



Ghent University's 'quality framework for doctoral education'

Quality assurance: from the central level to the faculties
Case-study: Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences

Dr Nele Bracke, Doctoral Schools policy advisor
Prof Dr Johan Van de Voorde, Chair Faculty Doctoral Committee & Director Doctoral School of Life Sciences and Medicine
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Actors in quality assurance

PhD candidates

Supervisors / supervisory teams

Doctoral Advisory Committees

Research groups / departments

Faculties

Doctoral Schools

Ombudspersons

(Ethical Committees / Office Research Integrity)

University

Examination boards

Peer reviewers / Editors

Funding agencies

External stakeholders

...

Actors in quality assurance



Quality framework

Ten building blocks to ensure quality

1. The faculty is responsible for **admission to a doctorate** at Ghent University. The faculty investigates whether a candidate meets the [entry conditions](#) regarding university degree, language, essential scientific knowledge and personal competencies for academic research. The faculty also investigates whether the proposed supervisor possesses the time and expertise required to take on supervisory responsibilities.
2. The **(main) supervisor** is in charge of [supervising the doctoral research](#). He/she receives assistance from others. This could be a doctoral advisory committee, cosupervisors or others who take on a guiding role.
3. The doctoral student develops towards an **independent researcher**. As such, he/she acquires the necessary scientific expertise and competencies corresponding with PhD level.
4. The regulatory framework for the doctorate is [Ghent University's Education and Examination Code](#). In addition, the [Charter for doctoral students and supervisors](#) elaborates on the responsibilities and expectations of all those involved in the doctoral process and lays the foundations for a quality relationship between supervisor and doctoral researcher. Should any conflicts arise, the doctoral student can consult the [ombudsperson](#) and the faculty can avail of the procedures required to intervene.
5. Doctoral students at Ghent University receive the necessary tools and guidance to develop broader **competencies** at the level of doctoral research. In addition, doctoral researchers are expected to maximize their talent development. They receive the support required to achieve this in their research environment.
6. All doctoral students, regardless of their nationality, appointment or funding, receive [adequate support](#). They have access to essential **information, funds, training and infrastructure**, as well as access to the **social networks** within the research environment. This supports their development as a researcher and prepares them for a wide range of careers.
7. The **administrative processes** that organise the recruitment, selection, introduction, progress and graduation of doctoral students require continuous improvement. In order to be as effective as possible, increasing automatism of the administrative process is essential.
8. The [Doctoral Schools](#) support the entire doctoral process in terms of quality assurance, training provision and preparation for the (non)academic labour market. They provide information, organise courses, manage administrative workflows in the doctoral training programme, coordinate the Doctoral Schools Councils, establish regional and international networks and collaboration, perform internal policy analyses, etc.
9. The **doctoral dissertation** serves as evidence of the development as independent researchers. Its quality is guaranteed first and foremost by good guidance and support and by the various steps in [submitting the dissertation](#).
10. An **independent assessment** of the doctoral student's performance is guaranteed by a well-founded composition of the examination board. The board is composed of internal and external members whose expertise matches the research being delivered. Should the quality appear to be insufficient, the examination board can decide not to award the doctoral degree, or to reassess the dissertation upon revision by the doctoral student.

Quality framework

Which actions is Ghent University currently undertaking in order to improve quality in the doctoral process?

1. Improving **admission** and introduction of new researchers
2. Developing an **online toolbox** of good practices in a quality doctoral environment
3. Further integrating **administrative processes** in [OASIS](#) (the university's education and student administration system)
4. Implementing the **charter** for doctoral students and supervisors (COMPLETED)
5. Consolidating the training opportunities for **supervisors**
6. Developing the procedures to intervene in case of **insufficient progress** (COMPLETED)
7. **Evaluating** training and supervision
8. **Sharing** information and data
9. Developing a **competency framework** for doctoral students
10. Making adjustments to the **doctoral examination regulations** (COMPLETED)
11. Appointing the **Doctoral Schools** to monitor process of quality improvement

Focus on



Ghent University fine-tunes PhD quality policy

The increase in the number of doctoral degrees requires an institutional quality policy with a specific focus on the doctoral process. Therefore Ghent University introduced two new instruments: an integrated framework and charter.

[> Read more](#)

Faculty



Faculty

Faculty Doctoral Committee

- ✓ Mission: stimulate high-quality PhD degrees
- ✓ Focus: monitor quality during PhD process
 - ❖ Admission of PhD candidate (candidate and project)
 - ❖ Check ethical approval
 - ❖ Submission of PhD thesis (meets the requirements?)
 - ❖ Examination board (members, avoid COI)
- ✓ Interaction with Doctoral School (at management level)
- ✓ Personal contacts with PhD students
- ✓ Interaction with ombudspersons and dean
- ✓ Interaction with Faculty Committee for Scientific Research (PhD research fully embedded in faculty's research culture)

Faculty

Faculty Doctoral Committee

- ✓ Valuable partner in implementation quality framework
- ✓ Brings faculty and rectorate closer together
- ✓ Brings rectorate and PhD students closer together
- ✓ Fully embeds PhD research in research culture of faculty

Challenges

- ✓ Foster and nurture relationships
- ✓ Fully acknowledge partnerships
- ✓ Further engage in implementation quality framework
- ✓ Promote as good practice (Faculty of Law)



Thank you!

Nele.Bracke@UGent.be
www.ugent.be/doctorschools

Johan.VandeVoorde@UGent.be
<http://www.ugent.be/ge/nl>