PhD regulation

The requirements for attaining a doctoral degree at KU Leuven

Approved by the Academic Council on 25 November 2014
Applicable from 1 May 2015

Updated by the FDOC September 2016
PhD regulation


One regulation consisting of:

1. The general requirements for attaining a doctoral degree at KU Leuven
2. The supplementary regulations (‘Particulars FEB’) that only apply to FEB

Throughout this presentation these Particulars FEB are put in a box

Recent changes to the Particulars FEB are highlighted in green
PhD regulation: when and whom?

• Approved by the Academic Council on 25 November 2014
• Applicable from 1 May 2015 also for ongoing PhD projects, taking into account certain exceptions as detailed in the transitional provisions.
  – If the current PhD regulation is not applicable according to the transitional provisions, the old University regulations remain applicable, as well as the PhD regulations of the groups and faculties that were applicable before 1 May 2015.
• An updated version of the FEB particulars has been approved by the FDOC and Faculty Board in September 2016 – awaiting approval of the Executive Committee
PhD regulation

The following topics are addressed:

(1) preliminary provisions,
(2) doctoral school and doctoral committee,
(3) admission and enrolment,
(4) supervision and progress,
(5) doctoral programme,
(6) doctoral thesis and public defence,
(7) joint degree and double degree,
(8) ombudsperson, appeal procedure and disciplinary regulation.
(1) Preliminary provisions

Article 1. Scope of the PhD regulation

Article 2. Concept

Article 3. The PhD researcher is expected

1. to conduct original and scientific research under the supervision of a supervisor and optionally one or more co-supervisors.

2. to successfully complete the doctoral programme with the aim of (i) expanding and deepening the knowledge within the research domain and (ii) acquiring various skills that will advance the quality and efficiency of doctoral research and promote the future professional career, within or outside the university.

3. to write and successfully defend a thesis in public.

4. to adhere to the rules of scientific integrity.

5. to comply with the general provisions laid down in this regulation and its ‘Particulars’.
(2) Doctoral school and doctoral committee

Article 4. Doctoral school at the group level.
http://ghum.kuleuven.be/phd

Article 5. Doctoral committee at the level of every faculty.
Consists of members of the senior academic staff and representatives of the PhD researchers, representing the various research domains within the faculty.

Particulars FEB:
One ZAP member of FEB, from each of the Research Domains who represent together the field of Economics and Business Economics, nominated by the Faculty Council of FEB. All different campuses (Antwerp, Brussels and Leuven) need to be represented.
(2) Doctoral school and doctoral committee

Article 5. Doctoral committee

Particulars FEB: doctoral committee (FDOC)

- Prof. Jo Swinnen (PhD coordinator Economics)
- Prof. Kristien Smedts (PhD coordinator Business Economics)
- Prof. Geert Dhaene (Economics and Leuven)
- Prof. Tom Van Caneghem (A,F,I,T and Brussels)
- Prof. Dirk Czarnitzki (ME, S, I, E and Leuven)
- Prof. Anneleen Forrier (M, WOS and Antwerp)
- Prof. Jeroen Beliën (I,IM, DS, S and Brussels)
- Michaël Rubens (PhD student Economics)
- Dennis Verhoeven (PhD student Business Economics)
- Prof. Inneke Van Nieuwenhuysen (doctoral ombuds)
- Annie Vercruysse (administrative coordinator)
- The Vice-dean Research and the Campus vice-deans Research have the right to attend each meeting as a full member.
(2) Doctoral school and doctoral committee

Article 5. Doctoral committee

The responsibilities include:

1. authorising the enrolment of PhD researchers,
2. authorising the enrolment of predoctoral students, stipulating the content and scope of the predoctoral test, and evaluating whether the predoctoral test has been passed,
3. approving the composition of the supervisory committee and giving advice about the composition of the examination committee,
4. monitoring the progress reporting.
(2) Doctoral school and doctoral committee

Article 5. Doctoral committee

The **responsibilities** include:

5. deciding whether the doctoral programme was completed successfully,
6. authorising a collaboration leading to a joint or double degree,
7. taking note of the anonymised report from the ombudsperson.

