



Université libre de Bruxelles

PhD Charter

Approved by the Board on the 12th of November 2012
and amended by the Academic Council on the 30th of June 2014 and the 19th of October 2015.

PREAMBLE

A PhD thesis is both a contribution to scientific research and personal training acquired by carrying out research. Seen in this way, writing a thesis is a demanding personal and professional project, and its objectives and the resources needed to achieve them must be clearly established through an agreement between the candidate and the thesis supervisor, and monitored by a supervisory committee.

Current regulations at the Université Libre de Bruxelles¹ establish the institutional framework for the PhD, and this Charter specifies the reciprocal commitments made between the candidate, their supervisor and the supervisory committee. Before signing the charter, those involved should hold a thorough discussion of the doctoral research project, the conditions in which it will be completed, the support and supervision mechanisms, and the candidate's place within the research team.²

1. COMMITTING TO A THESIS

The future thesis supervisor vouches for the candidate's scientific skills and sense of initiative.

The supervisor helps the candidate to outline the doctoral research project, ensures that it is original and in line with current knowledge, and confirms that the thesis can be completed within the planned (and clearly defined) period. Together with the candidate, the supervisor outlines the conditions regarding doctoral training, research supervision and integration into the research team, including the equipment that can be made available to the candidate.

The supervisor commits to devoting the necessary attention to the monitoring of the candidate's work. The supervisor must also inform the candidate of the number of theses (s)he is supervising.

The supervisor meets the candidate to discuss the financial context within which the research will be carried out, offers suggestions (assistant contracts, PhD fellowships, etc.), and takes care to ensure that the candidate can complete their PhD under satisfactory conditions. The supervisor must inform the candidate that the University is unable to guarantee any financial support.

Finally, the supervisor informs the candidate of the general job opportunities available in their field, while clearly stating that the vast majority of opportunities are to be found outside the ULB.

The candidate commits to:

- following the subject-based and transferable skills training suggested by their supervisor and supervisory committee,
- doing their utmost to integrate into the research team and to demonstrate team spirit and ethical practices,
- paying full attention to any advice regarding the progress of their research given by their supervisor and supervisory committee,

¹For any questions about the regulatory aspect of the PhD, the signatories of the charter are instructed to consult the ULB *PhD Regulations*, as well as any additional provisions that may be required by the Faculty.

²The ULB complies with the *European Charter for Researchers*, compiled by the European Commission in 2005.

- accepting all invitations extended to them,
- providing regular progress updates
- informing their supervisor and committee in a positive and timely manner of any difficulties encountered, as regards both scientific matters and relationships within the team.

2. INTEGRATION IN THE RESEARCH TEAM

The candidate becomes a full member of the research team. Depending on the resources available and the progress made, the host team may provide access to the facilities required to move the PhD research forward (equipment, computer resources, operational and documentary resources, attending seminars and lectures, presenting work at scientific conferences, etc.). If necessary, the supervisor will submit requests for external funding and, if it is not obtained, discuss the possibility of restructuring part of the candidate's research. In addition, the supervisor regularly informs the Candidate about the status of funds which have been granted to them (operating costs...).

The Candidate commits to complying with the regulations in force within the host team, as well as with scientific ethics and intellectual property rules at the ULB³. The possible contractual and statutory obligations may not include excessive responsibility for tasks unrelated to thesis research and training.

3. THESIS SUPERVISION AND MONITORING

The thesis supervisor will meet the Candidate as often as necessary in order to monitor the progress made, discuss any difficulties encountered and their potential solutions, and suggest any new directions that their research could take in light of the results obtained. The supervisor will inform the candidate of any positive or negative assessments of their work, as well as any objections or criticism that their work may incur. The supervisor will also suggest that a co-supervisor be appointed when appropriate, particularly when, at any time and for whatever reason (extended stay abroad, etc.), the supervisor might be prevented from supervising and monitoring the thesis.

Members of the supervisory committee, and the Chairperson in particular, will also monitor progress closely, at least once per year. The committee meets with the Candidate at the beginning of the thesis, and then annually thereafter, in order to give their opinion regarding re-enrolment. The supervisor and candidate describe the thesis project to the committee, detailing its context, the progress made with respect to the established objectives, and any difficulties encountered. On the basis of this information, the committee, together with the supervisor and candidate, sets the objectives for the coming year, as regards both subject-specific and transferable skills, and scientific objectives. This information is also used to determine the doctoral training programme. The committee takes special care to monitor the feasibility of the research programme and the thesis-writing phase, with a view to the defence taking place within the established period. If necessary, the committee may enter into an in-depth discussion on the possibility of redefining the thesis objectives in order to determine a realistic submission date. When the thesis is close to completion, the committee has to give its opinion on whether it can be submitted for defence.

The candidate must demonstrate their own initiative and independence in carrying out their research, and is responsible for completing the thesis by the established deadline. In addition, the

³Unless otherwise stated, the ULB holds full and exclusive intellectual property rights over the research carried out, and any income gained is governed by the University Board.

candidate must inform the supervisor and supervisory committee of any difficulties encountered, and of any assistance that they may be called upon to request.

The supervisory committee is responsible for resolving any conflicts that arise between the supervisor and the candidate. If the conflict remains unresolved, the candidate or their supervisor may call in a mediator in accordance with the procedure detailed in the PhD Regulations.

4. DURATION OF THE PhD

A PhD is the first stage in a high level professional career in academic research, extra-academic research, and a range of other fields. This first stage must be long enough for the necessary skills to be developed, and also to enable the PhD holder to begin their professional career as soon as possible, in whatever field, nationally or internationally.

The candidate, supervisor, and supervisory committee are therefore committed, (under normal financial conditions) to making every effort to ensure that this initial stage of professional life, including doctoral training, does not exceed four years for those receiving research fellowships (who are working on their thesis full-time), and six years for full-time assistants (who also have teaching responsibilities). Ideally, the schedule set with the supervisory committee should enable the candidate to apply for postdoctoral research positions available in spring of the fourth year of their thesis (in the sixth year for assistants). The deadline for the defence should therefore be set by the supervisory committee and the candidate no later than when the candidate enrolls for the final year of the thesis.

In order to avoid wasting time unnecessarily, the supervisory committee will give its opinion on whether the candidate should continue or stop their thesis upon completion of the “intermediate evaluation”. For candidates with a full-time research grant, this “intermediate” evaluation will be held no later than the end of the second year (third year for assistants); under other circumstances, the supervisory committee may choose to extend the deadline, in compliance with the PhD regulations. If serious shortcomings are observed, then the supervisory committee must advise the Candidate not to re-enrol.

5. AFTER YOUR PhD

In order to facilitate the candidate’s insertion into the professional world, the supervisor and supervisory committee either suggest or assign any transferable skills training that may be of use. Furthermore, during the final year of the thesis, they discuss the candidate’s career prospects and provide all available information on this matter. Together with the University’s specialised services, they will help the candidate to market the general skills acquired during their studies, so that the candidate can mention these skills when seeking employment. If the candidate wishes to continue their career in academic research, particularly abroad, then the supervisor and supervisory committee should give them access to their own networks, while of course remaining objective about their scientific merit.

All candidates who complete their PhD at the ULB commit to providing the university with their email address for the ten years following the defence of their thesis (so that they may be used as an example for new candidates), and to answering all queries from the university regarding professional career.

SIGNED

in *(place)* , in triplicate, on *(date)*

The candidate

Full name:

Signature:

The supervisor

Full name:

Signature:

Chair of the supervisory committee

Full name:

Signature:

Each signatory keeps a signed copy of the present document.