From institutional policies to multiple pathways to support PhD supervision @Ghent University

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Content

Context ➔ Policies ➔ Support
Faculties: 11
Campuses: 3

Staff: 9,000
incl. many PhD students

Students: 41,000
incl. PhD students: 4,132

Doctoral Schools: 5
PhD degrees (2014-15): 660

No accreditation for PhD programmes
Context

Challenges

- Growing number of PhD students
- More diverse career paths PhD degree holders
- Growing international profile (PhD students, PhD supervisors)
- Open, merit-based and transparent recruitment policy
- Output orientation
- Changing career paths for ‘professors’ (tenure track systems etc.)
Policies
Supervisory culture

Supervisors

PhD candidates
What is it?

Ghent University’s **Quality framework for doctoral education** ensures quality assurance from the entry point to the completion of the doctoral process. It is a guiding tool composed of **10 building blocks** and was approved by the University’s Board of Governors on May 8th 2015. These building blocks remain the framework for further plans, actions, evaluations and improvements of the doctoral process.

In addition, this quality framework underpins the **accountability** of doctoral level education for all stakeholders: doctoral students, supervisors, future employers, funders. It also illustrates the **shared responsibility** for a quality culture within the research community (supervisors and doctoral researchers), at management level (advisory and deciding bodies, Doctoral Schools and faculties) and at operational level (Doctoral Schools Coordination Unit).

Ten building blocks to ensure quality

1. The faculty is responsible for **admission to a doctorate** at Ghent University. The faculty investigates whether a candidate meets the **entry conditions** regarding university degree, language, essential scientific knowledge and personal competencies for academic research. The faculty also investigates whether the proposed supervisor possesses the time and expertise required to take on supervisory responsibilities.

2. **The (main) supervisor** is in charge of **supervising the doctoral research**. He/she receives assistance from others. This could be a doctoral advisory committee, cosupervisors or others who take on a guiding role.

3. The doctoral student develops towards an **independent researcher**. As such, he/she acquires the necessary scientific expertise and competencies corresponding with PhD level.

4. The regulatory framework for the doctorate is **Ghent University’s Education and Examination Code**. In addition, the **Charter for doctoral students and supervisors** elaborates on the responsibilities and expectations of all those involved in the doctoral process and lays the foundations for a quality relationship between supervisor and doctoral researcher. Should any conflicts arise, the doctoral student can consult the **Ombudsperson** and the faculty can avail of the procedures required to intervene.

5. Doctoral students at Ghent University receive the necessary tools and guidance to develop broader **competencies** at the level of doctoral research. In addition, doctoral researchers are expected to maximize their talent development. They receive the support
**Policies**

**Charter for doctoral students and supervisors**

The charter is in line with the prevailing Ghent University regulations and policy plans, and observes the principles included in the [European Charter for Researchers](https://ec.europa.euره) (European Commission, 2005).

Drafted on the initiative of the [Doctoral Schools](https://example.com) Steering Committee, the charter is based on the good practice guidelines derived from a broad stakeholder consultation at Ghent University.

The commitments included in the charter are not legally binding (except for those that are a translation of legal or other regulations).

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### The relationship between doctoral students and supervisors

The relationship between doctoral students and supervisors is subject to the provisions of:

- the [Ghent University Labour Regulations](https://example.com)
- the applicable directives of the funding bodies
- the [Regulations concerning UGent PhD scholarships](https://example.com) (with regard to recipients of Dehousses scholarships, see article 1 of the relevant regulations)
- the [Education and Examination Code of Ghent University](https://example.com) and its faculty additions.

The academic framework and the supervisors in particular create the **scientific environment** needed to successfully conduct doctoral research.

Doctoral students in turn affirm commitment to **integrity in research** and deliver results which benefit both Ghent University as well as themselves.

The prerequisites for achieving this are **reciprocity** as well as healthy working conditions which also take into account workplace well-being. Open communication and a willingness of both parties to reach a constructive solution in case of conflict are essential.

This **charter relates to all kinds of collaboration** involving a doctoral student, his/her supervisor(s) and the doctoral advisory committee (DAC; if appointed), and the chairman of the department to which the doctoral student is affiliated, or to which the main supervisor is affiliated if the doctoral student is not on the payroll of Ghent University.
Translate policy into action

- Rules and regulations
- Engage faculties
- Communication (website, mails, information sessions etc.)
- Formal training (workshops for supervisors)

Future?

- Toolbox with good practices
- Appraisal for PhD supervisors
- Feedback about supervision from PhD students