



# Doctoral Regulations

## Chapter I General provisions

### Article 1

In these regulations, the following terms have the following meanings:

The Act:

the Higher Education and Research Act (Wet op het Hoger Onderwijs en Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek, WHW)

Doctorate Board:

the board as referred to in Chapter 11, Section 10, of the Act.

## Chapter II Admission to the PhD track

### Article 2

- 1 Admission to the PhD track is open to anyone who has:
  - a been awarded the degree of 'Master' pursuant to Section 7.10a of the WHW, first, second or third subsection,
  - b written a PhD thesis by way of an aptitude test to prove his ability to contribute to the independent pursuit of science,
  - c written (a maximum of ten) propositions, a maximum of four of which are directly related to the contents of the PhD thesis, and
  - d met the other requirements set in the regulations.
- 2 In special cases, those who meet the conditions in the first paragraph under b., c., and d., though not the condition under a., can be given access to the PhD track.

## Chapter III The PhD thesis

### Article 3

The following can serve as a PhD thesis:

- a an academic treatise (i.e., monograph) on a certain subject;
- b a number of separate academic treatises, some or all of which have been published, provided that there is sufficient connection between these with regard to a certain subject and that they come with an introduction in which this connection is indicated.

### Article 4

- 1 The PhD thesis may be written by one or by two people.

- 2 If a PhD thesis has been written by two people, each of those who wish to obtain a PhD on the basis thereof must have made a recognisable, independent contribution to it that is sufficient for obtaining a PhD, and take personal responsibility for the part of the PhD thesis that (s)he has written and is indicated as such, as well as for the connection between the parts. The provisions of these regulations apply accordingly to the relevant part of the PhD thesis.
- 3 Having a PhD thesis written by two people requires the prior permission of the Doctorate Board. In addition, the Doctorate Board may set additional requirements for a PhD thesis written by two people.

#### **Article 5**

- 1 The PhD thesis and the propositions that are added to that must be written in Dutch or in English. The Doctorate Board may allow the PhD thesis to be written in a different language.
- 2 If the PhD thesis has been written in Dutch, it must come with an English translation of the title and an English summary of the contents. If the PhD thesis has been written in English, it must come with a Dutch version of the title and of the summary of the contents.
- 3 If a PhD thesis has been written in a language other than Dutch or English, it must in any case come with a Dutch translation of the title and of the summary of the contents, as well as an English translation of the title and of the summary.

### **Chapter IV The supervisor**

#### **Article 6**

- 1 The PhD candidate must apply for admission to the PhD track by means of a form to be determined by the Doctorate Board. The form must be co-signed by the supervisor(s) and any co-supervisors.  
By signing the form, the (co-)supervisor(s) also declare that the PhD candidate may be admitted to the formal PhD track and that they are prepared to take on the supervision/monitoring thereof.
- 2 The Doctorate Board will appoint at least one professor of the Open University as a supervisor. In addition, the Doctorate Board can appoint a professor of a Dutch university or a foreign university as a supervisor. As a rule, no more than two supervisors will be appointed. If more than one supervisor has been appointed, where in these regulations reference is made to 'supervisor', this must be read as: 'supervisors'. If more than one supervisor has been appointed, a/the supervisor employed by the OU will be appointed as 'coordinating supervisor'.

- 3 The supervisor will assist the PhD candidate and see to it that there are regular consultations about the PhD thesis and its progress.
- 4 The Doctorate Board may also appoint a co-supervisor, who will assist the supervisor in the monitoring of the PhD candidate. By signing the form referred to in the first paragraph, the party involved accepts the appointment of the co-supervisor. The Doctorate Board will appoint a maximum of two co-supervisors.
- 5 The co-supervisor must be a (senior) university lecturer and have a PhD. In special cases, the Doctorate Board may appoint people with other qualifications as co-supervisor as well.
- 6 In addition to the (coordinating) supervisor, a second supervisor and/or a co-supervisor is involved in any PhD track as well. Supervision of a PhD track by a single supervisor, without a second supervisor or one or more co-supervisors, is not permitted.  
The Doctorate Board may decide otherwise if a PhD track has been in progress for some time already.

#### **Article 7**

- 1 The PhD thesis will be submitted for the approval of the supervisor, who will determine whether the PhD thesis can serve to prove the candidate's ability to contribute to the independent pursuit of science. The propositions require a statement from the supervisor that indicates that he feels it can be defended academically.
- 2 The supervisor will inform the Doctorate Board of the approval of the PhD thesis in writing.
- 3 If, after being appointed as a supervisor, a professor is honourably discharged from the Open University of the Netherlands, the PhD thesis must in any case be approved within five years after dismissal.  
In the event that the approval is not received within this term, the Doctorate Board will revoke the appointment and, after hearing the PhD candidate, will appoint another supervisor, unless more than one supervisor was appointed and it is of the opinion that a new appointment is not required.
- 4 In the event that a supervisor withholds approval from the PhD thesis, the Doctorate Board may, after hearing the PhD candidate and the supervisor, appoint another supervisor at the PhD candidate's request, unless more than one supervisors was appointed and the Doctorate Board is of the opinion that a new appointment is not required.

