



Graduate School for the Humanities (GSH)

Sandwich PhD Programmes at the Faculty of Arts

Information and first steps for potential supervisors

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1. What & why?

What is this about?

This document is intended as a first source of information for members of staff at the Faculty of Arts who

- are generally interested in internationalisation at PhD level
- are interested in initiating a Sandwich PhD trajectory as main supervisors (also: promotor) or daily supervisors
- are already in the process of setting up such a trajectory

Please note that this is a document that will be updated when relevant. We advise you to regularly check for such updates. No rights can be derived from the contents of this document.

Why Sandwich PhDs?

In its [Strategic Plan for 2021-2026](#), the Faculty of Arts has committed itself to strengthen its international collaborations, with a particular emphasis on PhD level. One key objective in this regard is to double the current numbers of Sandwich PhDs.

Sandwich PhDs can not only contribute to existing research and broaden or deepen existing expertise at the Faculty; co-supervisions in Sandwich PhD constellations also

- contribute fundamentally to internationalisation at chair group, Faculty, and University levels
- are often particularly sustainable in terms of research remit and long-lasting collaborations with external partners

By establishing Sandwich PhD collaborations, you actively contribute to

- the Faculty's strategic vision of an inclusive, strongly international institution
- the University's strategic key objective to attract and retain an excellent and diverse community of international staff and students

The Faculty actively supports this strategy by providing either tops ups or up to 50% funding, depending on the funding scheme (see below).

2. Definitions

Sandwich PhD

In this document, the term “Sandwich PhD” will be used as an umbrella term for

- Double Degree PhDs
- Joint Degree PhDs
-

What all these formats, summarised under the term “Sandwich PhD” have in common is that

- the respective PhDs are **supervised by members of staff from the UG and from an international partner university**
- the PhDs are **funded**, either partially or fully, by **external** entities (e.g., governmental agencies and/or the respective partner universities). If partially, the UG often contributes either a maximum of 50% or a “top up”
- they receive a **degree from the UG**
- In any case, the defence of the thesis **must take place first at the UG**

For details, see chapter 3. *PhD types & funding formats* below.

Partner

The partners with which the UG cooperates in cases of Double and Joint PhDs can be universities within or outside the UG strategic partnership scheme. In principle, any university with which individual staff members have cooperated or would like to cooperate can become a partner for a Sandwich PhD project.

See the appendix for an overview of our Strategic and current partners.

3. Definitions ‘double/joint’ degree

The term “Sandwich PhD” is used in various ways throughout academia.¹ In the context of this document, it comprises the following formats, all of which are registered in Hora Finita, and all of which lead to the candidate defending their thesis at the UG and subsequently receiving a degree from the UG² (degree mobility). In some countries, universities are only allowed to issue a "double degree" or only a "joint degree".

A "Joint Degree" means that the combined educational programmes lead to a joint diploma and a joint degree. The institutions involved are jointly responsible for the entire training and form an integrated curriculum. This is the most extensive form of collaboration, as it involves integration in all areas of the educational programme, including the degree or diploma. Institutions must agree on all matters concerning the study programme, including the form and contents of the degree.

A "Double Degree" (also “double doctorate” or “cotutelle”) programme means that two diplomas are linked to the joint programme (one performance), and includes joint supervision from supervisors from two universities. One achievement leads to two degrees. A "double degree" programme therefore consists of a (single) degree from the University of Groningen and a (single) degree from the other institution, which together produces a "double degree". A Double Degree either combines elements of two existing programmes or can be based on one integrated training and supervision programme. There are usually two PhD ceremonies, one at each university.

The difference between a joint and double doctorate lies in the number of diplomas issued (one in the case of a joint doctorate, two in the case of a double doctorate).

In order to qualify for a Joint or Double Degree, the PhD candidate has to spend at least 6 months at the respective partner university. Please note: the requested minimum stay can be different in the partner university.

¹ In other contexts (outside of the Faculty of Arts), the term is sometimes used to address all cases in which a PhD candidate undertakes their research at two or more institutions; this broad use then also includes e.g. visiting researchers / visiting PhDs (“non-degree mobility”) who are initially not planning to obtain a degree from the UG. Such cases are not included in our definition of “Sandwich PhDs” in this document. However, such visiting PhD students (which are regularly hosted by the GSH) might very well become *interested in* “becoming” a Sandwich PhD, i.e. in obtaining an UG degree, during their stay - see below 5. *Steps & procedures - General tips*.

