



Université  
de Liège

Doctoral Council

# GET YOUR PHD!

## University of Liège PhD guide





## *Pars en thèse*

*Dear PhD candidate,*



This guide's title sounds like an order. It is like an irrepressible appeal inviting you to you embark on a new adventure without any hesitation... At the same time, it refers to a parenthesis, suspended time, reflection rather than precipitation. This is, of course, no coincidence.

If you take a look at “Pars-en-thèse” today, it's because you have arrived at a decisive moment in your personal and professional development. So take some time to read and reflect. This guide provides a great deal of information which you will find indispensable and, what's more, it will connect you to those who have taken the plunge of entering a PhD programme before you!

Perhaps you are one of those who felt a vocation for research early on, but it is more likely you have discovered the prospect of doing a PhD only very recently within the scope of your Master's thesis or recruitment as a research and teaching assistant or project researcher. We now invite you to consider doctoral studies as a real professional and personal experience, as a stepping stone towards a future that allows you to reach your full potential. Doctoral studies are anything but a withdrawal or excessive specialisation!

During your doctoral studies you will expand your knowledge and share ideas with the world. If you join us, you will not do a PhD at Liège University, but thanks to Liège University you will discover a wider network of researchers; from Liège you will fan out and you will make Liège known abroad...

You will soon find out that doing a PhD is not as testing as it might sound and that it will no doubt be the most fertile and creative parenthesis of your life. Innovate, change, move... put your knowledge and competencies into action. Doctoral studies require young people to commit themselves... enter the world through the front door of research.

Embark on a thesis! You will see, you will be amazed!

*We look forward to seeing you soon*

Gentiane Haesbroeck,  
*President of the Doctoral Council*

## Starting a PhD?

Sophia is thinking about starting a PhD... Is this the opportunity to explore the fascinating subject she treated in her Master's thesis in depth? She has lots of questions and does not know whom to turn to...

*Where can I find information? Do I have to discuss this with my thesis supervisor first? In which field can I do a PhD? And what is possible for me after the doctoral studies? Is this adventure something for me? Who can guide me?*



## SELECTING A PHD TOPIC

You become a researcher by researching... Research work represents the essence of the PhD. In addition, selecting a research topic is important. By conducting research you learn how to become a researcher, but your research will proceed far more smoothly if you are interested in and curious about the subject! The research topic can be proposed by the PhD candidate themselves, who may ask a professor or an experienced doctor to provide guidance and become their supervisor. However, research topics are usually proposed by the supervisor, who integrates them into the research conducted within their research group. In the end, it is of little importance how the PhD is started; the in-depth relationship between a PhD candidate and their thesis subject will necessarily be creative!


## A PHD IN WHICH DOMAIN?

A PhD provides a unique opportunity to explore a topic you feel passionate about in depth! This takes place in one of the domains covered by the 'Paysage' Decree, and as far as Liège University is concerned in particular:

Architecture and Urban Planning – Art Sciences – Criminology – History, Art and Archaeology – Information and Communication – Languages, Literatures and Translation Studies – Philosophy – Sciences – Agronomy and Bio-Engineering – Biomedical and Pharmaceutical Sciences – Motor Skills – Public Health – Engineering Sciences and Technology – Dental Sciences – Economics and Business Management – Law – Medical Sciences – Political and Social Sciences – Psychology and Education – Veterinary Sciences.

In practice, a PhD is a long-term “parenthesis” or, according to others, a “test”, which can be both rewarding and difficult, in which you learn to assert yourself and excel, but you have to dare to take the plunge...

## WHOM TO TURN TO?

- ✓ **Professors:** Daring, from the start, to ask your supervisory staff any questions which come to mind is an essential step in outlining the specific characteristics of the research, the subject requirements, financing possibilities, the supervisor’s guidance style, etc., all the more so because PhD enrolment requires the approval of supervisory staff.
- ✓ **Other PhD candidates and doctors:** Informal contacts between PhD candidates are an essential type of support during doctoral studies, also at the very beginning... Those who have started a PhD can discuss their successes and achievements as well as their regrets and failures. Those who have successfully completed a PhD can attest to their great resilience. Watch the video 
- ✓ **Network of PhD Students**