**Article 8**

In addition to family members of the PhD candidate, other persons whose relationship with the PhD candidate is such that they should not be asked to provide their opinion will not be eligible for the position of supervisor or co-supervisor.

**Chapter V The Assessment Committee****Article 9**

- 1 After the supervisor has informed it of the approval of the PhD thesis, the Doctorate Board will set up an Assessment Committee, on the recommendation of the supervisor and with the approval of the relevant dean. The Doctorate Board will charge the Assessment Committee with the decision as to whether, by means of the PhD thesis, the PhD candidate has sufficiently proved her/his ability so as to be allowed to defend the PhD thesis. The members of the Assessment Committee will communicate their decision as referred to in the second full sentence to the process coordinator, being the dean of the relevant faculty. The latter will inform the supervisor(s) after all the members have provided their decisions.
- 2 De Assessment Committee will have a maximum of six members. Where appropriate, the Doctorate Board may decide otherwise with regard to this size. The Assessment Committee will have at least four members, including at least three professors. At least two members, including at least one professor, may not be employed by the Open University. Those members of the Assessment Committee who are not professors must have a PhD. The (co-)supervisors are not part of the Assessment Committee. The process coordinator will ensure that foreign professors who are part of the Assessment Committee have the so-called *ius promovendi*.  
If a PhD thesis consists of articles, only one article may have been written with the involvement of one or more members of the Assessment Committee.
- 3 The Assessment Committee will give a positive decision if there is no more than one vote against approval. If there is more than one vote against, the PhD thesis will be deemed to not provide sufficient evidence of the PhD candidate's ability for her/him to be allowed to defend the PhD thesis.
- 4 If one of the members of the Assessment Committee has given a negative decision (Article 9.3), the substantiation of the negative decision will be made available to the other members of the Assessment Committee as soon as possible.

## Chapter VI The Defence Committee

### Article 10

- 1 If the Assessment Committee is of the opinion that the PhD candidate may be allowed to defend the PhD thesis (see Article 9), the process coordinator will inform the Doctorate Board and the supervisor thereof by means of a dedicated form.

In such case, the duties of the Assessment Committee will be completed. A Defence Committee will take the place of the Assessment Committee. The public defence of the PhD thesis will take place before the Defence Committee. The Defence Committee will decide on whether the PhD can be granted.

- 2 The Defence Committee will be chaired by or on behalf of the chairman of the Doctorate Board. The Defence Committee will consist of the chairman, the (co)supervisor(s) and the members of the Assessment Committee. On the suggestion of the supervisor, the Doctorate Board may allow additional members to join the Defence Committee. These other members must have a PhD and must preferably be professors. If a PhD thesis consists of articles, only one article may have been written with the involvement of one of the members of the Defence Committee. This provision does not apply to (co-)supervisor(s). Including the chairman, the Defence Committee will have a maximum of 10 members. Where appropriate, the Doctorate Board may decide otherwise with regard to size.

The member of the Assessment Committee that did not consider the PhD thesis to be defensible, may take a seat on the Defence Committee as well. Members of the Defence Committee that were not part of the Assessment Committee will be deemed to consider the PhD thesis to be defensible.

- 3 The parties involved are required to preserve the confidentiality of any matters discussed at the closed meetings as referred to in these regulations.

## Chapter VII Distribution of the PhD thesis

### Article 11

- 1 After the Assessment Committee has determined that the PhD candidate will be allowed to defend the PhD thesis, the PhD thesis will be copied. The title page of the PhD thesis must state both the title and subtitle, and must be laid out in a form determined by the Doctorate Board. In addition, the reverse of the title page must state the name(s) of the (co-)supervisor(s) and the members of the Assessment Committee. The front or back cover of the PhD thesis must contain a word mark indicating that the PhD thesis will be defended at the Open University of the Netherlands.

The title page and the reverse of the title page will be submitted to the Doctorate Board for approval. The Doctorate Board may resolve that the PhD thesis may deviate from the provisions in the second full sentence.

- 2 Fifteen physical copies as well as a digital copy of the PhD thesis must be made available to the Doctorate Board no later than three weeks prior to the PhD defence ceremony.
- 3 With regard to a PhD thesis that is to be published in a commercial edition, in full or in part, this commercial edition may not be published before the PhD is granted.