² As a rule, students must stay at the UG for a minimum of 6 months in order to obtain a degree.

4. Funding formats

What the options summarised under the term “Sandwich PhD” have in common is that PhD research takes place in a context of international collaboration.

The PhDs are usually funded, either partially or fully, by external entities. In case of collaboration between the UG and a (strategic) partner, the Faculty of Arts may provide up to 50% funding for approved projects. Candidates may also fund their PhD trajectory at the Faculty of Arts with scholarships from **a foreign national research council** (e.g., CSC, LPDP, CONACYT, ANID, MINCIENCIAS). From the UG side, this external funding can be complemented with a “top-up”; this is the more common form of co-funding, for which many Sandwich PhDs qualify. The UG complements the difference between the amount received from external partners and the standard amount set by the CvB at the UG.

NB The top-up is paid out during the time the PhD is **physically present in the Netherlands and doing their research at the UG**. A top-up is not possible in situations where a PhD is receiving a salary.

It is also important to note that a PhD trajectory can be either 3 or 4 years.

5. Example testimonials

At the Faculty of Arts, Sandwich PhD projects often co-evolve with collaborations between UG scholars and important strategic partners. The following exemplary testimonials from a supervisor with ample experience in supervising externally funded and Double Degree candidates and from a PhD candidate with external funding will provide an impression of practical experience with the process.

The supervisor's perspective: Prof. Dr. Pablo Valdivia

is Chair of European Culture and Literature and has ample experience in supervising Double PhDs and other externally funded candidates. In his [testimonial, accessible here](#), Professor Valdivia discusses his collaboration with the [Universidad de Antioquia](#).

The PhD's perspective: Leonardo Salvador Arriagada Beltrán

completed his PhD trajectory at UG and University of Chile in 2023:

I will always look back with joy on my time at GSH. It was a place where I found unparalleled human support from my supervisors and mentor. Entering UG through the PhD sandwich program allowed me to compare the development of my doctoral research on art and AI both outside and within GSH. The transformation upon entry was absolutely positive. My work gained significantly more visibility at UG. Shortly after arriving in Groningen, I received dual distinctions for my research—a prize for the best scientific article and a people's choice award at the Nederland Digitaal Conference in 2021. Both honors were bestowed by the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy. UG provided extensive coverage of this recognition, leading to numerous invitations to international conferences, press interviews, and requests for talks in study groups. The university's rector personally congratulated me. Such details value your work and bolster the confidence of a young researcher. I am deeply grateful for that.

I recommend everyone who hesitates to join this program go ahead. You won't regret it. It's even an excellent platform for future career projection. Indeed, two weeks after receiving my PhD, I was invited to a postdoctoral project at UG, which I hope secures funding for my return to my beloved university. Speaking of numbers, my productivity at GSH includes 7 scientific articles, 3 book chapters, 2 awards, 18 academic and outreach presentations, and 17 media appearances and interviews. I hope you, too, can have a similar or even better experience.

The PhD's perspective: Rebecca Pitt

PhD-candidate (Theoretical Linguistics), University of Groningen and Stellenbosch University.

I decided to pursue my PhD jointly with the University of Groningen and my home university (Stellenbosch University, South Africa) given the opportunities the track opens, which are not as readily accessible in my local context alone. In particular, I am able to produce research that is valuable to my local community, while also sharing and nurturing my research within the greater international research community. As a trainee-researcher, learning to produce research on these two levels is vital as it sets the foundation for meaningful research. This is, however, a challenging endeavour – even more so without community. Gaining a research community at RUG has been the most rewarding part of my RUG-experience: sharing in the ups and downs of PhD life with peers, in the same boat as you, is invaluable. It is also through a lively research environment that I have grown

exponentially as a researcher through robust training programmes, active research groups, and continuous opportunities to engage with seasoned academics – all ingredients for a fruitful candidacy!

6. Application: steps & procedures

Application Double and Joint PhDs - Procedure on the UG side

The following steps address procedures at the UG. The supervisors and candidates need to inquire about the steps necessary with the respective partner institution.

[Via this link](#) (only accessible for UG staff) you find templates of Joint or Double degree agreements and the Graduate School contact persons.

