)
- Life Sciences companies offering special expertise

The offer of activities for PhD students contains specialized courses, support of scientific activities, generic courses, master classes, medical seminars, activities organized by PhD students, special events.

Specialized courses:

The DS LSM itself mostly organizes these courses in consideration with the target group. The DS LSM also provides visibility for specialized courses by a different organizing institute such as the universities of Ghent and Leuven or the Flemish Institute for Biotechnology (VIB).

Support for scientific activities of PhD students:

The support for scientific activities of PhD students can be divided in three different kinds of



support. Financial support based on an application by the PhD student, financial support based on registration and pre-funding and substantive support in the area of data analysis.

- **Generic courses (transferable skills):**

These courses and workshops are organized by the Central PhD Office and are usually also available on the medical campus Jette. DS LSM members can of course always participate in the courses and workshops organized on the main campus Etterbeek.

- **Master classes:**

Most master classes of the DS LSM are derived from the former "Cell and Gene Therapy" program in the Biomedical Sciences. PhD students can follow these classes as activities for cluster 1 of the Doctoral Training Programme (regular course units).

- **Research seminars:**

The DS LSM supports the organization of the Research seminars that are organized on Fridays from 1 to 2 pm (Hall A - Auditorium Vanden Driessche). They cover a broad range of topics in the Life Sciences, speakers at these seminars are always PhD's with adequate didactic skills such as young post-doc's in the Life Sciences but also external researchers with an international profile.

- **Activities organized by PhD students:**

In order to stimulate 'entrepreneurship' among PhD students as well as the individuality of the Doctoral Training Programme and that of the DS LSM, a program of own initiatives is currently being developed.

- **Special events:**

The DS-LSM actively supports initiatives such as the PhD research day and the PhD presentation days organized by its associated faculties.

IMPORTANT All relevant information concerning the activities and grants can be found on the website of the Doctoral School of Life Sciences and Medicine <http://www.vub.ac.be/phd/doctoralschools/lsm>

Doctoral School of Natural Sciences and (Bioscience) Engineering – DS NSE

Welcome!

PhD research is of supreme importance for the complete VUB community. Increasing the efficiency of the PhD research is important for

- PhD researchers who will have a higher job satisfaction, more scientific publications, a higher external exposure, and better post-PhD career opportunities;
- PhD supervisors who are also evaluated on the number of successful PhDs, project and scientific publications in their group;
- the VUB, the faculty, and the departments. Since a higher scientific output means attracting more students and project, and more income due to a larger number of successful (co-tutelle) PhDs and scientific publications.

As the new director of DS NSE, I consider it as my responsibility to enhance the research culture within the associated faculties in such a way the the Doctoral School NSE becomes:

A catalyst to increase the efficiency of the PhD research

I envision stimulating the PhD researchers in a more structured way by considering their needs as a function of time. A starting PhD researcher has other demands (e.g. learning to write papers and giving presentations) than finalizing PhD researchers whose future careers influence their interests. This implies that the organized courses, tutorials, workshops, must be well tuned to the needs of the PhD researcher.

In addition to the classical financial support, tutorials and workshops, I also envision structural solutions to enhance the research culture. By proposing and supporting structural solutions (both

organizational and financial), it becomes possible to increase the efficiency with only a minor additional workload. Examples of such structural solutions are

- Systematic organization of (bi-)weekly, possibly cross-departmental presentations to increase the cooperation and networking;
- Training sessions for public speaking using experienced trainers;
- Document procedures on recurring issues (e.g. How to combine patent applications and scientific publishing? How to start a co-tutelle PhD?).

There's no such thing as a free lunch: Following and organizing the different activities will introduce an additional workload for the PhD researcher (to participate in the DS NSE activities), the post-docs, the supervisors (for the organization/supporting of courses...), and the involved departments. However, all parties have a direct benefit for high-efficiency within PhD research (see above). For this reason, I am optimistic that this support will be provided by all parties, resulting in a happy ending for the Doctoral candidates and the DS.

Prof. Dr. Gerd Vandersteen
DS NSE Director



Associated faculties

The Doctoral School of Natural Sciences and (Bioscience) Engineering accommodates PhD students from:

- Faculty of Sciences and Bio-Engineering Sciences (WE)
- Faculty of Engineering (IR)
- Faculty of Physical Education and Physiotherapy (LK) (advisory role)

DS NSE activities

The DS NSE activities are founded on four essential pillars:

1. Activities organized through and/or by PhD researchers through a call system to respond to their specific demands;
2. Financial support for DS NSE travel grants for PhD researchers that participate in international doctoral seminars;
3. Activities organized through and/or by post-docs to organize conferences, workshops, broad lectures, summer schools...
4. Activities organized by the DS NSE to train transferable skills (possibly in cooperation with a third party), such as technical writing, public speaking, getting researchers in contact with the industry.

Activities through and/or by PhD students will be organized by use of a call system that offers PhD students the possibility to propose an activity within pre-determined formats. These pre-determined formats include

- **Master classes:** a workshop based on the presence of an expert in a specific field, giving feedback to a group of PhD students.
- **PhD presentation days:** a meeting where a reasonably large group of PhD students presents their own work to the research community. Two presentation formats are possible: a PhD poster day and PhD presentation days with oral presentations.
- **Content seminars:** A seminar or small conference aimed to discuss a specific content that is relevant for a substantial group of PhD students.

The DS NSE travel grants are available to its members in order to allow them to attend an event that is specifically targeted at the training of PhD students and that takes place outside Belgium. This grant system is used by the DS NSE to support PhD-related training of the DS NSE members, and to stimulate the international dimension of their education.



Support will be foreseen for post-docs that organize conferences, workshops, broad lectures, and summer schools that focus mainly on the PhD researcher of the DS NSE. The provided support will be defined based on a proposal filed prior to the activity. An example is the organization of bi-weekly seminars that are accessible/announced to all DS NSE members. In this case, the responsible organizer can reclaim additional travel expenses to facilitate the presentation of a recognized lecturer.

In addition to the initiative of the PhD researchers and the post-docs, the DS NSE will setup and organize various courses, workshops and activities of a more generic nature (so-called transferable skills). This will include:

- Support for better (international) networking (literature and patent search, tracking of interesting contacts);
- Public speaking and technical writing courses, including training sessions organized by trainers that are trained specially for this course;
- Courses and training for submitting scientific projects for PhD researchers that aim for a career at the university;
- Industry driven courses (e.g. how to setup a spin-off) for PhD researchers that want to valorize their research in industry.

The activities organized, coordinated, recognized or supported by the DS NSE are always announced through various channels: the DS NSE website, the newsletter for junior researchers and the website of the Central PhD office. All relevant information and forms concerning the DS NSE activities and grants will be posted on the website of the Doctoral School of Natural Sciences and (Bioscience) Engineering: <http://www.vub.ac.be/phd/doctoralschools/nse>







Useful links:

- Central PhD Office: <http://www.vub.ac.be/phd>
- Doctoral School of human Sciences: <http://www.vub.ac.be/phd/doctoralschools/dsh/>
- Doctoral School of Life Sciences and Medicine: <http://www.vub.ac.be/phd/doctoralschools/lsm/>
- Doctoral School of Natural Sciences and (bioscience) Engineering:
<http://www.vub.ac.be/phd/doctoralschools/nse/>