**Particulars FEB:**
Doctoral committee is also responsible for the content of the PhD programmes

The term of an FDOC member is four years, with no explicit term limit.
(3) Admission and enrolment

Article 6. Admission requirements

Admission is requested from the doctoral committee by the candidate together with the future supervisor.

The candidate must meet the following requirements:

Either (1) the candidate must hold a Flemish Master’s degree relevant to the doctoral research or an equivalent higher education degree, and also have obtained at least a distinction or have distinguished him/herself with high-quality scientific publications or design-oriented achievements, or (2) the candidate must have passed the predoctoral exam with the degree of distinction.

The candidate must also have sufficiently mastered the language of the discipline, to participate actively in the research.
(3) Admission and enrolment

Article 6. Admission requirements

Particulars FEB:

For admission to the doctoral programme in Economics

- Degree: master in economics or equivalent (conditional on research abilities) – distinction; doctum colloquium (MASE) - distinction
- Proficiency of English: TOEFL/IELTS
- Additional Credentials: GRE + recommendation letters + motivation
  - Different requirements may apply for students who graduated at a Belgian University

For admission to the doctoral programme in Business Economics

- Degree: master in business or management studies or equivalent (knowledge relevant research methodologies) – 2 yearly distinctions (at least once in master year)
- Proficiency of English TOEFL/IELTS
- Additional Credentials: GRE/GMAT + motivation
  - Language test and GRE/GMAT can be waived by supervisor
(3) Admission and enrolment

Article 7. Predoctoral period and predoctoral exam
Article 8. Enrolment

The PhD researcher is obliged to enrol every year.

The initial enrolment can go ahead once the doctoral committee has given authorisation. A PhD researcher with a doctoral scholarship or a research and teaching assistant position with doctoral finality, must enrol at the latest on the day that the scholarship or research and teaching assistant position begins.

The PhD researcher pays course fees at the first enrolment and at the enrolment for the doctoral degree with defence. The interim enrolments are free of charge. The number of enrolments is restricted to seven; from the eighth enrolment onwards permission is required from the doctoral committee. For non-EEA researchers permission is required every year from the International Admissions and Mobility Unit from the fifth enrolment onwards.
Admission and enrolment

Article 9. Start of the doctoral period
The doctoral period starts at the beginning of the doctoral scholarship or the research and teaching assistant position with doctoral finality, and for others on the date of the first enrolment as a PhD researcher.

Article 10. Duration of the doctoral period
A PhD researcher with a full-time research assignment obtains the doctoral degree in principle within a period of four years.
(4) Supervision and progress

Article 11. Supervisor and co-supervisors

§1. The supervisor is a member of the senior academic staff (ZAP) of the KU Leuven and is affiliated to the faculty in which the doctoral degree is procured. The supervisor can request a motivated exception from the executive committees in question. An exception can be given ad hoc (applicable to one PhD researcher) or structurally for a certain period limited in time (applicable to several PhD researchers of the same supervisor)
(4) Supervision and progress

Article 11. Supervisor and co-supervisors

§1. The following points also apply:

1. ZAP members with provisional appointment can be a supervisor if the suspected duration of their appointment is at least four years from the start of the doctoral period,

2. tenure track ZAP are equivalent to permanent ZAP and can therefore be a supervisor,

3. persons with the title ‘special guest professor in the arts’ can act as supervisor of PhD researchers in the arts,

4. for emeriti the terms and conditions for being a supervisor are described in the [emeritus professors’ policy](#) of the KU Leuven,

5. if a supervisor leaves the KU Leuven during the doctoral period, a new supervisor is appointed.
(4) Supervision and progress

Article 11. Supervisor and co-supervisors

§2. In addition to the supervisor, one or more co-supervisors can be appointed. In principle, co-supervisors have a doctorate. The doctoral committee may allow an exception to this on the basis of certain competences.