1) Pre-application phase (checking feasibility):

- a) PhD candidates first need to **contact the Graduate programme coordination of their home institution** in order to get the **approval** to apply for the Double or Joint Degree Programme.
- b) It is the responsibility of the PhD and supervisor to check the timeline requirements at the home institution to ensure feasibility.
- c) The candidate then needs to find supervisors both at the UG Faculty of Arts and at the partner university. Both institutions should have at least one main supervisor (full professor / associate or assistant professor with ius promovendi).
- d) The supervisor at the UG should subsequently submit the following documents to the GSH director (directeurgsh@rug.nl) and the relevant Research Institute director ([ICOG/CLCG/GIA](#)), with the GSH Sandwich PhD Coordinator (Manou Jonink) in cc (m.e.jonink@rug.nl):
 - i) research proposal
 - ii) CV
 - iii) language certificate (see *Proof of English language proficiency on [this page](#)*)

2) Official application at GSH: After the approval of the proposal, cv and language qualifications a complete application then needs to be submitted to the GSH via: gsh-groningen@rug.nl, with the GSH Sandwich PhD Coordinator (Manou Jonink) in CC (m.e.jonink@rug.nl):

- a) [A Personal Data/Application form](#), filled in (in English) and signed,
- b) [Research proposal, including a motivational statement \(form\)](#),
- c) Support letter by the UG supervisor,
- d) CV (incl. educational/professional history, publications & prizes/awards),
- e) Copy of diploma (highest academic degree obtained),
- f) Scan of passport,
- g) [Financial statement \(template\)](#),
- h) Official scholarship letter (if applicable)
- i) Proof of English language proficiency, if you intend to write your thesis in English (exemptions possible - contact GSH for details)

3) Contract phase: If the candidate is admitted to the GSH PhD programme, a Joint or Double Degree Contract will be set up by the GSH Sandwich PhD coordinator (Manou Jonink).

- The supervisor contacts Manou via m.e.jonink@rug.nl and informs her of who the relevant counterpart is at the partner institution (i.e. the person there who oversees the agreements for DD/JD PhDs).

NB if the partner institution works with tight deadlines for DD/JD agreements, please inform Manou of this as soon as possible.

- Manou oversees the process in collaboration with the UG legal department - the supervisor can be cc'd in relevant email interaction between UG and the partner if preferred.
- Once a contract is ready to sign, signatures will be collected either digitally or wet. Contracts are signed by the presidents of both institutions, the directors of the graduate schools, the supervisors and co-supervisors. The PhD candidate signs to indicate they have read the agreement.

Please note that drafting the contract will take a minimum of 2 months and can take up to 18 months, depending on the laws and regulations regarding higher education, such as the duration of the educational programme and graduation requirements, from both universities. These differ from country to country and it can be a challenge to find common ground.

Registration - Procedure on the UG side

If a candidate's application is successful, the GSH coordinator, **Rachael Fletcher**, will reach out to the candidate to collect any further necessary documents.

Please note that the preparation of documents might be time-intensive, especially for candidates from outside the EU who need a visa; therefore, candidates are advised to start preparation as early as possible. For candidates who do require a visa, it takes 3 months minimum to process. This should be taken into account when planning start dates at the UG.

The GSH Coordinator **Rachael Fletcher** (r.l.fletcher@rug.nl) is the contact person for registration at the UG (e.g., contract and visa).

Non-EU citizens will need a long-stay visa for over 90 days (called MVV). **Visa procedures for non-EU citizens must never be initiated by the students themselves, but always by the UG.** As soon as the candidate's application is approved, they must contact the GSH Coordinator Rachael Fletcher (r.l.fletcher@rug.nl) about the visa.

General tips: How to attract externally funded PhDs

- Contact peers who supervise externally funded PhDs and learn from their experience
- Attend the matchmaking events which are regularly announced by GSH
- To learn more about specific strategic partner universities and existing UG contacts there, get in touch with the [policy officers for international strategy and relations](#). The policy officers can also put you in contact with region-specific Academic Ambassadors at the University of Groningen
- Candidates for Sandwich PhDs are often recruited from MA programmes at strategic partner universities. UG contacts at these universities can be of help with the search. For Double Degree PhDs, existing PhD programmes in the strategic partner network are promising sources
- Visiting doctoral researchers (PhDs enrolled at another university) might, during their stay in Groningen, develop the ambition to "become" a Sandwich PhD. Such students can be particularly promising candidates as they are already familiar with the UG and (potential) supervisors. As all other candidates, they need to fulfil the requirements set out above

7. FAQs

Will Double Degree PhD students defend their thesis twice?

