



UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

PhD survey report 2020

Appendix II - Highlights

Central PhD council, 2020

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The following highlights offer an overview of the outcomes of the UvA Central PhD Council PhD survey of 2020. For any questions about the survey or the full report, please contact the CPC at cpc@uva.nl.

The full report will be made available on the Central PhD Council section of the UvA website.

General characteristics

- 743 PhD candidates responded to the survey, of which 605 completed the survey.
- The percentage of respondents across faculties resembled the distribution of PhD candidates across faculties (apart from FGW, which was slightly underrepresented in the survey).
- A slight majority of the respondents had a Dutch nationality (62%).
- A slight majority of the respondents did not have an employment contract at the UvA (PNID; 60%).
 - The percentage of PNID was high at ACTA and AMC, and low at FGW and LAW.
- Most responding PhD candidates had a >3 years and ≤4 years project (68%), followed by a project duration of ≤3 years (24%).
 - Short projects (>3 years and ≤4 years) were quite common at ACTA, AMC, FEB, and LAW, less common at FGW and FMG, and rare at FNWI.

Starting and finishing a PhD project

- Who is responsible for the project design differs largely between faculties?
 - In traditional beta-faculties (ACTA, AMC, FNWI), supervisors take more responsibilities for the project design.
 - In LAW and FGW, PhD candidates take most responsibility for the project design.
- PhD candidates received most information on employment or scholarship conditions through their daily supervisor (46%), followed by an HR appointment (38%) and a job interview (34%).
 - A substantial portion of PhD candidates did not feel properly informed about their employment/scholarship conditions (28%).
 - A substantial portion of PhD candidates experienced problems because they were not properly informed about their employment/scholarship conditions (15%).
 - The percentage of PhD candidates that felt properly informed is lower in faculties where HR appointments are less common (LAW, FMG, and FGW).
- A substantial portion of international PhD candidates did not receive assistance in finding housing (13%) or other formalities as insurances and bank matters (26%), but would have liked such assistance.
- A majority of PhD candidates considered the requirements of the PhD thesis to be clear (72%).
- A majority (57%) of PhD candidates does not know whether funding is available for printing the PhD thesis.

Research environment

- Most PhD candidates indicate that the offered research facilities are adequate (88%).
 - Even though PhD candidates indicate that facilities are adequate, not all PhD candidates have access to a computer or software.
- Travel or training budget are often insufficient (15% and 11% for travel and training, respectively), not available (7% and 8%), or are unknown to the PhD candidate (15% and 19%).
- A substantial percentage of PhD candidates received a monthly net income lower than €1500 (13%).
 - This is more common across non-Dutch PhD candidates (22%) compared to Dutch PhD candidates (7%), and across PNID (17%) compared to PID (5%).
- Contact and satisfaction with the research community differs across faculties, types of PhD candidates, and nationalities:

- Most PhD candidates meet other researchers daily (36%) or regularly (35%), though a substantial group of PhD candidates rarely meets other researchers (21%),
- At FGW, a substantial percentage of PhD candidates rarely meets other researchers and is dissatisfied with their social contacts at work.
- PID and Dutch PhD candidates are more often satisfied with the social contacts at work compared to PNID and non-Dutch PhD candidates.
- Dutch PhD candidates less often disagree with the research community providing opportunities to become involved in a broader research culture compared to non-Dutch PhD candidates.
- Most (70%) PhD candidates answer that their research group openly discusses research integrity issues
 - This percentage was substantially lower at LAW compared to other faculties.

Supervision

- Most PhD candidates are supervised by one promotor and one co-promotor, two promotors, or one promotor and two co-promotors.
 - PhD candidates at ACTA and AMC most often have large supervisory teams.
 - Substantial portions of PhD candidates at FEB (14%) and FNWI (17%) reported to have only one supervisor.
- Most PhD candidates meet their supervisor once a week, but this differed largely between faculties.
 - At the traditional beta faculties (ACTA, AMC, FNWI) the majority of PhD candidates meets their supervisor at least once a week.
 - At FEB and FMG, about half of the PhD candidates meet their supervisor at least once a week.
 - At FGW and LAW, most PhD candidates meet their supervisor less than once a month.
 - The satisfaction with the number of supervision appointments did not differ substantially between faculties.
- A majority of PhD candidates (ranging from 72 to 90% between faculties) are satisfied with supervision.
- A substantial percentage of PhD candidates (12%) is extremely dissatisfied with the supervision they receive.
- Substantial percentages of PhD candidates disagreed with the statement that supervisors self-evaluate their behaviour and viewpoints (21%).

Education

- Not every PhD candidate is enrolled in a graduate school and/or familiar with its role.
 - A third of PhD candidates does not know if they are enrolled in a graduate school.
 - At the AMC, almost all PhD candidates indicate that they are enrolled.
 - Of PhD candidates that are enrolled, a substantial portion (22%) is not familiar with (the role of) the graduate school.
 - But 73% of PhD candidates that are enrolled are satisfied with the graduate school.
 - PhD candidates find offering courses, symposia, workshops etc. the most relevant role of the graduate school.
- Most PhD candidates have access to seminars and conferences (89%)
- Most PhD candidates have access to general skills courses and workshops (86%)
 - Most PhD candidates are satisfied with the number and the diversity of general-skills activities available at the UvA and the information they receive about such activities.
 - Especially at LAW and FMG, quite some PhD candidates are dissatisfied with the number and variety of, and the information provision about general-skills activities.
- Most PhD candidates have access to discipline specific courses and workshops (72%)

