



VRIJE
UNIVERSITEIT
BRUSSEL

**CENTRAL REGULATIONS FOR THE
CONFERRAL OF THE ACADEMIC TITLE OF
DOCTOR**

**Approved by the Academic Council on 4
October 2021**

*Including faculty additions made by the
Faculty of Social Sciences and Solvay Business
School*

*Approved by the Education Council on the 22
October 2022*

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PREAMBLE

These regulations are complemented by the *VUB* Doctoral Schools Regulations and supplementary faculty PhD regulations.

The following terms as used in these regulations are defined as follows:

- Liaison Officer for Scientific Integrity: this is the contact point that provides first-line information on the procedure to be followed in the event of (suspected) breach of scientific integrity. It is the official contact point for reporting (suspected) breaches of scientific integrity and conducts the preliminary investigation.
- CDO: PhD Progress Monitoring Commission
- CWI: Commission for Scientific Integrity
- Dean: the dean of the faculty in which the PhD candidate enrolls.
- Doctoral training programme: the educational framework for PhD candidates organised by the Researcher Training & Development Office (RTDO) in collaboration with the Doctoral Schools, as stated in the *VUB Doctoral Schools Regulations*.
- EHB: Erasmushogeschool Brussel (Erasmus University College Brussels)
- PAC: previously acquired competence
- Joint PhD: a doctoral thesis written and defended under the joint responsibility of the VUB and one or more partner institution(s), leading to a "double" PhD degree or "joint" PhD degree meeting the requirements of article II.172. of the Higher Education Codex of 20 December 2013.
- Main institution: the institution that, within the framework of a joint PhD:
 - a) funds (the largest part of) the doctoral research or the institution to which the supervisor belongs under whose auspices the application for external funding was made; or
 - b) where most of the doctoral research takes place and/or where the PhD candidate will mostly be present; or
 - c) where the PhD candidate has started his/her doctoral research and was first enrolled.If these criteria are insufficient to distinguish between the two partners, an institution shall be designated as the main institution by mutual agreement.
- ICDO: Interdisciplinary PhD Progress Monitoring Commission
- Incoming PhD candidate: a PhD candidate preparing a joint PhD for which the VUB is not the main institution.
- Interdisciplinary PhD: a PhD that extends over various fields of expertise, which means that the PhD candidate can be associated with several faculties.
- KCB: Royal Conservatory of Brussels (Koninklijk Conservatorium Brussel)
- OWSA: Education and Student Administration
- OZR: the Research Council
- RITCS: Royal Institute for Theatre, Cinema and Sound
- RTDO: Researcher Training & Development Office
- Outgoing PhD candidate: a PhD candidate preparing a joint PhD for which the VUB is the main institution.
- VUB: Vrije Universiteit Brussel
- ZAP: Independent Academic Staff

All references made to people and positions in these regulations apply equally to men and women.

Section I. Scope of these regulations

Article 1 - General information

§1. These regulations set out the requirements and procedure for obtaining the academic degree of doctor at the VUB.

§2. To the extent expressly authorised in these regulations, a competent faculty body can further elaborate the provisions of these central doctoral regulations in a set of addition faculty doctoral regulations approved by the Education Board.

The bureau of the faculty of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Solvay Business School is the competent body authorised to subsequently work out the provisions of these Central Doctoral Regulations in supplementary faculty doctoral regulations.

The faculty additions made by the Faculty of Social Sciences and Solvay Business School are indicated in red.

Where the Central Doctoral Regulations make mention of the competent faculty body, this refers to the bureau of the faculty unless stated otherwise.

Article 2 - The academic title of doctor

§1. The VUB awards the academic degrees of doctor listed in the official list "Academic degrees of doctor". This list can be amended or supplemented at any time by the Education Board in response to a reasoned proposal from the competent faculty body.

§2. An academic degree of doctor can only be conferred by the VUB in or in relation to the fields of study or parts of the fields of study in which it has the authority to offer training programmes leading to a master's degree by virtue of Article II.82 of the Higher Education Codex of 20 December 2013. Where the VUB can only offer bachelor programmes in certain fields of study or parts of fields of study, the PhD degree can be conferred in or in relation to such fields of study or parts of these fields of study, provided that the public defence of the PhD thesis takes place before an inter-university panel composed in consultation with a university that can offer master's programme in the field of study or part of the field of study concerned by virtue of the Higher Education Codex of 20 December 2013.

Section II. Admission for preparation of the PhD thesis

Article 3 – Written application for admission

§1. Anyone wishing to acquire the academic degree of doctor at the VUB (including incoming and outgoing PhD candidates) must obtain admission for preparation of the PhD thesis. The candidates submit an admission application to this end. The application file is approved by the competent faculty body.

A certified copy of the diploma is attached to each application, unless the PhD candidate has been granted access to prepare the PhD thesis on the basis of a diploma from a Belgian institution. The latter shall submit the original version of the relevant diploma at the time of enrolment.

The documents supplied, including the authenticity of the diploma, are checked by the OWSA.

This written request should contain:

- a description of the subject of the thesis;
- the name of the supervisor(s) and the professional field(s) to which the thesis is relevant;
- a curriculum vitae;
- a first draft of an extensive research plan, consisting of at least the following elements:
 - Abstract (max. 250 words)
 - Reasoning and positioning within state-of-the-art literature
 - Research objectives/questions
 - Methodology and work plan (for at least the coming working year)
 - Initial start on filling in the compulsory components of the doctoral programme (with regard to training and societal outreach)
 - Requirements with regard to ethical and RDM (if applicable)
- a declaration from the supervisor(s) accepting supervision of the candidate;
- a description by the supervisor of the material resources and framework made available for the intended research;
- the choice of Doctoral School.

§2. The supplementary faculty regulations may deviate from the requirement of submitting a draft of an extensive research plan immediately with the application. In that case, the modalities (time frames and working method) should be specified in detail, to the degree of the first progress report. The completed research plan must then be submitted no later than the deadline of nine (9) months after the doctoral study begins.

As an exception, the faculty allows a deviation from the obligation to already submit a draft of an extensive research plan upon enrolment. If no draft of the extensive research plan is submitted at the time of enrolment, the PhD student must include the research plan in the next progress report. This can be done in both the first and second evaluation round, as long as the deadline of 9 months after the start of the PhD is not exceeded.

§3. The competent faculty body shall decide on the application for admission within a reasonable period of time after receiving such application. If the competent faculty body so wishes, it can ask the ICDO to decide on the admission application. The choice of the Doctoral School for the PhD candidate is also confirmed with the decision on admission by the competent faculty body or the ICDO.

§4. In the case of an interdisciplinary doctorate across faculty boundaries, it must be recorded in writing no later than at the time of the decision by the competent faculty body concerning the acceptance of the application from the supervisor-spokesperson how the further progress of the doctorate is to be monitored across the faculty boundaries.

§5. For a PhD candidate with a diploma from a Belgian institution, the file is approved by the competent faculty body or the ICDO. For a PhD candidate who is granted access on the basis of a non-Belgian diploma, the decision of the competent faculty body or the ICDO is submitted to the vice-rector for Education and Student Policy for approval.

§6. A positive decision by the competent faculty body or the ICDO and, where applicable, the vice-rector for Education and Student Policy is only valid as admission to prepare for the PhD thesis under the condition precedent of enrolment as a PhD candidate in accordance with article 5 of these regulations.

Article 4 – Diplomas and admission

§1. Admission for the preparation of a PhD thesis is permitted to all persons who:

1° have obtained one of the following degrees:

- a. a master's degree or a diploma equivalent thereto pursuant to the provisions of the Higher Education Codex of 20 December 2013, obtained within the Flemish Community, including a Polytechnic Civil Engineering diploma, or a master's or licentiate diploma awarded by the Royal Military School in Brussels;
- b. a degree obtained outside the Flemish Community that is deemed equivalent to a master's degree in accordance with the stipulations of the Higher Education Codex of 20 December 2013;
- c. a master's degree obtained within the French Community, or a degree deemed equivalent in accordance with the decree of the French Community and which is equivalent to a master's degree obtained within the Flemish Community;
- d. a foreign degree obtained upon successful completion of a course of study with at least 240 ECTS study points and which is equivalent to a master's degree in accordance with a decree, a European Guideline or a bilateral agreement.