That depends on the PhD regulations of the partner university. If a candidate wants to obtain a degree from the University of Groningen, it is required that they defend their thesis at the UG (first). Whether a defence is required at the partner institution depends on the legal framework of that institution. The PhD supervisor from the partner institution will be invited to attend the UG PhD ceremony, and the PhD assessment committee should include an external reviewer.

Can students who are already enrolled in a PhD programme at their home university still apply for a Double or Joint PhD position?

In principle yes, however this depends on many factors, such as how far they are in their studies, whether they require funding by the Faculty of Arts for their obligatory stay of at least 6 months at the UG, and whether they would be able to find a supervisor at the UG. Students should discuss these options with their primary supervisor first, and then contact a known potential supervisor at the UG and the Graduate School for further steps.

What about visas and accommodation?

The UG needs at least four months between admission and the actual starting date of the student's stay. The main reasons for this are:

- Visa: In case the candidate is not an EU national, the university needs to apply for a long-stay visa for the candidate. (Note that in the case of a stay of more than 90 hours, candidates should never apply for a visa themselves - this must be done via the UG.) For questions about the visa procedure, please contact the Immigration Service Desk.
- Housing: Finding accommodation in Groningen is the student's own responsibility. The university can guide them in this process. Ample time should be allowed for the search.

8. Appendix

Important contacts

For general questions: Manou Jonink, GSH Internationalisation Officer, m.e.jonink@rug.nl

For questions on specific partners and contacts: [Office for International Strategy and Relations](#)

If you are looking for a model contract, please contact Manou Jonink.

Strategic Partners of the University of Groningen

Partner full name	Region	Country	ISR Coordinator
Stellenbosch University	Africa	South Africa	Anita Veltmaat
Nanyang Technological University	Asia	Singapore	Tim Zwaagstra
Osaka University	Asia	Japan	Tim Zwaagstra
Universitas Gadjah Mada	Asia	Indonesia	Tim Zwaagstra
Universidad de Antioquia	Latin America	Colombia	Joyce Fongers
Universidad de Chile	Latin America	Chile	Joyce Fongers
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México	Latin America	Mexico	Joyce Fongers
Universidade de São Paulo	Latin America	Brazil	Joyce Fongers
Macquarie University	Oceania	Australia	John Falvey

Examples for the Faculty of Arts' current and past Sandwich PhD cooperations

Universiteit Antwerpen, Belgium
Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg, Germany
Charles University, Czech Republic - Prague
Cyprus University, Cyprus
Emory University, USA - Georgia - Atlanta
Greenwich University, United Kingdom
James Cook University, Australia - Townsville
Johannesburg University, South Africa
Leuven Katholieke Universiteit, Belgium
Lille University, France
Lucca University, Italy
Macquarie University, Australia - Sydney
McGill University, Canada - Montreal
Nantes University, France
Sao Paulo School of Business Administration, Brazil
Sapienza Università di Roma, Italy

St Andrews University, Scotland
Stockholm University, Sweden
Strasbourg University, France
Tartu University, Estonia
Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain
Universidad de Chile, Chile - Santiago
Universidad de La Frontera, Chile - Temuco
University Erfurt, Germany
University of Lausanne, Switzerland
University of Nantes, France
University of Pisa, Italy
University of Roma Tre, Italy
University of the Free State, South Africa - Bloemfontein
University of the Gambia, Gambia
York University, United Kingdom

Examples for scholarships and bursaries obtained by Sandwich PhDs at the Faculty of Arts

Colciencias Scholarship, Colombian National Research Council
Columbia School Linguistic Society (CSLS)
CONACYT scholarship, Mexican National Research Council
ANID, Chilean National Research Council
CSC, Chinese National Research Council
ERC Research Programme 'ArchSci2020', European Research Council
ESR Research Programme SeaChanges
Fellowship Rijksmuseum A'dam
IDEALAB, International Research Consortium
LPDP, Indonesia Endowment Fund for Education Agency
Volkswagen Stiftung, Germany

Grantfinder Database

On [this webpage](#) you can find more information about obtaining a grant to finance your research. An overview [can be found here](#).