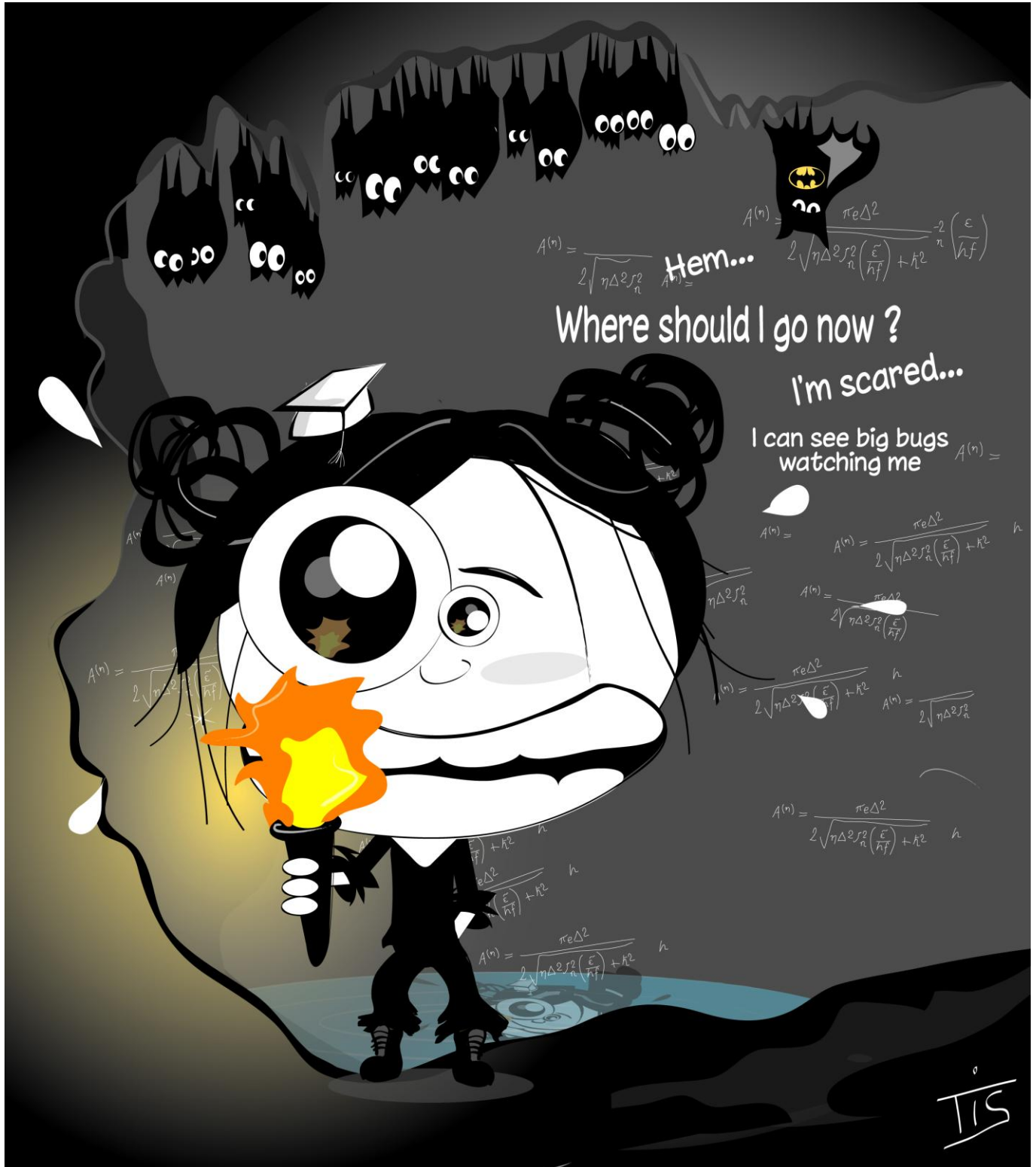
A PhD is an experience to be shared with the Network of PhD Students (Réseau des Doctorants – ReD), an association aimed at bringing together the PhD candidates of Liège University. ReD is intended as an inter-faculty entity as PhD candidates are often faced with the same problems and questions, regardless of their area of research. It makes dialogue between individuals as well as interdisciplinary meetings possible, often sources of inspiration and innovation in research.

Watch the video concerning the Network of PhD Students!



- ✓ **The Doctoral Affairs service of ARD:** Those who undertake a doctoral degree ask themselves certain questions about the required competencies, the practical organisation, the enrolment procedures, financing possibilities, etc. Information can be found in this document and on the Internet to shed light on the matter and specify the options [www.ulg.ac.be/phd](http://www.ulg.ac.be/phd)

What steps need to be taken to enter a PhD programme, Sophia wonders. She learns she also will have to enrol in a PhD training programme. What is this PhD training exactly?



### WHAT ARE THE CONDITIONS FOR ACCESS TO A DOCTORAL PROGRAMME?

The first condition for access to a doctoral programme is having completed an initial training programme of at least 300 credits, usually in the scientific field of the thesis.

The second requirement is having distinguished oneself (in the broadest sense) during one's studies.

The third requirement is having a sufficiently well-defined research topic as well as written proof that a professor or researcher at ULg agrees to supervise the research. The supervisor is in fact the first person to accompany and guide you throughout your doctoral studies from the very beginning.

The role of the doctoral colleges is to organise and manage the doctoral process at the level of the corresponding discipline. The organisation of doctoral programmes by each college is specified in specific regulations.

### WHAT STEPS ARE REQUIRED FOR ADMISSION AND ENROLMENT?

✓ **Admission procedures:** The Admissions Office may assist you with all questions and steps relating to admission to a PhD programme.

✓ **Enrolment procedures:**

To enter a PhD programme, you need the authorisation of the doctoral college of the domain in which you wish to do your PhD (see [list of colleges](#)). The PhD candidate or their supervisor needs to contact the college (more detailed contact information can be found at [the faculty pages](#) dedicated to PhD).

The PhD candidate has to enrol in the PhD training programme and in the PhD programme at the same time; tuition fees only have to be paid once since enrolment in both programmes takes place simultaneously. Pursuant to the 'Paysage' Decree, enrolment is free for PhD candidates who are also ULg staff members (including members of FNRS and associated funds).

[Enrolment procedure](#)

[Doctoral college model certificate](#)

✓ **Re-enrolment procedures**

Not later than 31 May of each year, the thesis committee submits an opinion to the doctoral college on the progress of the PhD project and, consequently, the possibility of re-enrolment of the PhD candidate. The PhD candidate only has to pay the matriculation fee for re-enrolment. Re-enrolment is free for PhD candidates who are also ULg staff members (including members of FNRS and associated funds).