2° have a supervisor and have finalised their choice of subject;

3° have obtained permission to prepare the PhD thesis in accordance with Article 3 of these regulations.

§2. Implementing Art. II.184 of the Higher Education Codex, the supplementary faculty PhD regulations stipulate for each academic degree of doctor, listed the requirements that can be set for the preliminary training and the diplomas obtained previously which give the PhD candidate access for preparation of a PhD thesis.

By way of a standard:

- *a degree Master of Science in Economic Sciences grants access to the academic title of Doctor of Economic Sciences;*
- *a degree Master of Science in Applied Economic Sciences grants access to the academic title of Doctor of Business Economics;*
- *a degree Master of Science in International Business grants access to the academic title of Doctor of Business Economics;*
- *a degree Master of Science Business Engineering grants access to the academic title of Doctor of Business Economics;*
- *a degree Master of Science Business Engineering: Business and Technology grants access to the academic title of Doctor of Business Economics;*
- *a degree Master of Science in Political Sciences grants access to the academic title of Doctor of Political Science;*
- *a degree Master of Science in Political Science: European and International Governance grants access to the academic title of Doctor of Political Science;*
- *a degree Master of Science in Sociology grants access to the academic title of Doctor of Sociology;*
- *a degree Master of Science in Communication Sciences grants access to the academic title of Doctor of Media and Communication;*
- *a degree Master of Science in Communication Studies: New Media and Society in Europe grants access to the academic title of Doctor of Media and Communication Studies;*
- *a degree Master of Science in Communication Sciences grants access to the academic title of Doctor of Media and Communication Studies: Journalism Studies*
- *a degree Master of Science in Communication Studies: Journalism and Media in Europe grants access to the academic title of Doctor of Media and Communication Studies: Journalism Studies*

Deviations from these regulations are possible and may be put before the Doctoral Progress Monitoring Commission by the dean.

Article 5 – Enrolment as a PhD candidate

§1. If the PhD candidate has been admitted for the preparation of a PhD thesis for the academic degree of doctor in accordance with article 3 of these regulations, he/she must then register as a PhD candidate at the VUB without delay.

§2. The registration needs to be repeated every academic year in which the PhD is being prepared, including the academic year in which the PhD examination takes place.

§3. Registration as a PhD candidate is possible throughout the entire academic year. The administrative requirements for the registration and the tuition fee due are set out on the OWSA website.

§4. When registering for the first time, the PhD candidate is assigned to one of the Doctoral Schools, as set out in article 9 of the VUB Doctoral Schools regulations.

§5. A PhD candidate who does not reside in Belgium at the time of his/her registration can request remote registration in a reasoned application sent to the vice-rector for Education and Student Policy. If this registration is allowed, the PhD candidate shall provide a certified copy of his/her diploma and passport or identity card to the OWSA in advance.

Article 6 – Deviations regarding diplomas and admission

§1. Even if the candidate has obtained the necessary master's degree or a degree equivalent to the master's degree, the competent faculty body may, if it deems necessary, insist on an additional individual review to assess the candidate's suitability to carry out academic research in the discipline concerned and to express the research results in a PhD thesis. Where applicable, the supplementary faculty PhD regulations shall set out the provisions for the detailed organisation of this examination.

§2. If the PhD candidate does not have a master's degree or equivalent diploma, the competent faculty body or the ICDO can, pursuant to article II.185 Higher Education Codex, still grant admission for preparation of a PhD thesis if the competent faculty body deems the candidate competent in this regard. This admission can be made dependent on an investigation designed to gauge the PhD candidate's suitability to conduct scientific research and set down the results of the same in a PhD thesis or successfully pass an examination set by the competent faculty body. The supplementary faculty PhD regulations further describe the organisation of this examination.

The Doctoral Progress Monitoring Commission, as authorised under Article 9 of the supplementary faculty doctoral regulations may, on the recommendation of the supervisor of the doctoral candidate who does not have a Master's degree or an equivalent diploma, require the doctoral candidate to take a number of exams for which an ECTS credit should be obtained before the candidate can be admitted to enrolment for the preparation of a doctoral thesis.

In choosing the subjects for said exams, the Doctoral Progress Monitoring Commission shall take into account any hiatus in the prior knowledge of the doctoral candidate.

Article 7 – Admission by means of a foreign diploma

§1. The holder of a degree diploma from a foreign university or a foreign institution of academic education other than that referred to under article 4, §1, °1, d can be admitted for the preparation of the PhD thesis by the competent faculty body or the ICDO notwithstanding the absence of the required diploma.

§2. If the competent faculty body is of the view that the foreign diploma cannot be regarded as equivalent to a master's diploma, admission can be made dependent on an investigation designed to gauge the PhD candidate's suitability to conduct scientific research and set down the results of the same in a PhD thesis or successfully pass an examination set by the competent faculty body. The supplementary faculty PhD regulations further describe the organisation of this examination.

The Doctoral Progress Monitoring Commission, as authorised under Article 9 of the supplementary faculty doctoral regulations may, on the recommendation of the supervisor of the doctoral candidate who does not have a Master's degree deemed to be equivalent, require the doctoral candidate to take a number of exams for which an ECTS credit should

be obtained before the candidate can be admitted to enrolment for the preparation of a doctoral thesis.

In choosing the subjects for said exams, the Doctoral Progress Monitoring Commission shall take into account any hiatus in the prior knowledge of the doctoral candidate.

Article 8 – Admission (acceptance of regulations)

On being admitted for preparation of the PhD thesis, as referred to in article 3, the PhD candidate shall be given a copy of these Central Regulations for the Conferral of the Academic Title of Doctor as well as the supplementary faculty PhD regulations applicable. The PhD candidate shall also receive a copy of “the researcher's charter”, and the Valorisation Regulations, as approved by the management board of the University Association Brussels on 2 June 2015.

Section III. During preparation of the PhD thesis

Article 9 – PhD Progress Monitoring Commission (CDO)

§1. Each faculty shall set up at least one CDO. This is made up of at least three members of the Independent Academic Staff, supplemented by at least one member of the other Academic Staff with an advisory vote. The supplementary faculty PhD regulations set out the precise composition and working method of this commission.

As voting members of the Doctoral Progress Monitoring Commission (CDO), the Faculty Research Commission (FOZ) delegates one of its ZAP members per department and one OAP member in an advisory capacity.

The faculty secretary and the faculty policy officer for Research will be added to the CDO in an advisory capacity.

The CDO shall be chaired by the Chair of the FOZ; the Chair is at the same time the delegated representative of his/her department in the CDO.

The supervisor and/or the doctoral candidate may, also at their own request, be invited by the CDO to provide information.

The CDO has five tasks:

- At the request of the dean, in implementing Articles 4 and 55 of these regulations, the CDO shall determine the academic title of Doctor to which the diploma grants access.*
- In implementing Articles 6 and 7, the CDO shall determine which ECTS should be obtained as a precondition for enrolment for the preparation of a doctoral thesis, based on the recommendations of the supervisor.*
- Based on the recommendations of the supervisor in implementing Articles 10 and 18 of these regulations, the CDO shall determine which study programme components and/or activities are to be completed in the context of the Doctoral Programme and within which time period they should be successfully completed.*
- As defined under Article 17 of these regulations, the CDO shall discuss the progress of the doctoral theses.*
- In accordance with Article 13 §3, the CDO shall check the composition of the Advisory Commission at the annual evaluation of the progress.*

The CDO shall decide by a simple majority. In the event of a tied vote, the decision shall be made in favour of the doctoral candidate.

The CDO may delegate tasks.

§2. Each CDO is responsible for ensuring the smooth course of preparations for the PhD theses in its faculty.

§3. The principles to be applied as the guideline for this follow-up are those included in "the Researcher's Charter". The CDOs evaluate the progress of all PhD candidates in their faculties on an annual basis, as set out in articles 16 and 17 of these regulations. The progress of PhD candidates working on an interdisciplinary doctorate across faculty boundaries and of PhD candidates preparing for a doctorate in the arts shall be evaluated by the ICDO according to the same procedure.

Article 10 – Doctoral Schools

As soon as the PhD candidate has been registered at the Doctoral School, he/she shall acquire the right to follow PhD training in accordance with the VUB Doctoral Schools Regulations. In accordance with the VUB Doctoral Schools Regulations and Article 18 of these regulations, the doctoral candidate who has enrolled from academic year 2019-2020 is required to take courses in the doctoral training programme.