## Chapter VIII The PhD defence ceremony

### Article 12

- 1 After the Assessment Committee has determined that the PhD thesis is defensible, the supervisor can apply to the secretary's office to take an option on three different dates/times for the PhD defence ceremony. The option will be valid for two weeks. Within these two weeks, the supervisor is to inform the secretary's office of the Doctorate Board of the preferred date and time. To that end, the supervisor will consult all the parties involved (the PhD candidate, the (co-)supervisors and the members of the Assessment Committee).  
The Doctorate Board will determine the date and time of the PhD defence ceremony. The PhD defence ceremony will take place at least four weeks after the date and time is determined. In special cases, having heard the PhD candidate, the Doctorate Board may deviate from the four-week term.
- 2 The PhD defence ceremony will take place in public, before the Defence Committee. The Defence Committee will meet half an hour prior to the PhD defence ceremony in order to determine the order of the opposition and prevent overlapping questions from being asked.
- 3 During the PhD defence ceremony, (co-)supervisors will not act as opponents.
- 4 Third parties who wish to raise objections to the PhD thesis and/or the propositions during the PhD defence ceremony, must have permission for that in advance. A request for permission, accompanied by clear substantiation, can be submitted to the chairman of the Defence Committee up to two weeks prior to the PhD defence ceremony. Following consultation of the Doctorate Board, the chairman will decide whether the objections may be raised during the PhD defence ceremony.
- 5 Professors who are not members of the Defence Committee, may join the cortège wearing their robes. The dean of the faculty from which the PhD is to be obtained will communicate this to the secretary's office of the Doctorate Board at least one day prior to the PhD defence ceremony. Such professors will sit in the auditorium, leave the auditorium with the Defence Committee when the Committee retires to deliberate, but will not participate in the deliberations.

- 6 The PhD defence ceremony will consist of a short statement from the PhD candidate on the contents of the PhD thesis that will take approximately 10, though no more than 15 minutes. After that, the PhD candidate will defend the PhD thesis and the propositions against objections of the Defence Committee for 45 minutes.
- 7 The raising of objections and the defence will be in Dutch, unless the PhD candidate or one or more members of the Defence Committee have no command of Dutch.  
In such case, the English language will be used.
- 8 In the event that the PhD thesis has been written by two persons, each of them will defend the thesis separately in accordance with the provisions in the preceding paragraphs.

### **Article 13**

- 1 The PhD will be granted by the Defence Committee.
- 2 When the PhD is granted, the supervisor will, on behalf of the Defence Committee, ask the PhD candidate to promise that, in her/his research, (s)he will observe the principles of academic integrity.

### **Article 14 Cum laude regulations**

- 1 Based on the reactions received from the members of the Assessment Committee, the supervisor can propose to the members of the Assessment Committee that, when the time comes, the Defence Committee award the distinction of 'cum laude' to the degree of 'doctor'.
- 2 The decision on a proposal as referred to in Article 14, paragraph 1 will be adopted by the Assessment Committee if there is no more than one vote against (or one abstention). The supervisor will communicate a positive decision in this regard to the Rector. In consultation with the dean of the relevant faculty, the latter will consult at least one expert in the relevant field of science with regard to the awarding of the 'cum laude' distinction.  
Where a request for a 'cum laude' distinction is being considered, the Assessment Committee's decision on this will be submitted to the Rector no later than four weeks prior to the PhD defence ceremony.
- 3 In order to be eligible for the 'cum laude' distinction, a PhD thesis must be of extra-ordinary quality, and the following criteria may play a part:
  - the PhD thesis phrases clear theoretic and normative starting principles;
  - to that end, the PhD thesis contains a thorough and exhaustive analysis of a given scientific problem;
  - the PhD thesis places that analysis (and, as a result, the problem) in a wider theoretic context;



- in doing so, the PhD thesis proves that the PhD candidate is able to go beyond the margins of his own field of science and beyond those things that are a matter of course;
  - the PhD thesis must make a material contribution to the scientific debate, leading to new points of view or insights;
  - the PhD thesis introduces a new or innovative methodology, and the PhD thesis must be readable and accessible.
- 4 If the expert(s) consulted make a positive recommendation with regard to the awarding of the 'cum laude' distinction as well, the Rector will see to it that the members of the Defence Committee are informed of this proposal and the advice prior to the start of the PhD defence ceremony.
- 5 After the defence, the Defence Committee will decide on the proposal by written vote, after taking the decision on whether or not to award the title of 'doctor'. The quality of the defence will be taken into account in this decision as well. The distinction will be awarded if there is no more than one vote against or one abstention.