§3. The supervisor and any co-supervisors are jointly responsible for the intrinsic monitoring of the doctoral project. As such each of them separately endorses the profile of the good supervisor. The supervisor functions as a contact point, bears final responsibility for the doctoral project and coordinates the supervisors’ team.
# Supervision and progress

## Article 11. Supervisor and co-supervisors

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<th>Co-supervisor</th>
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<td>Member of the corporate world (condition: PhD-degree and relevant)</td>
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<td>ZAP member other Faculty KU Leuven*</td>
<td>ZAP member FEB</td>
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*Only as an exception granted by the executive committee*
(4) Supervision and progress

Article 12. Supervisory committee

The doctoral committee appoints a supervisory committee for every PhD researcher at least one month before the first progress report.

The supervisory committee consists of the supervisor, any co-supervisors and at least two other members. The doctoral committee ensures that the supervisory committee is sufficiently diverse, and doesn't consist exclusively of members of the same research group. The composition can be changed during the doctoral programme.

The responsibility of the supervisory committee is to monitor the progress of the doctoral research by means of the annual progress report. The PhD researcher or supervisor can also appeal to the members of the supervisory committee for additional discussion.
(4) Supervision and progress

Article 12. Supervisory committee

Particulars FEB:
Members of the supervisory committee are holder of a relevant PhD and/or have expertise in the relevant domain
(4) Supervision and progress

Article 13. Progress reports

The first progress report takes place at the latest one year after the start of the doctoral period and consists of an oral or written presentation on the research undertaken or still to be done. The results determine whether the doctoral programme and the preparation for the thesis can be continued or not. The evaluation takes place on the basis of two criteria: (1) the progress made in the doctoral research, and (2) the advances made in academic ability and research maturity by the PhD researcher.
(4) Supervision and progress

Article 13. Progress reports

Subsequently the PhD researcher reports on an annual basis on the progress of the doctoral research, and in addition, if required, when applying for or extension of a scholarship or mandate.

Every progress report is validated by the supervisor and any co-supervisors, and assessed by the other members of the supervisory committee. The result is substantiated and recorded in writing and sent to the PhD researcher and the doctoral committee.
Particulars FEB:
Doctoral students at FEB annually submit a written progress report to the administrative coordinator of the PhD programmes, before June 30. Students who did not start at the beginning of the academic year, submit their first report before the end of the first year.

http://feb.kuleuven.be/eng/leuven/edu/phd > Doctoral programmes > forms and templates)

➢ Progress is reported in doctoral booklet
Article 14. Doctoral programme

§1. The doctoral programme is obligatory and must be successfully completed before the PhD researcher is permitted to submit the thesis and defend it publicly.

§2. The doctoral programme consists of a truncus communis and a supplementary part. The PhD researcher can only complete the doctoral programme if all the elements of the truncus communis are completed. The doctoral committee can on an individual basis grant a (partial) exemption of the doctoral programme or set a substitute assignment, on the basis of a motivated application by the PhD researcher and in consultation with the supervisor. [...]
Article 14. Doctoral programme

§2. [...] If the doctoral research is multi- and/or interdisciplinary, the doctoral committee can give permission for elements of the truncus communis to be replaced by course components from another doctoral programme, on the basis of a motivated application by the PhD researcher in consultation with the supervisor.

§3. The PhD researcher reports to the doctoral committee on the progress made within his/her doctoral programme. On the basis of this report, the doctoral committee will decide whether the PhD researcher has completed the doctoral programme.
(5) Doctoral programme

Article 15. Content of the truncus communis

1. the writing of at least one scientific publication at an international level or a similar achievement at an international level. By a publication at international level is meant: a peer-reviewed contribution (journal article, contribution to a book, conference proceedings, patent, design) about his/her own research and written in the language of the discipline. The contribution is aimed at an international audience. In order to be able to successfully complete the doctoral programme, the contribution must be published or be accepted for publication,

2. giving at least two seminars, either about his/her own research, or on a more general theme,
(5) Doctoral programme

Article 15. Content of the truncus communis

3. giving at least one oral or poster presentation at an international scientific conference,

4. following at least one seminar series or course component specifically organised for PhD researchers,

5. following the course component ‘Scientific integrity for starting PhDs’ during the first year of the doctoral programme (note: following this course component is mandatory for PhD researchers whose doctoral period started during or after the 2014-2015 academic year.)