Article 11 – Guidance and responsibility for the PhD thesis

§1. The PhD thesis is prepared under the guidance and responsibility of at least one member of the Independent Academic Staff (ZAP), who can be assisted in this regard by:

- 1° A supervisor, ZAP external from the VUB;
- 2° A supervisor, ZAP emeritus at the VUB;
- 3° A supervisor, non-ZAP with a PhD based on a thesis.

If a PhD is supervised by several supervisors, it will be determined who should take on the role of supervisor-spokesperson. The supervisor-spokesperson manages the budgets of the PhD candidate being supervised.

§2. The supplementary faculty PhD regulations can further supplement the list of supervisors who can assist the ZAP supervisors.

Article 12 - Changing the supervisor

The PhD candidate or the supervisor can, in exceptional circumstances, submit a written request to the dean of the faculty to change the supervisor (spokesperson) of the thesis. The dean can designate a new supervisor if this is possible within the funding arrangements and following consultation with the supervisor (spokesperson), the PhD candidate and possible new supervisor (spokesperson).

The PhD candidate and the supervisor (spokesperson) shall be heard and informed of any changes without delay.

Article 13 – Advisory committee

§1. Each PhD candidate is also supervised by an advisory committee comprising the supervisor(s) as defined in article 11 and at least one other member who, in principle, is the holder of a PhD degree based on a thesis. This other member shall preferably be from outside the department, the research group or the VUB.

§2. The advisory committee shall be constituted by the competent faculty body on the initiative of the supervisor(s). In any case, the advisory committee shall be composed within 18 months of the first registration of the PhD candidate. The supplementary faculty PhD regulations can specify the composition, powers and procedure of the advisory committee in greater detail.

On the advice of the supervisor, the bureau of the faculty shall put together an Advisory Commission as quickly as possible, but certainly within 18 months of the first enrolment by the doctoral candidate. The Advisory Commission shall monitor the progress of the doctorate and determine the form it should take, as defined under Article 20. To this end, a feedback moment between the Advisory Commission and the doctoral candidate shall be scheduled at least once a year. This may be by way of a physical meeting or interactive electronic means of communication, such as teleconferencing. A report shall be made of this feedback moment, including any comments made by the Advisory Commission. The report by the Advisory Commission shall be added to the annual progress report, as stipulated in Article 16.

§3. When carrying out the annual progress evaluation, the CDO shall verify the due and proper composition of the advisory committee as set out in article 17. If it has not yet been convened, the CDO will encourage the supervisor to convene it. If the supervisor fails to constitute the advisory committee within the period of time stipulated under §2 of this article, the chairperson of the CDO can put this on the agenda of the Research Council, which can take measures accordingly.

Article 14 - The Researcher's Charter

§1. The supervisor is obliged to provide guidance and encouragement to the PhD candidate for the preparation of the PhD thesis. In this regard, the supervisor must observe the principles set out in "the Researcher's Charter".

§2. The PhD candidate is required to regularly inform his/her supervisor(s) of the progress made on his/her PhD thesis.

§3. In the event of non-compliance with the obligations set out in the Researcher's charter, the PhD candidate or the supervisor can inform the dean and/or one of the ombudsmen for PhD candidates of this accordingly.

Article 15 - Breach of scientific integrity

§1. The PhD candidate shall refrain from committing any breach of scientific integrity in whatever form.

§2. In the case of suspicion of an infringement of scientific integrity, this must be reported to the point of contact for scientific integrity, and the CWI regulations will apply.

§3. If the Commission for Scientific Integrity is of the view that the thesis submitted by the PhD candidate contains breaches of scientific integrity, such breach can give rise to one of the following (examination-related disciplinary) decisions:

- 1° the obligation to revise/rewrite the PhD thesis in such a way that the thesis no longer contains any breaches in the opinion of the Commission for Scientific Integrity;
- 2° rejection of the PhD thesis: the PhD candidate is not permitted to submit or defend a thesis on the same or any closely related subject;
- 3° rejection of the PhD thesis and exclusion of the PhD candidate: the PhD candidate is not permitted to submit or defend a thesis on the same or any closely related subject and is prohibited from enrolling at the university again for a number of academic years to be determined.

§4. Identification of a breach of scientific integrity after the public defence of a PhD thesis can lead to the title of doctor conferred being withdrawn and to decisions referred to in paragraph 3 of this article.

§5. If the PhD candidate is also a staff member of the VUB, the regulations for order and discipline and the relevant personnel regulations will apply.

Article 16 – Annual progress report

§1. Each PhD candidate shall draw up an annual follow-up report on the progress of the PhD thesis. No later than on 30 April of each academic year, he/she shall send a copy of the same to his/her supervisor(s), the dean and the chairperson of the (I)CDO, who will in turn make the same available to all members of the (I)CDO. This date can be brought forward under the supplementary faculty PhD regulations.

§2. The complete progress report consists of two parts:

- 1° The part to be submitted by the PhD candidate, containing:
 - a. a report of the activities undertaken by him/her during the past year (including a publication list), including the mention of having attended the Doctoral Schools introductory course mandatory for PhD candidates enrolled from the academic year 2017-2018 on, or a justification for non-participation;
 - b. a plan for the subsequent year;
 - c. indication of any problems occurring.
- 2° The supervisor's part, containing:
 - a. a report of the PhD candidate's activities;
 - b. indication of any problems occurring;
 - c. compilation and a report by the advisory committee, including any remarks or comments it has.

§3. The supplementary faculty PhD regulations can stipulate further requirements for the specific content of the progress report.

Article 17 – Evaluation of progress

§1. Each academic year, all the CDOs will discuss the progress of the doctoral theses.

If there appears to be a lack of progress, or if a significant discrepancy between the supervisor's and that of the doctoral candidate is observed, the relevant CDO will invite the doctoral candidate and supervisor(s) to a hearing.

The PhD candidate can request the presence of one of the ombudsmen for PhD candidates during this meeting.

§2. The (I)CDO shall issue a report in this regard to the OZR no later than on 25 May and send the progress report and an opinion to the supervisor, the dean and the PhD candidate. In this report, the (I)CDO shall, in a reasoned and detailed manner, formulate an opinion in relation to the PhD candidate's re-enrolment. The opinion can be positive or negative, or the decision to issue and opinion can be postponed. Failure by the doctoral candidate to submit the annual progress report, as described in Article 16, on time in either the first or second exam period, for reasons other than force majeure, will automatically result in a negative advice for re-enrolment.

§3. The (I)CDO has until 31 August to submit a new opinion to the OZR on the cases submitted to it earlier.

§4. The OZR decides on allowing the PhD candidate to re-enrol on the basis of the report by the (I)CDO. This decision can be appealed against in accordance with the provisions of Section VII of these regulations.

Article 18 – PhD training programme

§1. In the context of supervision of the doctoral candidate, the VUB offers a PhD training programme as later described in the VUB Doctoral Schools Regulations.

§2. This doctoral training programme is compulsory for PhD students who have enrolled in a doctoral programme at the VUB from academic year 2019-2020. They must have successfully completed this programme before the PhD thesis can be submitted. Participation in this doctoral training programme is not compulsory for PhD students who enrolled for the first time before academic year 2019-2020, with the exception of the PhD Introduction Day and of any additional requirements imposed upon the PhD student by the supplementary faculty regulations.

§3. Further specifications may be included in the supplementary faculty regulations, including the time frame in which this programme (or part of this programme) should be completed, and which body will check this.

The authorised Doctoral Progress Monitoring Commission (CDO) as provided for in Article 9 of the supplementary faculty doctoral regulations may, on the advice of the supervisor, oblige the doctoral candidate to undertake a number of programme components and/or activities in the context of the doctoral programme.

In determining which programme components and/or activities should be undertaken, the CDO shall take into account any hiatus in the prior knowledge of the doctoral candidate and/or any special needs with regard to the subject of the doctorate.

The Advisory Commission as provided for in Article 13 shall report on the progress of the doctoral programme to be followed, in the annual progress report.

§4. The Doctoral Schools Regulations will determine which categories of PhD student can be exempted from the compulsory doctoral training and which procedure should be followed for that.

Section IV. The PhD examination and the PhD thesis

Article 19 – The PhD examination

The examination for the academic degree of doctor includes the submission and public defence of a thesis that meets the requirements set out in article 20.