#### **Article 15**

- 1 At the request of the supervisor and with the approval of the Assessment Committee, the Doctorate Board may draw up a letter stating that the PhD thesis and the defence thereof were of good quality.
- 2 Such a letter will only be written for candidates from countries in which the awarding of a distinction is customary, but who, pursuant to Article 14, are not eligible for the distinction of 'cum laude'. A request for issue of such a letter must be submitted to the Rector no later than four weeks prior to the date of the PhD defence ceremony. The Rector will forward the request to the members of the Defence Committee without delay. At the same time, the Doctorate Board will be asked to determine whether the candidate is eligible for such a letter on formal grounds.  
The Defence Committee will be charged with the assessment.
- 3 After the defence, the Defence Committee will decide on the relevant letter by written vote, after taking the decision on whether or not to award the title of 'doctor'. The quality of the defence will be taken into account in this decision as well. The positive decision will be taken if there is no more than one vote against or one abstention.  
The letter will be signed by the chairman of the Defence Committee, as well as by the Rector and the supervisor(s).

**Article 16**

- 1 As evidence of the PhD being granted, the doctor will receive a certificate, signed by the chairman of the Doctorate Board or a deputy to be appointed by her/him, and by the (co-)supervisor(s). The certificate will be made available in the Dutch or the English language, at the option of the PhD candidate. At the request of the doctor, (s)he will – at her/his option – be provided with a Dutch, English, French or German translation of the certificate.
- 2 A distinction as referred to in Article 14, first paragraph, will be stated on the certificate.

**Article 17**

- 1 PhD defence ceremonies will be held at the Open University of the Netherlands (OUNL) in Heerlen (in the Pretoria building). Only in very specific, special cases can this be deviated from.  
When requesting that the Doctorate Board hold the PhD defence ceremony at a venue other than the OUNL in Heerlen, the supervisor will have to provide convincing, substantive arguments for this. These will be assessed by the Doctorate Board. Arguments that are logistic and/or practical in nature are insufficient in themselves.
- 2 The Doctorate Board may set additional conditions for PhD defence ceremonies held elsewhere.

**Chapter IX Joint doctorate****Article 18**

- 1 A joint doctorate can be obtained from the university.
- 2 The doctorate will be granted by the Doctorate Board, along with a similar body of the partner institution(s).
- 3 A joint doctorate can only be obtained with the written permission of the Rector, after hearing the Doctorate Board. To this end, the intended supervisor and the dean of the faculty at which the supervisor is appointed must submit a written request for a joint doctorate to the Doctorate Board.
- 4 This request must set out the contents and composition of the track of the joint doctorate, and show that the PhD thesis will be prepared in a formal collaboration with the partner(s) (that is laid down in a collaboration agreement). The partner(s) must make a substantial contribution to the PhD track.

- 5 In the event of a joint doctorate, the PhD candidate will conduct the research under the responsibility of a supervisor of the OUNL and a supervisor of each individual partner institution with which it collaborates as referred to in the preceding paragraph.
- 6 The joint doctorate takes place with due observance of the respective regulations of the partner institutions.
- 7 In the event of a joint doctorate, the PhD thesis requires the approval of a Defence Committee that is composed in consultation with the partner(s). This committee will consist of a supervisor from each of the collaborating universities.
- 8 At the start of the track of the joint doctorate, it will be determined where the PhD defence ceremony will take place. The PhD defence ceremony will be in accordance with the rules that apply with the partner on whose premises the PhD defence ceremony takes place.
- 9 As evidence of the joint doctorate being granted, the doctor will receive a certificate. The form of this certificate will be determined in consultation between the partner(s).

## **Chapter X The settlement of disputes**

### **Article 19**

- 1 The provisions of the Dutch General Administrative Law Act (Algemene wet bestuursrecht, Awb) apply.
- 2 In the event that, in the implementation of the provisions of these regulations, there is a dispute on a decision of the Doctorate Board, an interested party can submit a substantiated notice of objection to the Doctorate Board within six weeks of being informed of the decision.
- 3 The Doctorate Board will inform the submitter and the other parties involved of its decision no more than ten weeks after receipt of the notice of objection, in writing, and providing reasons.
- 4 The submitter of the notice of objection can appeal a decision of the Doctorate Board on the objection submitted to the court within six weeks of the decision being communicated to the submitter of the notice of objection.

## **Chapter XI Honorary PhDs**

### **Article 20**

Honorary PhDs are granted by and before the Doctorate Board, in a manner to be determined by this board.

## **Chapter XII Final provisions and transitional provisions**

### **Article 21**

The Doctorate Board will decide in all cases that are not provided for in these regulations.

### **Article 22**

These regulations take effect on 1 May 2018 and replace the regulations with reference U2013/2.952

Thus adopted by the Doctorate Board of the Open University on 11 October 2023.