6. reporting on the progress of the doctoral research.

The executive committees can add more specific provisions or additional components to the truncus communis in their Particulars.
(5) Doctoral programme

Article 15. Content of the truncus communis

Particulars FEB:
More detailed information about the truncus communis of the Doctoral Programme in Economics and the Doctoral Programme in Business Economics can be found on:

http://feb.kuleuven.be/eng/leuven/edu/phd > Doctoral programmes > programme overview

➢ Progress is reported in doctoral booklet
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<th>Particulars FEB:</th>
<th>Following two components of the truncus communis can be highlighted:</th>
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<td>1. Coursework (see programme book)</td>
<td>2. Literature review/comprehensive exam (posted online soon)</td>
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Article 16. Content of the supplementary part

The supplementary part consists of additional activities and training that the PhD researcher follows as part of the doctoral research and/or as a preparation for a career within or outside the university. The PhD researcher is ultimately responsible for the supplementary part. The supplementary part should not be in conflict with the status of the PhD researcher and must not hinder the progress and quality of the doctoral research.
Particulars FEB: More detailed information about the supplementary part of the Doctoral Programme in Economics and the Doctoral Programme in Business Economics can be found on:

http://feb.kuleuven.be/eng/leuven/edu/phd > Doctoral programmes > programme

- Progress is reported in doctoral booklet
(6) Thesis and public defence

Article 17. Examination committee

The rector appoints an examination committee for every PhD researcher on the recommendation of the doctoral committee. The chair of the examination committee belongs to the ZAP of the KU Leuven and is affiliated to the faculty that will award the doctoral degree. The chair does not belong to the same research group as the supervisor and the PhD researcher, and is not a member of the supervisory committee. The chair does not act as a direct evaluator and only in the event of a tie does the chair decide. At least one member of the examination committee is external to the KU Leuven.

The responsibilities include: (1) evaluating the thesis, (2) taking part in the public defence, and (3) deciding whether or not to grant the doctoral degree after the public defence.
(6) Thesis and public defence

Article 17. Examination committee

Particulars FEB:

The examination committee includes at least six and at most eights members, chair included. The members of the supervisory committee are also members of the examination committee. At least three members of the examination committee are a member of the academic staff of FEB, chair excluded. At least two members of the examination committee are not a member of the academic staff of FEB. Members of the examination committee are holder of a relevant PhD and/or have expertise in the relevant domain.
Thesis and public defence

Article 17. Examination committee

Particulars FEB:
Doctoral students at FEB propose an examination committee to the administrative coordinator of the doctoral programmes, at **least 4 weeks before the date of the predefense** (see Art. 19), to put the proposal on the agenda of the Faculty Board of FEB. (see http://feb.kuleuven.be/eng/leuven/edu/phd --> Doctoral programmes -> forms and templates)
(6) Thesis and public defence

Article 18. Thesis

The thesis is an exam piece that must allow the examination committee to assess the quality of the doctoral research.

The regulations with regard to PhD thesis copyright must be respected. The regulations on intellectual property rights on research results including copyright applies, and non-salaried PhD researchers must sign a written agreement at the beginning of their doctoral research as specified in this regulation if the results of the doctoral research have to be protected.
(6) Thesis and public defence

Article 19. Evaluation of the thesis

The examination committee can take the following decisions:

1. *the thesis is approved, possibly on condition that minor changes are made:* the PhD researcher is permitted to publish the thesis and defend it publicly.

2. *the thesis is approved on certain conditions:* the PhD researcher must make changes to the thesis taking into account comments made by the examination committee and ensure that the adapted version is given to the examination committee for final approval.