Article 20 – Learning outcomes of the PhD thesis

§1. The PhD examination gives the PhD candidate the opportunity to prove that he/she is able to make an independent contribution to the development and growth of scientific knowledge and report on this both in writing and orally.

§2. The PhD thesis should show the ability to create new scientific knowledge in a particular field or across fields of expertise on the basis of independent academic research, including the arts, and must be able to lead to academic publications. The PhD thesis must be drawn up in the form permitted by the supplementary faculty PhD regulations.

The Advisory Commission appointed in accordance with Article 13 will determine the form of the thesis in agreement with the doctoral candidate.

Article 21 – Admission to the PhD examination (general)

§1. When the PhD candidate wishes to take the PhD examination, he/she must, with the agreement of the supervisor(s), submit a request to take the doctorate examination.

This application to take the PhD examination can be specified in greater detail under the supplementary faculty PhD regulations.

The submission of the proposal for the composition of the doctoral examination panel provided for in Article 27 §1 also counts as an application to take the doctoral examination. To this end, the supervisor submits the provided faculty application form via faces@vub.be, and includes the doctoral student in CC in the message. The bureau of the faculty grants admission to the doctoral exam by approving the proposal of composition of the doctoral jury.

§2. To be admitted to the PhD examination, the same diploma requirements apply as set out in article 4, with the additional condition that the diploma granting access for preparation of the PhD thesis must have been acquired at least two years previously.

§3. To enable him/her to be admitted to the doctorate examination, the PhD candidate must demonstrate the ability to undertake scholarly work independently.

§4. If the relevant supplementary faculty PhD regulations stipulate that attending (part of) the PhD training programme is mandatory, the successful completion of that programme shall then become a condition for being admitted to submit and defend the PhD thesis. The competent faculty body will check whether this condition has been met.

§5. If article 62 stipulates that a publication is mandatory, this shall then become a condition for being admitted to submit and defend the PhD thesis. The competent faculty body will check whether this condition has been met.

Article 22 – Admission to the PhD examination (internal and public defence of the thesis)

The PhD candidate shall only be admitted to the internal and public defence of the PhD thesis following mandatory plagiarism screening of the thesis.

The introduction to the plagiarism software shall be carried out by the person responsible at the faculty, after which the chairman of the doctoral examination panel interprets the results document of the plagiarism software, following the principles and definitions specified in the CWI regulations. If the chairman of the doctoral examination panel does not specify any peculiarities, the PhD candidate can then be admitted to the internal defence of the PhD thesis.

Article 23 – Submission of the PhD thesis

§1. The doctoral candidate should submit the PhD thesis to the faculty secretariat in digital form.

§2. Supplementary faculty PhD regulations can specify the arrangements for the submission of the thesis in greater detail.

The doctoral thesis should be submitted electronically to the faculty secretariat through faces@vub.be

Article 24 – Intellectual property rights and the PhD thesis

§1. The PhD candidate holds all copyrights relating to his/her doctoral thesis.

§2. The PhD candidate irrevocably grants the VUB the non-exclusive permission to reproduce the doctorate, in the final version submitted to the doctoral examination panel, in its entirety and unchanged, unless expressly stipulated otherwise, and to make this available to the public.

When submitting the thesis, the PhD candidate has the choice of making the thesis directly available in full or in part via the channels where VUB publishes its scientific results. The modalities of this availability will be indicated by the PhD candidate on the form that he/she and the supervisor(s) signed on submission. The metadata of the thesis (such as title, author, year, brief description of content or abstract in Dutch and English if available etc.) will always immediately be included through the channels on which the VUB publishes its scientific results, barring any exception defined in the form that the PhD candidate and the supervisor signed on submission of the thesis.

The PhD candidate shall have two years from the date of his/her public defence to exploit the thesis commercially or otherwise, and to reproduce (or allow it to be reproduced) in an edited or reworked form and publish it (or allow it to be published). If the thesis has not been published within this period of two years (whether commercially or not), the VUB has the right to reproduce it in its entirety and to make it available (without a profit motive) to the public via the channels where VUB publishes its scientific results. This deadline may be extended if the PhD candidate can submit due grounds for this (e.g., by submitting a signed publication contract in which, in accordance with the customary industry practices, a reasonable period of time is set for the agreed number of copies of the thesis to be produced and distributed, even if publication has not yet taken place).

§3. The use of the thesis in electronic form pursuant to this article implies that it can be reproduced on digital media, in accordance with the chosen modalities on the form, so that it can be used in accordance with the generally recognised rules. Depending on technological developments, the thesis may be reproduced in any way and reworked technically to ensure that the techniques used for the permitted use are the most appropriate.

§4. This non-exclusive licence applies worldwide and for the entire period of the copyright protection and of all other intellectual and commercial property rights applying to the thesis.

§5. The PhD candidate will receive no compensation for any of the aforementioned user rights granted to the VUB.

§6. The PhD candidate warrants that he/she will not or has not granted any exploitation rights to third parties that are incompatible with the usage rights he/she has granted to the VUB.

§7. The PhD candidate guarantees that he/she is the author of the thesis and that, where necessary, he/she has received any authorisation that may be required to include copyrighted materials belonging to third parties (for example, texts, charts, pictures, recordings, etc.) in the thesis and to grant the aforementioned usage rights to the VUB.

§8. The PhD candidate shall indemnify the VUB without limitation against all possible claims by third parties (for example, for breach of intellectual property rights, personal rights, etc.).

§9. The other intellectual property rights to the doctorate thesis are subject to the provisions of the Valorisation Regulations of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB).

Article 25 – Storage of the PhD thesis

One digital copy of the PhD thesis will remain in the secretariat of the faculty concerned, where it will be available to the members of the Independent Academic Staff (ZAP). The VUB archives the digital PhD thesis through the library and makes it available on the channels on which the VUB publishes its scientific results and according to the modalities indicated by the doctoral candidate in the form.

Article 26 – Language of the PhD thesis

§1. The PhD thesis will be written and defended in Dutch or in English. If the thesis has another language as its subject, it may be written in that language.

§2. At the request of the PhD candidate and provided that the permission of the competent faculty body has been obtained, the PhD thesis can also be drafted and defended in a language other than Dutch or English.

§3. If the joint PhD has been written in a language other than Dutch, the PhD candidate must provide an abstract in Dutch if the PhD candidate has obtained a basic bachelor's or master's degree in Dutch. The abstract may be in English if the doctoral thesis is also written in a language other than English. This summary will be available to the general public.

Article 27 – Doctoral examination panel

§1. The competent faculty body shall constitute a doctoral examination panel on the proposal of the supervisor(s) and at the latest prior to the submission of the PhD thesis.

The supervisor submits the proposal for the composition of the doctoral examination panel via the appropriate faculty form via faces@vub.be, thereby including the doctoral student in CC in the message. The bureau of the faculty, as the competent faculty body, approves the doctoral jury proposal.

§2. The doctorate panel consists of at least three members of the Independent Academic Staff (ZAP) or ZAP emeriti with assignment after retirement of the VUB, and at least two external members. In principle, the committee shall be composed in such a way that it includes at least two people of the other gender. Any departures from this must be justified.

The members of the jury are holders of a PhD based on a thesis obtained under a supervisor other than the supervisor of the doctoral candidate to be assessed. In addition, at least one of the external members is attached in principal order to a foreign university. Except for the supervisors, the members of the jury may under no circumstances co-author scientific publications based on the PhD research of the doctoral candidate. Deviations from these provisions must be justified.

§3. In principle, all members shall be holders of the title of doctor based on a thesis. Any departures from this must be justified.

§4. The doctoral examination panel must consist of no more than eight voting members. The advisory committee may not constitute the majority of the voting members on the doctoral examination panel. The supervisor(s) form(s) part of the committee and, where there is more than one supervisor, the supervisors as a whole shall have a single vote. The votes of the VUB members must, however, at all times constitute the majority of the votes cast. Written opinions are not included in the voting.

§5. The chair appointed from among the members of the doctoral panel by the competent faculty body shall under no circumstances be the supervisor of the PhD candidate.

§6. If it is shown by an interested party that serious conflicts of interest exist with one of the members of the committee, the competent faculty body that approved the constitution can be asked for a replacement via a reasoned request.