### DEFINITION OF THE PHD

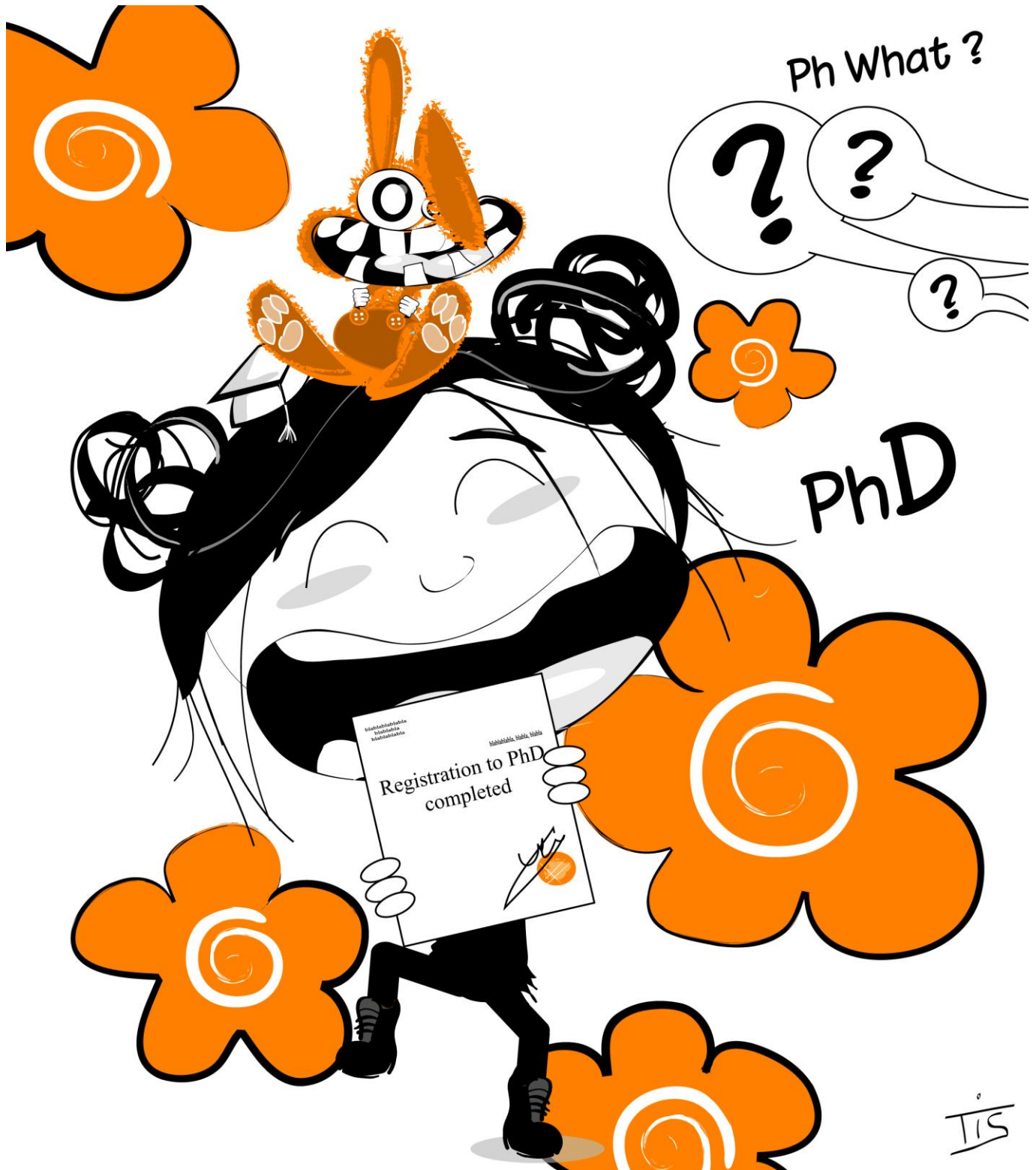
Within the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, a PhD is defined by the '[Paysage](#)' Decree as the third university cycle leading to the academic degree of doctor, issued after the defence of a thesis.

The doctoral test consists of:

- individualised **doctoral training** (60 credits), resulting in the award of a research training certificate. This certificate highlights the skills acquired during the thesis and provides graduates with a high scientific and professional qualification;
- the writing of an [original dissertation](#) or an [essay](#) reflecting the importance of a coherent body of [publications and research achievements](#) of which the candidate is the author or co-author under the conditions set by the college regulations;
- the public presentation of this work highlighting its qualities and originality as well as the candidate's scientific popularisation capabilities.

A friend of Sophia's asks: *You're going to be a doctor? But what's a PhD candidate?* Sophie tries to explain her situation, but she is not sure what receiving a 'PhD scholarship' implies...