- Most PhD candidates are satisfied with the number and the diversity of discipline-specific courses available at the UvA and the information they receive about such activities.
- At LAW, FGW, and FNWI a large portion of PhD candidates was dissatisfied with the number and diversity of discipline-specific courses.
- At LAW, FNWI, and FMG information provision about discipline-specific courses.
- Only half of the PhD candidates reported to have access to teacher-training activities and career orientation activities (50%)
 - Most PhD candidates are satisfied with the number of teacher-training activities available at the UvA
 - About half of the PhD candidates is satisfied with the diversity of and the information they receive about teacher-training activities.
 - Especially at FGW, FMG, and LAW, substantial percentages of PhD candidates are dissatisfied with the number and variety of, and the information provision about teacher-training activities.
- Less than half of the PhD candidates reported to have access to career orientation activities (44%)
 - About half of the PhD candidates are satisfied with the number and the diversity of career-orientation activities available at the UvA and the information they receive about such activities.
 - A substantial percentage was dissatisfied with the number and the diversity of career-orientation activities available at the UvA and the information they receive about such activities.
- A substantial percentage of PhD candidates (21%) does not have sufficient time to participate in education activities.
 - Especially at ACTA, FMG, and FGW, PhD candidates had too little time to participate in education activities.

Teaching

- 71% of PhD candidates teaches or supervises students.
 - 38% of the PhD candidates has a teaching obligation.
 - 33% of the PhD candidates teach voluntarily.
- The teaching load varies across PhD candidates.
 - Most teaching PhD candidates teach and supervise up to 4 hours a week.
 - At FEB, most teaching PhD candidates teach and supervise 4 to 8 hours a week.
 - A substantial percentage of PhD candidates (19%) spends more than 8 hours per week teaching and supervising students.
- Not all PhD candidates feel prepared to teach.
 - 50% agrees that teacher-training activities prepare them well for teaching and supervision.
 - This percentage was higher at ACTA and FNWI.
 - 23% disagrees that teacher-training activities prepare them well for teaching and supervision.
 - This percentage was higher at LAW, FEB, and FGW.

Progress and wellbeing

- A large percentage of PhD candidates did not have a go/no-go meeting (45%).
 - At AMC and ACTA, the majority of PhD candidates did not have a go/no-go meeting
 - The majority of PNID did not have a go/no-go meeting
- One third (34%) of PhD candidates did not have any (annual) progress reviews.
- Approximately equally large percentages of PhD candidates were on schedule (47%) or had fallen behind schedule (42%).
 - Two thirds (67%) of PhD candidates expect a delay within a range of 3-12 months

- Most of the PhD candidates that faced delays (76%) had not made any arrangement yet or did not know whether arrangements had been made.
- Most PhD candidates named problems with their experiment or data collection (41%), followed by the original plans being too ambitious (38%), bad time management (23%), and (mental) illness (19%) as reason for delays.
- More than half of all PhD candidates (51%) indicates the workload as high, with 10% describing it as too high, and 38% describing it as normal.
 - Work interruptions, the pressure to publish, the difficulty of the work, and the amount of work stand out as reasons for high work pressure.
- Less than half of all PhD candidates (46%) rates their wellbeing as good, 45% rates it as fair and 6% as poor.
 - Interaction with colleagues is the most important positive factor for wellbeing. Especially at FEB (41%) and FMG (43%), the contact with the daily supervisor was often mentioned as positive impact on wellbeing.
 - Teaching is often mentioned as having a negative impact on wellbeing at FEB (25%), as is employment after the PhD trajectory at FEB (38%), FGW (30%), and FMG (28%).

Social safety

- Most PhD candidates (70%) have not experienced any undesirable social conduct in the past year.
- A large portion of PhD candidates (24%) sporadically experienced undesirable social conduct in the past year.
- A small but substantial percentage of PhD candidates (6%) experienced undesirable social conduct on a regular basis (monthly-daily).
- 64 PhD candidates described the experienced social misconduct.
 - Reported cases included bullying, gossip or exclusion by co-workers, sexist jokes and inappropriate physical contact.
 - The perpetrator was mostly the supervisor (38%).
 - The reported behaviour was mostly systemic (66%).
 - To resolve these cases, most PhD candidates (25%) turned to their supervisor (if this was not the perpetrator), followed by doing nothing (23%), and speaking with the perpetrator (16%).
 - Only in few of these cases, the PhD candidate to an official office as a confidential advisor (3%), ARBO (5%), or HR (2%).
 - 37% of the PhD candidates that had acted to resolve the reported incidents indicated that the action had resolved the social misconduct. 30% of the candidates were satisfied with the undertaken action.

Career perspectives

- Most PhD candidates aspire a research career: within academia (44%) and/or outside academia (36%).
 - AMC had the largest percentage (42%) of PhD candidates aspire a non-research career.
 - Dutch PhD candidates aspired a non-research career (36%) more often compared to non-Dutch PhD candidates (16%).
- Most PhD candidates that indicated to aspire another career than research inside academia, aspired a career in a university (29%), followed by government (23%), industry (19%), or an NGO (19%). These percentages varied largely across faculties.
- The feeling to be encouraged by supervisors to think about a future career differed across PhD candidates.
 - A majority (59%) of the PhD candidates felt encouraged by their supervisors.
 - Though a substantial (20%) group did not feel encouraged.
 - Especially at ACTA (81%), FEB (70%), and LAW (67%), many PhD candidates felt encouraged to think about their future career, compared to FGW (51%) and FMG (51%).