Article 28 – Assessment period for the PhD thesis

§1. The doctoral examination panel has two months from the time of submission pursuant to articles 23 and 24 to examine the PhD thesis submitted to it and decide whether the internal defence of the thesis should take place.

§2. By unanimous vote, the doctoral panel can shorten this period by a maximum of one month or, with the explicit consent of the doctoral candidate, extend it by a maximum of one month. This extension must always be substantiated.

§3. The PhD candidate and the committee members shall be informed in good time by the chairman of the panel of any holiday periods that may extend the assessment period by more than one month. The panel and the PhD candidate must expressly agree with this extension.

Article 29 – Attendance requirements for the internal defence

§1. The assessment of the internal defence of the PhD candidate's thesis by the doctoral examination panel shall only be valid when at least half of the voting members are present at the deliberation or take part in the deliberation by means of interactive electronic means of communication.

§2. When a member of the doctoral examination panel has submitted a written opinion, that member is then deemed to be present as far as the attendance requirements of paragraph 1 above are concerned.

Article 30 – Consultation and assessment procedure

§1. On expiry of the period specified in article 28, the panel members shall commence a consultation and assessment procedure comprising two phases:

- 1° phase 1: the panel members consult among themselves. This can be done in writing or orally;
- 2° phase 2: the PhD candidate shall defend the thesis internally.

§2. The supplementary faculty PhD regulations determine the course of the internal defence and specify the possibilities for revision of the thesis in greater detail. The procedure shall at least provide for a time for the PhD candidate to defend the thesis by answering questions from the panel members.

The course the internal defence should take was decided by the Faculty Council at its meeting on 14/10/2015 and should proceed as follows:

- *Before the internal defence, each panel member shall draft a brief report with an explanation of the strengths and weaknesses of the thesis. This report shall not contain any grade or final assessment. The panel members submit their reports, also in advance of the internal defence, to the Chair of the panel. Under no circumstances shall the Chair share these reports among the other panel members. These reports will later be incorporated in full, reworked where necessary, in the report of the internal defence.*
- *In principle, all panel members are expected to be present for the internal defence. Should a panel member be physically unable to attend, they shall take part where possible by way of interactive electronic means of communication, such as teleconferencing. Should a panel member be absolutely unable to take part in the defence, due to force majeure, they should provide the Chair with a detailed report in advance, with a reasoned assessment of the thesis.*
- *During the internal defence, the panel members shall begin with brief deliberations, without the presence of the candidate. The Chair will use these deliberations to gauge the general level of appreciation and the questions members intend to ask. The Chair may ask the supervisor or supervisors to give additional information.*
- *After the brief deliberations, the candidate will be called in. The candidate may, but is not obliged to, give a presentation. The candidate answers the panel's questions. During*

this round, the supervisor or supervisors will not speak. When the Chair and the panel indicate that they have received sufficient answers, the Chair will ask the candidate to leave the room.

- Once the candidate has left the room again, the panel will deliberate and take a decision in accordance with Article 30 - §3.*
- If necessary, a vote may be taken. In accordance with Article 27, the supervisor is a member of the panel; if there are multiple supervisors, they have a joint vote. The supervisor may speak and offer additional information. The Chair will act as referee-mediator to prevent polarisation.*
- In a vote, all panel members shall vote on the proposal being voted on; it is not permitted to abstain from voting. The outcome of the vote shall be determined by a majority (half + 1); in accordance with Article 30 - §5 , in the event of a tied vote, the decision shall be made in favour of the doctoral candidate.*
- Once the panel has reached a decision, the Chair will call the candidate back in and the decision shall be announced.*
- The decision of the panel shall be recorded as the conclusion of the report of the internal defence. That report shall be drawn up by the Chair and contain the name of the candidate, the title of the thesis, the date of the internal defence, the panel members present, the names of any absent panel members including whether or not they submitted a written report, the brief reports submitted by the panel members beforehand, where necessary reworked, the decision of the panel and in the case of a positive response according to Article 30 - §3,1°, the date on which the public defence of the thesis is to take place. The Chair shall provide the faculty secretariat and the candidate, in accordance with Article 30 - §4, with the report within 5 days after the internal defence.*
- Together with the report of the internal defence, the chair provides the completed and signed 'Form for digital submission of doctoral thesis'.*

§3. The assessment of the internal defence can only lead to the following decisions:

- 1° The doctoral examination panel decides that the PhD thesis can be publicly defended. The chairman of the doctoral examination panel sets the date on which the public defence will take place and takes the necessary measures to announce this date.
- 2° The doctoral examination panel decides to admit the PhD candidate to the public defence but sets the requirement that he/she must first carry out certain, verifiable revisions to the PhD thesis.
The chairman of the doctoral examination panel stipulates in writing the conditions that the revision of the thesis has to meet as well as the modalities concerning the revision.
If the PhD candidate receives conflicting instructions and comments in relation to the required revision of the thesis, the chairman of the doctoral examination panel shall make a recommendation to the PhD candidate regarding such contradictions. The chairman shall also, if the committee is of the view that the conditions referred to have been met, set the date on which the public defence is to take place and take the necessary measures to announce this date.
- 3° The doctoral examination panel decides that the PhD thesis needs to be revised. The consultation and assessment procedure is suspended and the submission of the updated PhD thesis is then dealt with in accordance with article 28. If the PhD candidate receives conflicting instructions and comments in relation to the required revision of the thesis, the chairman of the doctoral examination panel shall make a recommendation to the PhD candidate regarding such contradictions.

4° The doctoral examination panel decides that the PhD thesis cannot be defended. The procedure set out in this article shall then be discontinued. The doctoral examination panel can ask the (I)CDO to advise the OZR to refuse re-enrolment in accordance with the provisions of article 17.

§4. The chairman of the doctoral examination panel shall in all cases issue a written report to the PhD candidate after the internal defence. This report shall state clearly which of the four possible decisions has been taken.

§5. In the event of a tie, the decision will be made in favour of the PhD candidate.

Article 31 – Date of the public defence

§1. The day on which the public defence will take place is within one month of the decision to allow a public defence.

§2. If the doctoral examination panel has decided that the thesis needs to be revised, as provided for in article 30 §3 under 3, the chairman of the committee shall, at the time the doctoral examination panel decides that the PhD thesis can be publicly defended, set the date on which this defence will take place and take the necessary measures to announce this date.

Article 32 – Announcement of the public defence

§1. The faculty secretariat will ensure that an announcement of the public defence is published on the VUB website. Each faculty can set out more detailed rules concerning the way in which the announcement of the public defence can be organised in the supplementary faculty PhD regulations.

§2. The announcement, which is made no later than eight calendar days prior to the public defence, shall contain at least the name of the PhD candidate, the title of the PhD thesis, as well as the date, time and place of the public defence.

§3. The PhD candidate shall also draw up a concise popular scientific extract of the PhD thesis in English or possibly, pursuant to article 26, in Dutch, which shall be approved by the supervisor. This text of 200 to 500 words shall be delivered to the Expertise Unit for Scientific Communication for the public defence. This text may be used for press releases and notices and will be accessible to the general public.

Article 33 – Location of the public defence

In principle, the public defence will take place on the premises of the VUB. Exceptions to this must be approved by the competent faculty body.

Article 34 – Content and course of the public defence

§1. The public defence lasts at least one hour and no more than two hours. It will include at least a brief summary of the PhD thesis intended for the examination panel and a lay audience, followed by a discussion.

§2. Both the doctoral panel and the public have the right to question the PhD candidate. The latter must defend him/herself against any questions and concerns.

Section V. Deliberation and proclamation

Article 35 – Attendance requirements for the public defence

The doctoral examination panel can only deliberate in a valid manner on whether the PhD candidate has passed or not and whether the degree is to be conferred when at least half of the voting members are present or take part in the public defence via interactive electronic means of communication or have issued a written opinion beforehand. A maximum of one written opinion may be taken into consideration for calculating the presence of a quorum in accordance with the attendance requirements.

Article 36 – Deliberation after the public defence

Immediately following a public PhD thesis defence, the doctoral panel will leave the room to proceed in private to the deliberation on awarding the PhD and, if so stipulated by the supplementary faculty regulations, will decide on the grade to be awarded.