*Are any other steps required from a PhD candidate?*





### THE DUAL ROLE OF THE PHD CANDIDATE

A PhD candidate is a student from the third cycle **as well as** an early stage researcher in accordance with the [European Charter for Researchers](#). Achievement of the PhD determines graduation. At the same time, a PhD is also a professional experience: it is important to keep this in mind when drawing up your CV. This dual role gives the PhD candidate a special status within the University. While all PhD candidates have the status of student, not all of them are ULg staff members, but they all practise the profession of researcher. In addition, different staff categories coexist:

- Some hold an assistant position. Their main task consists in pedagogical supervision, but a certain amount of time is freed up for the completion of a thesis.
- Scholarships are also awarded by research-funding organisations (including European and international funds), e.g. FNRS (National Fund for Scientific Research) and FRIA (Fund for Research Training in Industry and Agriculture). Find a [research job in Europe](#).
- It is also possible to receive an income based on the implementation of a research contract having been taken on by a professor (via credits or research projects specific to their research group).
- Certain types of funding from various organisations and foundations are possible as well. For this last category, there is a [database](#).

A PhD scholarship holder at ULg receives a scholarship subject to social security contributions and exempt from taxation, the amount of which is equal to an assistant's salary. They can only benefit from this status for a limited period of time (48 months). Should you have any specific questions, please feel free to contact your Human Resources Administrator ([ARH](#)).

### DURATION OF THE PHD PROGRAMME

From the start, PhD candidates have to keep in mind the duration of the thesis (maximum 48 months for a scholarship holder). They are reminded of this limitation by their supervisor and the entire thesis committee. Incidentally, this is the best way to demonstrate you have mastered a highly appreciated skill: adherence to deadlines. Based on the thesis committee's opinion, the doctoral college of the domain in which the PhD candidate's thesis is situated will annually ensure that the progress of the PhD candidate's work is sufficient to allow re-enrolment until submission of the thesis.

### MYULG FILE & E-MAIL ADDRESS

- ✓ **Consult your file at myULg:** in practice, every PhD candidate has a [file](#) at myULg as soon as their enrolment is effective. They input the activities performed within the scope of PhD training as well as this annual progress report into this file. The supervisor may enter the annual opinion on the work progress into the file on behalf of the thesis committee. The college inputs basic information (thesis title, thesis committee, etc.) into the file and may allow annual re-enrolment until completion of the PhD training and graduation.
- ✓ **E-mail address ending in [@doct.ulg.ac.be](#):** every PhD candidate has an e-mail address ending in [@student.ulg.ac.be](#) which they can transform into an address ending in [@doct.ulg.ac.be](#) so as to make their status of PhD candidate visible (to do so, go to Mes services/Services e-mail/redirection mail in MyULg). This e-mail address has to be consulted regularly or, if this is not possible, be redirected to an e-mail address that is used regularly. This e-mail address will be used by ULg staff members to contact you, e.g. by your doctoral college, the PhD managers of your faculty or the ULg Doctoral Affairs service, which will, for instance, propose to register you for training courses linked to your PhD.

In case the PhD candidate is also an ULg staff member, they will have an e-mail address ending in [@ulg.ac.be](#) as well. In this case, it is advisable to redirect the address ending in [@doct.ulg.ac.be](#) to the latter address.

Registered for her thesis since three months, Sophia is encouraged to take a course within the scope of an international doctoral school...



## DOCTORAL TRAINING

Throughout their doctoral studies, the researcher is offered numerous educational opportunities. Doctoral training enables PhD candidates to obtain a “high level of scientific and professional qualification” so as to specialise in their discipline, successfully conduct their research work and develop their future employability.

Watch the report 

Doctoral training is essentially individualised. At the beginning of each academic year, a personalised plan is drawn up in consultation with the doctoral college which assesses the progress.

It is structured around three major axes in a very flexible manner:

- Thematic training, provided by the [thematic doctoral schools](#) of FNRS or via summer schools, winter schools and other international doctoral schools;
- Transversal training (language courses, research conducted abroad, tutorials and [various trainings](#) such as those proposed by the Doctoral Council);
- Scientific output (publications, communications, etc.).

A [framework](#) has been established at ULg providing information on the number of credits attributed to a particular activity. Certain colleges have defined this framework specifically for their domain.

## INPUT INTO MYULG

PhD candidates have to [input](#) all doctoral training activities into their myULg file (tab “activités”); subsequently, these activities will be approved by the doctoral college after a favourable opinion by the thesis committee. Approved activities will be automatically included in the annex to the research training certificate which has to be obtained in order to defend one’s thesis.

## FUNDING OF TRAINING ABROAD

A great deal of specific trainings for PhD candidates are provided at foreign universities, for example within the scope of a summer school, an international doctoral school, etc. To encourage PhD candidates at ULg to receive training abroad, ULg offers [funding possibilities](#) available to all PhD candidates.

Sophia is meeting her supervisor next week.  
*How can I best prepare for this meeting?*

Go on Eddy

play the supervisor for  
me so I can practise!



Yeah baby  
I am the boss  
Saturday night  
feeeeever  
Yeaaaaaah

TIS

## PHD CANDIDATE GUIDANCE

- ✓ **Supervisor**  
From the start, the PhD candidates have to draw up an individual doctoral training plan as well as a work plan for their thesis in consultation with their supervisor.
- ✓ **Co-supervisor**  
Certain PhD candidates get two supervisors to counsel them, for instance because of the interdisciplinary nature of their research topic. It is important to meet regularly with your supervisors, together if possible, or in any case to keep records of meetings and decisions made and to pass them on to both supervisors.
- ✓ **Joint supervision**  
In the particular case of a [joint supervision](#), the PhD candidate has two supervisors, one at each institution. Joint supervision is an asset for the PhD candidate, but the latter has the additional mission of ensuring that they meet regularly with both supervisors and propose a work plan to them, regularly reporting the progress of their research work to them.
- ✓ **Thesis committee**  
Within one month after the start of the PhD programme, a thesis committee is established to guide the PhD candidate and provide them with scientific advice. The PhD candidate has to present the progress of their research work to the committee at least once a year. Even if this is sometimes a source of concern to the PhD candidate, this meeting is a good opportunity to put one's approach and analyses to an expert committee, which may in turn provide essential advice.