3. *the thesis is not approved:* the PhD researcher can submit a new or thoroughly amended thesis for evaluation by the examination committee in line with the above procedure. If the thesis is not approved after the second evaluation, it can be permanently rejected.
(6) Thesis and public defence

Article 19. Evaluation of the thesis

Particulars FEB:

At FEB, the evaluation takes place in the form of a preliminary defence. The members of the supervisory committee need to give approval to the student to proceed to the preliminary defence. The doctoral student asks the administrative coordinator of the PhD programmes at least four weeks before the date of the pre-defence to put the request for pre-defence on the agenda of the Faculty Board of FEB, Campus Leuven.

The members of the examination committee receive the preliminary text of the dissertation at least two weeks before the date of the pre-defence. Members of the examination committee who cannot be present in person, can participate via a virtual means of communication (a.o. conference call, video call), or send their remarks to the supervisor (in writing) before the time of the pre-defense.
(6) Thesis and public defence

Article 19. Evaluation of the thesis

Particulars FEB:
After the pre-defence, the administrative coordinator of the PhD programmes is informed about the outcome of the evaluation:

• Outcome (1) or (2): The PhD student and supervisor/co-supervisor(s) draw up a written report giving an overview of changes that need to be made in view of final defense. This report needs to be approved by the members of the examination committee.

• Outcome (3): The supervisor/co-supervisors draw up a written report giving an overview of changes that need to be made in view of a new pre-defense. This report needs to be approved by the members of the examination committee and should be communicated (in writing) to the doctoral student.
(6) Thesis and public defence

Article 20. Public defence

During the public defence the PhD researcher gives a short presentation about the thesis. Thereafter a discussion follows with the members of the examination committee. At the end the public is given the opportunity to ask questions.

The examination committee deliberates immediately after the public session and decides whether or not the PhD can be awarded the degree of doctor. A report is drafted and signed by all members of the examination committee present. The result is announced in public immediately after the deliberation.
(6) Thesis and public defence

Article 20. Public defence

Particulars FEB:
Doctoral students at FEB need to submit a request for public defence with the administrative coordinator of the doctoral programmes, at least 6 weeks before the public defence, to put the request for public defence on the agenda of the Faculty Board of FEB.

The members of the examination committee must receive the final version of the dissertation at least 2 weeks before the public defence. Members of the examination committee who are unable to attend the public defence in person, can participate via a virtual means of communication (a.o. conference call, video call), or should send their questions (in writing) to the supervisor before the time of the public defense.
Particulars FEB:

For the **final text and the layout** of the dissertation, the doctoral student follows the regulations developed by the Faculty of Economics and Business. For that purpose, he/she consults the administrative coordinator of the doctoral programme at the moment of requesting to proceed to the public.

At least one week before the public defense, the **final version** of the dissertation should be electronically archived in Lirias; In addition, a **one-page summary** (preferably in Dutch) intended for a wide audience should be made available via KU Loket, My PhD, for use by the KU Leuven Press Office. This summary is not part of the doctoral dissertation.
Particulars FEB:
After the successful defense of the doctoral dissertation, the doctoral student obtains an allowance up to a maximum of 750 Euro to cover the expenses incurred during the doctoral programme, upon submission of supporting documents.
Article 21. Joint degree and double degree

If the PhD researcher prepares the thesis in partnership with (an)other national or international institution(s), the KU Leuven can award jointly with this institution a joint doctoral degree or a double doctoral degree.

§1. A joint degree or double degree can be awarded if the partnership complies as a minimum with the following requirements:

1. the PhD researcher conducts research for the thesis for at least six months at the KU Leuven and at least six months in the other institution,

2. one person per institution is appointed supervisor,

3. the public defence of the thesis takes place in front of a jury which includes, in addition to the supervisors, at least one professor from the institutions concerned.
(7) Joint degree and double degree

Article 21. Joint degree and double degree

§2. If the institutions in question agree, one institution is appointed as the main institution and the other(s) as partner institution(s). The main institution acts as the contact point for the PhD researcher.

If the institutions do not agree to appoint one institution as the main institution, the doctoral committee decides at which institution the PhD researcher must comply with the regulations and guidelines regarding supervision, the progress reporting, the doctoral programme and the thesis and public defence. The other general provisions laid down in this regulation and its ‘Particulars’ remain applicable.
(7) Joint degree and double degree

Article 21. Joint degree and double degree

1. If the KU Leuven is appointed as the main institution, the PhD researcher complies with the general provisions laid down in this regulation and its 'Particulars'.