Article 37 – Assessment of the public defence

The doctoral panel declares by majority vote whether or not the PhD candidate has passed or not, taking into account the substantive academic value of the PhD thesis and the manner in which the PhD defended himself/herself. In the event of a tie, the decision will be made in favour of the PhD candidate. A maximum of one written opinion may be taken into consideration for the assessment.

Article 38 – Conferral of degrees

If the PhD candidate has been declared to have passed by the doctoral panel, no grade will be awarded unless otherwise provided for in the supplementary faculty PhD regulations. In this case, the jury shall announce whether the PhD candidate has passed satisfactorily, with distinction, with high distinction or with the highest distinction.

Article 39 – Proclamation

If the doctoral panel declared that the PhD candidate has passed the examination, the chairman of the panel shall issue the proclamation immediately after the deliberation. He/she shall publicly declare that all the relevant rules and regulations have been observed.

Article 40 – PhD degree

The PhD degree shall be awarded to the PhD candidate preferably at the time of the proclamation or otherwise no later than two months thereafter.

Section VI. Ombudspersons for PhD candidates

Article 41 – Appointment of Ombudspersons for PhD candidates (the purpose)

With a view to the high-quality supervision of PhD candidates, the VUB shall appoint three ombudsmen for PhD candidates, who shall have the powers set out below. Each Ombudsperson performs his/her duties within the area of operation of one Doctoral School and works or has worked in that Doctoral School.

Article 42 – Appointment of Ombudspersons for PhD candidates (the candidates)

§1. The Ombudspersons for PhD candidates are appointed by the Academic Council prior to the commencement of each academic year on the proposal of the OZR. Candidates must demonstrate that they have sufficient experience in the supervision of PhD candidates.

The prospective ombudsperson shall either be a member of the ZAP or an emeritus with an assignment after retirement, with the proviso that a professor emeritus can only hold the post of an Ombudsperson for PhD candidates up to, at the most, five years after reaching emeritus status.

§2. The Ombudspersons for PhD candidates can, where necessary, assist each other with (the handling of) files or take over files from each other.

§3. The mandate of the Ombudspersons for PhD candidates is incompatible with the position of (vice-)rector, (vice-)dean, (deputy) member of the Academic Council, (deputy) member of the OZR or (deputy) member of a PhD progress monitoring commission.

§4. The names of the Ombudspersons for PhD candidates, as well as where and when they can be reached, are published in an annual circular addressed to all PhD candidates.

Article 43 – Duties of the Ombudspersons for PhD candidates

The Ombudspersons for PhD candidates receive and assess comments and complaints from PhD candidates. Where supervising with regard to difficulties in relations with the supervisor(s) or the (I)CDO or in the event of difficulties with preparing and conducting doctoral research, the Ombudspersons for PhD candidates can decide:

- to further investigate the aforementioned comments and complaints;
- at the request of the PhD candidate, to mediate between the PhD candidate and the supervisor(s), the chairman of the (I)CDO, the dean, the chairman of the doctoral examination panel, or the members of the academic staff or the Administrative Secretary, with the aim of reaching an amicable settlement of the conflict;
- to report on their findings in the form of analyses, opinions or recommendations, in accordance with article 46 of these regulations.

Article 44 – Ombudsperson procedure

§1. The Ombudspersons for PhD candidates keep a register of all comments and complaints received in confidential files. The Ombudspersons for PhD candidates are under an obligation to maintain confidentiality and discretion.

§2. The Ombudspersons for PhD candidates determine in consultation with the PhD candidate concerned the way in which contact made by the PhD candidate will be responded to. After the first meeting, the necessity of a further procedure will be considered. When a complaint is confirmed in writing, there will always be a written follow-up.

§3. Ombudspersons for PhD candidates shall, in general, submit an amicable settlement to the (written) comments and complaints referred to in article 43 as soon as possible. The PhD candidate shall be informed of this proposal in writing without delay.

§4. If an Ombudsperson for PhD candidates is principally a member of the same research group as the PhD candidate requesting the intervention of the Ombudsperson, or if it is found that the Ombudsperson is too closely involved, one of the other Ombudspersons for PhD candidates shall step in.

§5. The Ombudspersons for PhD candidates shall ensure that comments and complaints that are reported but which do not, in their view, fall within the scope of the Ombudspersons for PhD candidates, are forwarded directly to the correct point of contact, provided that the person reporting the comments and/or complaints agrees to this in the light of the guarantees offered.

Article 45 – Right of access of the Ombudspersons for PhD candidates

The Ombudspersons for PhD candidates have the right for the performance of their duties:

- 1° to be involved in the discussions of the PhD progress monitoring commissions;
- 2° to consult all information necessary to implement the provisions of articles 43 and 44;
- 3° to view data of the annual PhD survey if the person responsible in the faculty so advises.

Article 46 – Reporting by the Ombudspersons for PhD candidates

§1. The Ombudspersons for PhD candidates shall, prior to 15 November, report to the Academic Council on the activities of the previous academic year. This report shall be submitted to the OZR beforehand. The report must contain a numerical overview of all contacts made and all cases in which mediation was actually carried out, without violating the duty to maintain confidentiality.

§2. The Ombudspersons for PhD candidates can submit a report to the vice-rector for Research Policy every three months.

§3. If an Ombudsperson for PhD candidates is of the view that there are matters that are so serious that they have to be reported, he/she shall report these directly to the vice-rector for Research Policy.

Section VII. Possibilities for appeal

Article 47 – Appeal against material errors

§1. If a material error is established when making a study progress decision, this shall be formally reported to the dean within 10 calendar days of such decision being taken.

§2. A mistake that does not lead to a less favourable decision with regard to the PhD candidate will be corrected by the Dean. The correction is communicated to the PhD candidate and will be adequately documented within the faculty.

§3. If the determined error leads to a less favourable decision with regard to the PhD candidate, the error must be corrected by the body that made the original decision. Where necessary, that body shall be convened by the dean as quickly as possible. The correction is communicated to the PhD candidate and will be adequately documented within the faculty.

Article 48 – Decisions against which an appeal can be lodged

Decisions taken as set out in article 17, §4, article 30, §3 and article 37 can be appealed against internally and externally. An external appeal can only be lodged when the internal appeal possibilities provided for have been exhausted.

Article 49 – Composition of the internal appeal body

§1. An appeal body is set up per faculty or per study programme which has the competence to deal with all internal appeals lodged within the faculty concerned against the decisions referred to in article 17, §4, article 30, §3 and article 37.

§2. The appeal body comprises at least one ZAP member and two other members of the academic staff with relevant experience in the supervision of PhD candidates in the relevant or a directly related subject area. The members of the appeal body shall appoint a chairman from their midst.

§3. If members who only have an advisory vote are invited to take part in the appeal body:

- One member of the central PhD supervision service;
- One of the Ombudspersons for PhD candidates. If the Ombudsperson for PhD candidates so wishes, he/she can refuse membership of the appeal body by means of a letter sent to the chairman stating the relevant grounds.
- A lawyer from the Research and Data Management department.

§4. The further composition of the appeal body can be elaborated in greater detail in the supplementary faculty PhD regulations.

Article 50 – Internal appeal procedure, with the exception of the decision concerning reasonable accommodation

§1. Decisions as described in article 17, §4, article 30, §3 and article 37, in relation to which the PhD candidate or the person to whom the decision relates is of the view that this is affected by a violation of the law, can be appealed against by that person to the office of the relevant dean. The appeal must be lodged within an expiry period of seven calendar days, starting from:

1° in the case of an exam decision: the day after the notification or proclamation;

2° in the case of any other study progress decision: the day after the doctoral student has been informed of the decision.

§2. The PhD candidate must factually substantiate the request and state the grounds for the objections raised within the expiry period of seven calendar days referred to above. If he/she fails to do this, his/her appeal shall then automatically be deemed inadmissible insofar as there are no other complaints and a factual account of the alleged objections has not yet been recorded.

§3. On pain of inadmissibility, the appeal shall be lodged by means of a signed and dated petition submitted to the chairman of the relevant appeal body by registered letter. The petition shall at least contain the identity of the PhD candidate concerned, the contested decision(s) and a factual account and justification of the alleged objections. The PhD candidate shall at the same time send an identical electronic version of the petition for information purposes via email to the email address stated in the supplementary faculty PhD regulations. The date of the appeal is the date of the postmark of the registered mail.