## DEFINING HIGH-QUALITY GUIDANCE

It is highly advisable to become familiar with your supervisor's method of working so as to understand their guidance style. It is in the interests of all parties to ensure that your supervisor is able to make optimum use of the time they can devote to you. It is therefore crucial to prepare the meetings thoroughly: summarise the questions to be asked and the topics to be discussed (ideally in writing), and make notes of the oral comments formulated by the supervisor. Of course, it may also be beneficial to send an overview detailing the progress of the work performed prior to the meeting and a summary note afterwards.

It is best to discuss one's mutual expectations from the start and agree on the frequency of meetings (while planning them) as well as how these meetings are to take place, in line with the agenda of each party. The annual meeting with the thesis committee needs to be planned in a timely manner as well.

Misunderstandings and even conflicts may sometimes arise from insufficient clarification of mutual expectations. It is therefore advisable to make one's wishes and requirements explicit. To help you, a [checklist](#) of topics to be discussed between a supervisor and a PhD candidate is provided by the Doctoral Council and IFRES. For example, the University of Melbourne provides a document entitled [Eleven practices of effective postgraduate supervisors](#). The European University Association (EUA) Council for Doctoral Education ([EUA-CDE](#)) points out the crucial role of supervision as one of the ten key principles for the development of doctoral education.

If problems persist, the President of the doctoral college will act as interlocutor for the PhD candidate and the members of the thesis committee. Any dispute between the parties may be submitted to the President of the doctoral college. It is possible to lodge an appeal against the college's decisions with the [Doctoral Board](#).

A thesis should not be improvised!

Sophia gets organised so as to be able to defend her thesis within the set deadline... She draws up a schedule detailing the steps to be taken to complete her PhD... She regularly adjusts her planning, but the essence remains unchanged from the start.



## A PERFECTLY PLANNED PHD

Under the supervision of the thesis committee, the PhD candidate's principal mission is to complete the doctoral project successfully within the set deadline. If a PhD candidate receives funding for their thesis, this generally covers 48 months, except for European funding which has a duration of 36 months (the European standard period for a thesis being 3 years). It is therefore up to the PhD candidate to create the dynamic necessary for success and to manage their time and material, financial and human resources essential to the success of their project.

In this respect, planning is crucial: organise your work and plan your travels abroad (conferences, colloquia, research stays), your publications and the different steps necessary to complete your PhD and doctoral training.

### ✓ A few tools:

Several transversal trainings are offered to PhD candidates at ULg to help them manage their PhD like a project. To consult the list of trainings, click [here](#). A few tools have been detailed during these trainings to help you: e.g. Gantt chart & APTE method.

## DISCOVERY, AUTONOMY & COMPLETION

According to Baty-Sorel and Deloffre-Vye<sup>1</sup>, every PhD takes place in 3 stages:

- 1- The discovery stage: the first year often constitutes a stage of discovering and taking ownership of one's research topic, but also of learning a method of working and managing meetings with one's supervisor, thesis committee and professional community.
- 2- The autonomy stage: the PhD candidate has taken their bearings: they take ownership of their subject and manage their bibliography as well as their relationship with their supervisor and professional community.
- 3- The stage of completion and preparation of the post-thesis phase: the PhD candidate masters their subject and gradually begins to write their thesis. This is also the moment when they prepare the post-doctoral phase (activate their network, prepare their postdoc if they wish to do one, prepare themselves for the labour market...).

Being able to explain in plain terms what your thesis is about is a virtually indispensable step. Likewise, it is advisable to ask yourself what the impact of your research will be on the society in which we live. Answering these questions enables a PhD candidate to gain a clearer understanding and clarify their objectives. One way of preparing yourself may consist in presenting your thesis in 180 seconds:

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<sup>1</sup> Baty-Sorel F. et Deloffre-Vye F., *Projet professionnel et doctorat, un duo gagnant*, Paris, Editions Eyrolles, 2009.

In May, Sophia has an appointment with her thesis committee so as to discuss the progress of her work, just like all other PhD candidates. This is an opportunity to benefit from the advice of others, but she is nevertheless stressed as it is also an evaluation test! How will they assess the progress of her thesis?





## THE IMPORTANCE OF REGULAR ASSESSMENT

The thesis committee **must** meet at least once a year (articles 13 and 15 of the [doctoral thesis regulations](#)). Your supervisor is responsible for supervising the committee meeting. However, it is up to the PhD candidate to remind the parties of the need for this meeting and to organise and plan the session.

After a presentation by the PhD candidate detailing the work performed and their work schedule, including with regard to doctoral training, the thesis committee provides advice for the future and possible necessary adjustments are established collectively. After this meeting, the thesis committee has to pass on their opinion with regard to the continuation of the PhD to the doctoral college with a view to re-enrolment of the PhD candidate.