2. If the KU Leuven is appointed as a partner institution, the PhD researcher complies with the regulations and guidelines of the other institution concerning supervision, the progress reporting, the doctoral programme and the thesis and public defence. The doctoral committee checks in advance whether the doctoral programme at this institution meets the necessary requirements. The doctoral committee can also make additional demands of the PhD researcher. The other general provisions laid down in this regulation and its ‘Particulars’ remain applicable.
Article 21. Joint degree and double degree

§3. Together with the (future) supervisor the PhD researcher requests permission from the doctoral committee to prepare a thesis in partnership. This is done in principle at the same time as the request for authorisation to enrol as a PhD researcher, or else at the latest one year after the start of the doctoral period.

§4. The conditions under which the partnership takes place are laid down in a partnership agreement between KU Leuven, the other institution and the PhD researcher. The negotiations about the partnership agreement are coordinated by the doctoral school in question.

§5. The application procedure and the conditions that the partnership must meet are clarified in the practical guidelines concerning the attainment of a joint or double doctoral degree at the KU Leuven.
(8) Ombudsperson, appeal procedure and disciplinary regulation

Article 22. Ombudsperson

One ombudsperson per faculty or per group to deal with disputes and problems related to the doctoral process. The ombudsperson belongs to the ZAP of the KU Leuven, including emeriti with assignment. The ombudsperson is not part of the Board of Trustees and the administrative bodies as defined in the statutory regulations of the KU Leuven. If the ombudsperson is an interested party, an ombudsperson from another faculty or group is contacted.

The ombudsperson is the first contact point for all concerned to discuss problems in the doctoral process. The ombudsperson shall mediate between the involved parties and together try and find an acceptable solution with them for everyone.

The ombudsperson sends a general and completely anonymised report of its activities to the doctoral committee every year. The doctoral committee discusses this report and sends it to the doctoral school, the executive committee and the Vice Rector for Research Policy.
Article 23. Appeal procedure

According to the procedure below an appeal is possible against the following decisions of the doctoral committee and the examination committee:

1. the discontinuation of the doctoral programme,
2. the discontinuation of the preparation of the thesis,
3. the final result of the public defence.

A PhD researcher who judges that a decision as mentioned above has breached his/her rights, can launch an internal appeal with the Vice Rector for Student Affairs. The PhD researcher is informed of this possibility. If the Vice Rector for Student Affairs is an interested party, he/she is replaced by the Vice Rector for Research Policy.
Article 23. Appeal procedure

The PhD researcher must submit the appeal by e-mail within five calendar days from the day after which the decision of the doctoral committee or the examination committee was made known. In his/her complaint the PhD researcher includes at least a factual description of the invoked objections. The Vice Rector for Student Affairs hears all parties in question and in each case the PhD researcher. The internal appeal procedure results in:

1. The motivated rejection of the appeal on grounds of unacceptability or unsubstantiated claims.

2. A new decision by the Vice Rector for Student Affairs.
Article 23. Appeal procedure

The internal appeal body can inform the PhD researcher within the time available to them that it will make a pronouncement at a later date. In that case the term for external appeal only starts the day after that date. After exhausting this internal appeal procedure the PhD researcher can appeal the day after the decision of the Vice Rector for Student policy or after the expiration of the term in which the Vice Rector for Student policy could make a decision, to the Appeals Council for Study Progress Decisions in compliance with the Codex Hoger Onderwijs, codified on October 11 2013.

In the event of disputes between the PhD researcher and the KU Leuven apart from the Appeals Council for Study Progress Decisions, only the Leuven courts have jurisdiction.
Article 24. Disciplinary regulation

The disciplinary regulation of the KU Leuven also applies to PhD researchers. The application of the disciplinary regulation applies to the AAP despite the provisions that apply via the Regulation for Academic personnel. In the event of improper conduct, sanctions can be imposed, which if necessary may result in discontinuation of the doctoral programme and thesis preparation.