An electronic version of the petition must also be sent to faces@vub.be.

§4. As part of a sustainable appeal procedure, the PhD candidate or the person to whom the decision relates has the right to be heard by the appeal body. The appeal body shall determine whether this right to a hearing is to be exercised in writing or orally. The PhD candidate can seek assistance from a third party during the oral proceedings concerning his/her appeal. The secretary of the appeal body shall be present during this discussion and take condensed minutes of the statements made, which can be submitted to the PhD candidate for signing. If the chairman deems it necessary for a fair and reasonable assessment of the appeal, these minutes shall be submitted to the supervisors concerned for their response.

§5. The appeal leads to:

- 1° the reasoned rejection of the appeal by the chairman of the appeal body concerned on the ground of its inadmissibility, or
- 2° a decision of the appeal body that confirms or revises the original decision in a substantiated manner.

§6. The decision pursuant to §5 shall be notified to the PhD candidate or the person to whom it relates within a period of 20 calendar days from the date on which the appeal was lodged. This notification shall contain the possibility to lodge an external appeal as well as the relevant deadline periods. The decisions taken pursuant to §5 shall be communicated to the Ombudsperson for PhD candidates of the Doctoral School concerned by the dean.

§7. The decision taken pursuant to §5 can be appealed against to the Council for disputes regarding study progress decisions.

Article 51 – Internal appeal procedure for a decision to refuse reasonable accommodations

§1. The PhD candidate can lodge an internal appeal against a decision to refuse reasonable accommodations of education and examination activities for a PhD candidate with functional impairments, in relation to which the PhD candidate is of the view that this was affected by a violation of the law. This appeal must be lodged with the office of the relevant

dean within an expiry period of seven calendar days starting from the day after notification of the decision.

§2. The internal appeal procedure leads to a substantiated decision that is binding on everyone within the institution. The PhD candidate has the right to be heard in this regard. An Ombudsperson for PhD candidates, as well as a lawyer from the Research and Data Management department can be present at this hearing.

§3. The decision pursuant to §2 shall be notified to the PhD candidate within a period of one month starting from the day on which the appeal was lodged. The decision shall be communicated to the competent Ombudsperson for PhD candidates.

Section IIX. Special doctorates

Part 1. General provisions

Article 52 - Scope and guiding principle of the section

§1. This section deals with the joint PhD, the interdisciplinary PhD and PhD in the Arts.

§2. Everything previously set out in these regulations also applies in full to joint PhDs, interdisciplinary PhDs and PhDs in the Arts, unless these previous provisions are expressly derogated from in this section.

Article 53 – Composition of the ICDO

The ICDO comprises three directors of the Doctoral Schools, the vice-rector for Education and Student Policy and the vice-rector for Research Policy, supplemented by at least one member of the other Academic Staff with an advisory vote.

Part 2. Joint PhD

Article 54 - Joint PhD contract

§1. A joint PhD contract is drawn up as soon as possible at the beginning of a joint PhD. A draft version of the joint PhD contract must be drawn up no later than one (1) year prior to submission of the theses and be handed to the partner institution.

§2. The aforementioned joint PhD contract may deviate from provisions in these regulations and in the relevant faculty PhD regulations, provided that each deviation is approved in a specific file by the competent faculty body and only insofar as it does not conflict with any decrees in force.

The deviations from the provisions in these regulations and the faculty doctoral regulations included in the 'Joint PhD contract' shall be approved by the bureau of the faculty. To this end, all 'Joint PhD contracts' for doctoral candidates affiliated with the faculty shall be signed by the dean.

§3. If, however, it concerns a joint PhD contract entered into with a Flemish institute, the rules of the main institution will still be unreservedly adhered to, so that no deviation is possible or necessary.

Article 55 - The doctor's degree for a joint PhD

The supplementary faculty PhD regulations determine which diploma gives access to which doctor's degree in the case of a joint PhD.

By way of a standard:

- *a degree Master of Science in Economic Sciences grants access to the academic title of Doctor of Economic Sciences;*
- *a degree Master of Science in Applied Economic Sciences grants access to the academic title of Doctor of Business Economics;*
- *a degree Master of Science in International Business grants access to the academic title of Doctor of Business Economics;*

- a degree Master of Science Business Engineering grants access to the academic title of Doctor of Business Economics;
- a degree Master of Science Business Engineering: Business and Technology grants access to the academic title of Doctor of Business Economics;
- a degree Master of Science in Political Sciences grants access to the academic title of Doctor of Political Science;
- a degree Master of Science in Political Science: European and International Governance grants access to the academic title of Doctor of Political Science;
- a degree Master of Science in Sociology grants access to the academic title of Doctor of Sociology;
- a degree Master of Science in Communication Sciences grants access to the academic title of Doctor of Media and Communication;
- a degree Master of Science in Communication Studies: New Media and Society in Europe grants access to the academic title of Doctor of Media and Communication Studies;
- a degree Master of Science in Communication Sciences grants access to the academic title of Doctor of Media and Communication Studies: Journalism Studies
- a degree Master of Science in Communication Studies: Journalism and Media in Europe grants access to the academic title of Doctor of Media and Communication Studies: Journalism Studies

Deviations from these regulations are possible and may be put before the Doctoral Progress Monitoring Commission by the dean.

Article 56 - Guidance and responsibility for a joint PhD

In the case of a joint PhD, the PhD thesis must be co-prepared under the guidance and responsibility of a ZAP member of the partner institution, possibly assisted by:

- 1° A supervisor, ZAP external from the VUB;
- 2° A supervisor, ZAP emeritus at the VUB;
- 3° A supervisor, non-ZAP with a PhD based on a thesis.

Article 57- Advisory commission

For a joint PhD contract entered into with a Flemish institution, the advisory committee will be put together in consultation with the partner institution and officially approved by the competent bodies of both institutions. It will consist of members from both institutions to allow both institutions to be able to assess the quality of the doctorate.

Article 58 - Progress report for a joint PhD

In the context of a joint PhD, if the VUB is not the main institution, the template of the other institution completed for that reason shall suffice for the drawing up and submission of the annual progress report. The PhD student is personally responsible for progress reports to both institutions, in accordance with the procedure provided by each institution.

Article 59 – Language of the thesis

§1. The thesis within the framework of a joint PhD is drawn up and defended in the language stipulated in the joint PhD contract signed by all the parties involved.

§2. With regard to the public defence, the preceding paragraph can be derogated from if the PhD candidate has obtained permission for this from the doctoral examination panel.

Article 60 - Defence of a joint PhD thesis

For the defence of a joint PhD thesis, the organisation of the internal defence can be derogated from in the joint PhD contract concluded. The supplementary faculty regulations determine the conditions under which this exception is made, unless it concerns a joint PhD contract entered into with a Flemish institution and this deviation is the result of the application of the rules of the main institution, in which case the latter will be unreservedly adhered to. If the rules of the main institution provide for an internal defence, it will be organised at the main institution. The explicit approval of the competent faculty body, as referred to in article 54, paragraph 2, is not required for such derogation.

The deviations from the provisions in these regulations and the faculty doctoral regulations, which are included in the 'Joint PhD contract', with regard to the organisation of the internal defence, shall be permitted by the bureau of the faculty on a case-by-case basis. To this end, all 'Joint PhD contracts' for doctoral candidates within the faculty shall be signed by the dean.

Article 61 - Submission of the joint PhD thesis

The obligations of article 23 relating to the submission of the PhD thesis apply equally to the thesis in a joint PhD if the PhD candidate wishes to publicly defend the doctoral examination at the VUB. The mandatory submission of the PhD thesis in electronic form applies in full to the PhD candidate engaging in a joint PhD, regardless of the location of the public defence.

In the case of a joint PhD contract entered into with a Flemish institution, the house style of the main institution will be adhered to. At the least, the logo of the partner institution must be clearly visible on the cover of the manuscript, plus the names of all supervisors and co-supervisors involved.

The following applies to a joint PhD contract entered into with a Flemish institution: when the doctoral student and supervisors wish to enter the final phase of the doctorate (submitting the thesis for evaluation), the main institution will notify the partner institution as soon as possible of the following:

- the completion of the PhD programme in accordance with Article 18,
- the completion of the publication condition provided for in Article 62,
- the proposal for the composition of the Doctoral Examining Panel in accordance with Article 63,
- the official title of the thesis and
- (as soon as is known) the dates of the various stages of the examination procedure.