### ✓ **MyULg file** :

Annual report – Annual meeting with the thesis committee

In the myULg file, under the tab “rapport”, the PhD candidate has to submit their annual progress report intended for their thesis committee. On behalf of the thesis committee, the supervisor can give a favourable or an unfavourable opinion and register this in the PhD candidate’s file in myULg. The supervisor can also submit the report drawn up by the thesis committee after the annual meeting.

### ✓ **Progress of the doctoral training**

In myULg, the PhD candidate has to input all doctoral training activities carried out. They can even enter the activities they plan to carry out. On behalf of the thesis committee, the supervisor can make changes and give an opinion on each activity (this is not obligatory, but depends on the doctoral college’s requirements).

The doctoral college approves and credits the activities, and determines the successful completion of the doctoral training.

### ✓ **How to best prepare for the thesis committee meeting**

It is essential to prepare this meeting thoroughly, both in terms of contents and in terms of form (duration, clarity and quality of your presentation, quality of your slides, etc.).

This is a good opportunity to improve in the presentation and argumentation of your ideas.

Take note of comments formulated by committee members or record the meeting so that nothing is lost, provided that all participants agree to this.

You need to discuss the issues to be addressed with your supervisor beforehand and if this is the first thesis committee, taking advice from other PhD candidates who have already been through it all can be useful. It may also be very helpful to rehearse orally, ideally in front of a few researchers from your community, after writing down the key points to be discussed.

Even if it seems a bit daunting, this meeting is crucial to the progress of your research.

Since the beginning of Sophia's thesis, her supervisor has encouraged her to seek "international confrontation". After establishing contacts at an international colloquium, Sophia stays in the United States for one term. Having been invited to a university laboratory so as to collect data for her thesis and learn a particular technique which this lab specialises in, this is also an opportunity to improve her English and establish numerous contacts.  
*How should I best prepare my stay? How can I get the most out of it?*



## A MOBILE PHD

In the present context of globalisation, international experience has become practically inescapable for any PhD candidate, whatever career they choose. An experience of international mobility opens up new scientific, professional and personal horizons, and provides you with valuable assets to be included in your CV! Learning a foreign language is an excellent example!

A stay outside ULg allows you to expand your network and come into contact with researchers who may become part of your thesis committee or thesis jury, and generally enables you to create future collaborations (for instance within the scope of a post-doc).

Watch the video “Un monde de doctorants” 

An international stay should be prepared months in advance: you should plan your mobility project! The [Euraxess Mobility Centre](#) of ULg, part of a network of over 200 centres situated in 35 mostly European countries, is committed to providing researchers with a high-quality [free service](#) to help them plan and organise their research stay.

Researcher mobility is one of ULg’s strategic priorities, and the university has made [substantial resources](#) available to enable PhD candidates, researchers and professors to come into contact with their peers, exchange ideas with them, and participate in high-level research projects, whether in conferences or during long-term stays abroad.

The database [SI4PP](#) includes a series of financial support possibilities offered by ULg and by external (Walloon, Belgian or international) organisations. It was designed so as to allow rapid identification of sources of funding which may be relevant to a personal project.

It is possible to capitalise on this experience by applying for the European label for your thesis or by creating a joint doctoral thesis.

## THE EUROPEAN LABEL: AN OPPORTUNITY TO BE SEIZED!

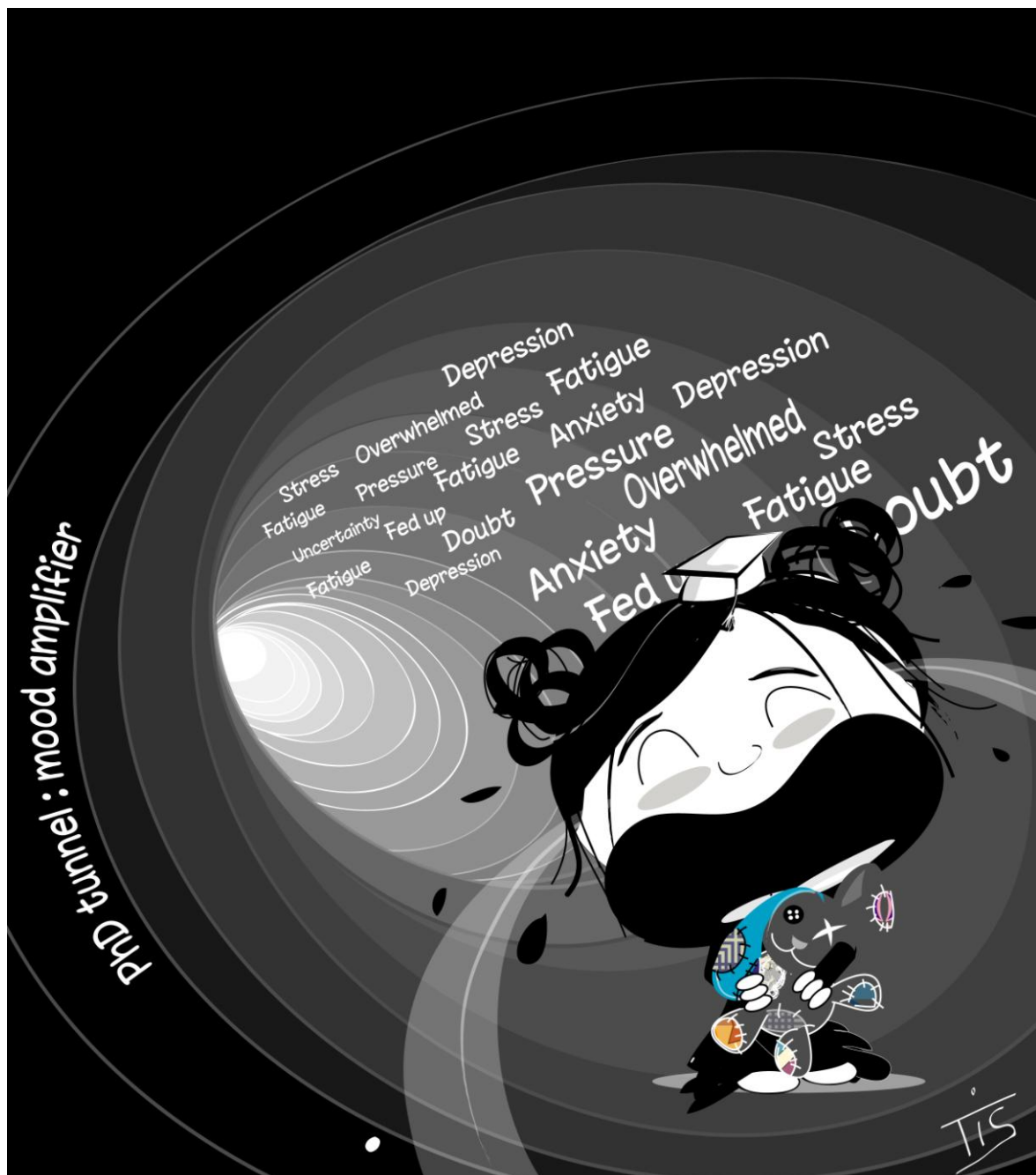
The label is awarded in addition to the PhD degree. Any PhD candidate can request this (after the PhD defence), if they fulfil 4 conditions (article 27 of the [doctoral thesis regulations](#)):

- 1) the thesis was judged fit for assessment by at least two university professors belonging to two different Member States of the European Union
- 2) a member of the jury must belong to a higher education institution from another Member State of the European Union
- 3) part of the viva voce must have been carried out in an official language of the European Union, other than French
- 4) the candidate must have spent at least one trimester in another country of the European Union to prepare the thesis.

## JOINT DOCTORAL THESIS

In case of a [joint doctoral thesis](#), mobility is the subject of an agreement between two universities, and in the end the PhD candidate obtains a PhD from both universities. A joint doctoral thesis reinforces the PhD candidate’s international base and constitutes a valuable asset.

Sophia is at the end of her tether! She is far from satisfied with the progress of her thesis and the deadline is fast approaching... In addition, she is experiencing difficulties in completing her professional and personal projects. Her friends and family find it hard to understand that she is sometimes still very occupied with her thesis when at home. And for her it is hard not to have the time she wanted to spend with her loved ones.



In the end, resilience often characterises those who successfully complete a PhD. However, some difficulties seem insurmountable... The [Student Quality of Life Service](#) provides support to students, including PhD candidates, throughout their academic career.

### THESIS AND PRIVATE LIFE

Of course, the situation varies from one PhD candidate to another: some receive adequate funding and guidance, while others feel left out in the cold and have irregular resources. But the situation is identical for all PhD candidates in one respect: the thesis seems to be a personal trial. It is a scientific and professional adventure, yet it also weighs upon, or is at least present in, the PhD candidate's personal life. It is time-consuming and often interferes with their private life. Although PhD candidates have to dedicate as much time as possible to their thesis during working hours, it is also important for them not to allow themselves to be consumed by their thesis. It is essential to find the right balance to prevent oneself from getting stuck in a thesis from which the PhD candidate has no critical distance. It is imperative to take time off (evening, weekend, holiday), which generally allows you to look at a problem from another perspective and resolve it!

### DISCONTINUATION

For some, the PhD programme does not end in successful completion of the thesis, but in discontinuation of the PhD project. This is never easy. It is always full of regrets. But despite the feeling of failure, the outcome is often more positive than appears at first sight. In any case, skills have been acquired and it is often possible to complete the doctoral training successfully. The PhD candidate makes a fresh start by making use of the positive elements. There are other paths to personal fulfilment than research. However, discontinuation is never an easy decision to make.

### NEARING THE END OF THE FUNDING

Some PhD candidates are helped or somewhat rushed by an external pressure: the approaching end of the funding. No doubt this brings additional stress, but it is crucial to pursue the effort up to the doctoral defence...

### WHAT IS THE PROCEDURE IN CASE OF PROBLEMS WITH SUPERVISORY STAFF?

PhD candidates can submit any dispute between them and their thesis committee, supervisor or jury to the doctoral college. They are to submit their request to the president of the doctoral college or, if the latter is concerned, to the vice-president by post or e-mail stating the reasons. Upon soliciting any advice it considers appropriate and hearing the PhD candidate, the college will take a position within two months of submission and will inform the PhD candidate in writing of the decision made. It is possible to lodge an appeal against the college's decisions with the [Doctoral Board](#).

### COMPLETING YOUR THESIS DESPITE EVERYTHING...

Receiving recognition for your work as well as your scientific and intellectual development constitutes a powerful lever for pursuing the effort up to the doctoral defence. It is essential to adhere to the deadlines as much as possible, and deliver high-quality work at the same time. It is more difficult to complete your thesis when you have left university and work elsewhere. But having obtained your PhD, you will know the satisfaction of finishing the job...