The partner institution will subsequently inform the main institution as quickly as possible about the administrative admission to the examination procedure. Someone will be designated responsible for this communication in each institution; at the VUB that will be one person per faculty.

Article 62 – The publication conditions on applying for admission to the examination procedure

For a joint PhD contract entered into with a Flemish institution, the doctoral student should submit at least one scientific publication at international level or equivalent international achievement when applying for admission to the examination procedure (i.e. the submission of the thesis for evaluation). A publication at international level is understood to be: a reviewed contribution (article in a journal, contribution to a book or conference, patent, design, monography) about the student's own research and written in a forum language of the professional field. The regulations of the main institution will determine what constitutes a valid publication/output in the discipline concerned. The contribution must have been published or accepted for publication. In exceptional circumstances, namely when the delay in publication is wholly due to the longer publication periods/waiting times in a specific discipline, the advisory committee may allow deviation from the latter condition. This joint, compulsory requirement in the area of publication/output overrides all other publication or output requirements valid at each of the individual institutions.

Article 63 – Composition of the panel for a joint PhD

§1. The doctoral panel set up for a joint PhD will consist of the supervisors and a minimum of four other members. Each partner institution will be represented on the panel by a minimum of two members, including the supervisor. If there are several supervisors per partner institution, these supervisors will together have one vote. In addition, at least two external members who are not connected to either of the partner institutions will have a seat on the panel.

§2. The members connected to the VUB will be appointed by the competent faculty body. The chairman and the external members of this doctoral panel shall be designated in accordance with the provisions of the joint PhD contract.

§3. The advisory committee may not constitute the majority of the voting members on the doctoral examination panel. Written opinions are not included in the voting. Articles 27, §1, §3, §5 and §6, and Article 74 §1 are applicable in full to joint doctorates.

§4. For a joint PhD contract entered into with a Flemish institution, the Doctoral Examining Panel is put together by the main institution in consultation with the partner institution following consultations between the supervisors of both institutions and official approval by the competent bodies of both partner institutions. Members of both institutions have a seat on the doctoral panel so that both institutions are able to assess the quality of the doctorate. The supervisors may not act as chair. In a deviation from Article 63§1, at least one member of the examining panel is external to both institutions.

Article 64 - Defence of a joint PhD thesis

The defence of a joint PhD takes place on the premises of the doctoral student's main institution, unless otherwise agreed in the doctoral contract.

Article 65 – Mandatory PhD training programme

As stated in Article 8, the Doctoral Schools Regulations determine which categories of doctoral student can be exempt from the compulsory PhD training programme and which procedure should be followed in that case. This applies, for example, to doctoral students with a joint PhD, of which the VUB is not the main institution.

Part 3. Interdisciplinary PhD and PhD in the arts

Article 66 – Admission to an interdisciplinary PhD

§1. The competent faculty body shall evaluate the diploma requirements in accordance with articles 6 and 7 for each admission application concerning an interdisciplinary PhD. The competent faculty body can, if it so wishes, ask the ICDO to issue an opinion in a specific case.

§2. The authority to judge whether a PhD is of an interdisciplinary nature or not rests with the ICDO.

Article 67 – Admission to a PhD in the arts

§1. In order to be admitted for preparation of a PhD in the arts, the candidate must in principle be the holder of a master's diploma for a study programme in the areas of the audio-visual arts, music, performing arts, literature, architecture or visual arts. In this regard, a non-binding opinion may be obtained from the Brussels Arts Platform with regard to PhD's falling within the common research framework established by the VUB and EhB Schools of Arts, KCB and RITCS.

§2. Candidates who do not have a master's degree (or the equivalent) in one of the above-mentioned study areas can be admitted to this PhD if the competence evaluation for PAC's conducted by the competent faculty body shows that competences can be recognised that are generally of a master's level in the field of the arts. The competent faculty body can, if it so wishes, ask the ICDO to issue an opinion in a specific case.

Article 68 – Application for admission to a PhD in the arts and additional research

In the case of an application for admission to a PhD in the arts, the competent faculty body can conduct additional research or include a further examination, such as that referred to in articles 6 and 7. The competent faculty body can, if it so wishes, ask the ICDO to issue an opinion or organise the research or examination in a specific case.

Article 69 – Admission for preparation of a PhD in the arts

In the case of a PhD in the arts in cooperation with the EhB, the competent faculty body shall obtain the opinion of the ICDO and/or the Brussels Arts Platform.

Article 70 – Doctorate study programme for special PhD's

§1. The competent faculty body may, based on the candidate's admission application for a doctorate in the arts or for an interdisciplinary doctorate, make the doctoral programme compulsory or, in the case of doctoral students for whom the doctoral programme is already compulsory, impose additional study requirements. Where this is the case, the mandatory study package will be a prerequisite for permission to defend a PhD thesis. The competent faculty body can, if it so wishes, ask the ICDO to issue an opinion in a specific case in this regard.

§2. The competent faculty body can provide for a maximum period of time within which this study package must be completed.

Article 71 – Follow-up of PhD's in the arts and interdisciplinary PhD's

In the case of an interdisciplinary PhD across faculty boundaries or a PhD in the arts, the ICDO monitors the smooth progress of the PhD. For the monitoring of the PhD's in the arts,

the ICDO will be supplemented by the Chairman of the Brussels Arts Platform, who will serve in an advisory capacity.

Article 72 – Guidance and responsibility for a PhD in the arts

In addition to article 11, there is, in the case of a PhD in the arts, always a supervisor to carry out the artistic supervision apart from the VUB ZAP supervisor(s). The artistic supervisor is exempt from the condition of being the holder of a doctor's degree based on a thesis.

Article 73 – Advisory committee for a PhD in the arts

The advisory committee for a PhD in the arts comprises the supervisors and at least one additional member. The artistic supervisor is counted among the supervisors and can therefore not act as an additional member.

Article 74 - PhD thesis for a PhD in the arts

§1. In the case of a PhD in the arts, the thesis forms a whole comprising two components, each of which must be taken fully into account:

- 1° an artistic part, consisting of all the artistic results that have emerged during the research and presented in a manner specific to the artistic process concerned.
- 2° A discursive part, consisting of a relevant reflection on the individual artistic process, on the methodology and on the skills and competences used, doing this in an academically responsible manner and taking into account the specific nature of artistic research.

§2. These two component elements must result in an original thesis, as referred to earlier in this article. This provision also applies to the realisations in the artistic part of the thesis.

§3. Insofar as the artistic research permits, the thesis, consisting of the artistic and discursive parts, must be presented in a manner that makes it possible to check and reproduce its component parts.

§4. The artistic part of the thesis of the PhD in the arts is exempt from the obligation stipulated in article 24 to grant non-exclusive permission to reproduce the thesis and make it available to the public. The granting of this permission is considered to be worthwhile but is not mandatory.

Article 75 – Application to take the PhD examination

The PhD candidate preparing an interdisciplinary PhD or a PhD in the arts shall submit his/her written application to take the PhD examination to the dean of the faculty to which his/her ZAP supervisor is principally affiliated.

Article 76 – Panel composition

§1. If the PhD thesis under scrutiny has an interdisciplinary character that transgresses the borders of a faculty, each faculty needs to be represented in the doctoral panel by a minimum of one member of the ZAP.

§2. If it concerns a PhD in the arts that has been realised in cooperation with the EHB, the proposal for the composition of the doctoral panel shall be accompanied by the non-binding opinion of the Brussels Art Platform.

Article 77 – Defence of the thesis for a PhD in the arts

In the case of a PhD in the arts, the presentations that form part of the PhD examination are not bound by the time and location restrictions referred to in articles 33 and 34.

Section IX. General and concluding provisions

Article 78 – Holidays

Academic leave and the period from 15 July to 15 August are not included in the calculation of the periods applying in these regulations, with the exception of Section VII.

Article 79 – Entry into force of these regulations

These regulations shall, following approval by the Academic Council, enter into force at the start of academic year 2021-2022, with the exception of the provisions of Section VI, which shall enter into force on 1 October 2018.

Doctorates for which the thesis was submitted prior to the start of academic year 2021-2022 will be examined, defended and, where applicable, proclaimed in accordance with the provisions of the Central Regulations for the conferral of the title of Doctor as in force at the time of submission.