### CONFIDENTIAL COUNSELLORS AT ULG

PhD candidates who wish to talk about difficulties they experience at work (conflicts, interpersonal problems, etc.) can contact the [confidential counsellors](#). The latter will listen to any problems confidentially.

Having been warned by her supervisor from the start, Sophia knows that a PhD is anything but solitary work, even though autonomy is indispensable! Retreating into her shell is not conducive to the progress of her work and the many questions she asks herself remain unanswered... Sophia then turns to the others: PhD candidates, researchers from her university and from elsewhere... Gradually she feels part of a community. She is even asked to participate in various scientific events.



Establishing contact with other PhD candidates and researchers from your domain from the start is a valuable asset. For example, it enables you to get a good idea of the related research topics of colleagues and the way in which a PhD is obtained. It is also interesting to meet researchers from other domains, and to be able to explain your research topic to an uninitiated audience.

### COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

Participation in international conferences and colloquia is a great opportunity for PhD candidates to develop a network. Of course, the supervisor's and the thesis committee's advice will be valuable, especially to guide the PhD candidate and introduce them to scientific practices in the beginning.

The PhD candidate will very quickly participate in scientific communication. Researchers make a name for themselves by communicating and publishing. It is an important mission to communicate your ideas and research results to your peers and the experts in your field, as well as to the general public. Researchers are expected to communicate both orally and in writing to an international audience.

Through communication, your work can be appreciated sufficiently and the PhD candidate will gradually be recognised as a full member of an international scientific community.

Funding is possible and is made available for the scientific mobility of PhD candidates.

### ACCESS TO DOCUMENTARY RESOURCES

ULg has 5 large libraries on 17 sites, located on various campuses. You can access all electronic resources (63000 e-books, 46000 e-journals, databases) from your home 24/7 by means of VPN.

The online catalogue **Source** includes the (electronic and paper) collections present in the ULg libraries. Via **MySource**, your online reader account, you can:

- ✓ Consult and renew items you've checked out
- ✓ Make a reservation for a document
- ✓ Create personalised alerts
- ✓ Suggest a purchase

The ULg libraries provide you with different services:

- ✓ Trainings (information retrieval, preparation of scientific works and bibliographies, use of tools...)
- ✓ Tools (EndNote, DSI, RSS) to manage your bibliography and keep up with the latest developments
- ✓ Practical guides (scientific publication, copyright)
- ✓ WiFi throughout the campus and in the libraries
- ✓ The possibility to order documents throughout Europe and the world (interlibrary loan service)
- ✓ Involvement in the Open Access movement via the institutional repository ORBi, the registry of dissertations BICTEL/e, and the portal PoPuPs
- ✓ With your ULg membership card, you can present yourself at other libraries of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation and of the UniGR Universities, and access the collections and services as if you were a member of these universities!

Sophia has published several articles and has actively participated in several colloquia, thus marking her integration into the international scientific community. *But how to maintain this network of relationships?*





## MAINTAINING YOUR NETWORK

Meeting other scientists presents a great opportunity, but you also need to benefit from this. It is therefore important to maintain the network of relationships you have developed, e.g. by informing them of your publications, by showing an interest in their ongoing research projects, by asking them to be part of your thesis committee, thesis jury, etc., or by submitting your application for a stay in their research centre.

It is also important to keep in touch with other PhD candidates as this is a source for exchanging information, good practices, etc.

For instance, you can create a file of all interesting contacts which includes their personal details, the context of the meeting, in what way the meeting was enriching ... This will serve as a reminder. Current technologies allow you to maintain your network online as well!

All such contacts will certainly be very useful within the scope of planning your thesis, but also in the post-thesis phase, which always arrives more quickly than you might think!

## MAKING YOUR RESEARCH KNOWN IS ALSO POSSIBLE THROUGH [ORBI](#)

PhD candidates can and should showcase all their publications and communications via [ORBI](#), "Open Repository and Bibliography", upholding ULg's aim of making its scientific production even more readily available to everyone.

## REFLEXIONS – WEBTV

At ULg, the works of researchers, including PhD candidates, are presented, explained and put into perspective in light of the current state of knowledge through the University of Liège's scientific popularisation website [Reflexions](#). In addition, [web TV](#) makes it possible to approach communications differently at ULg by means of video reports.

## ACTIVITIES OF THE RED NETWORK

All activities within the PhD candidate network promote the exchange of information between PhD candidates. For example, doc'café is an initiative by ULg enabling PhD candidates to share their research with a wide non-specialist audience. The different doc'cafés can subsequently be [reviewed](#) on the *Reflexions* website. Such interdisciplinarity frequently makes it possible to establish contacts. Other ReD activities, such as the PhD candidates' breakfast or the beginning of the academic year, are an excellent opportunity for exchange between PhD candidates.

Sophia is going to defend her thesis! The final and crucial step in the PhD programme.

Hem... answer C?  
right?

- Réponse A** : " I don't care"
- Réponse B** : " Lucky we'll get drunk at the buffet"
- Réponse C** : " This is very interesting, thanks a lot for your suggestion, I'll think about it in the next step of my research work "
- Réponse D** : " Why on earth did you choose to wear a green tie on a pink shirt on the day of my defence ? "
- Réponse E** : " Good morning I am a doctor" sounds pretty good
- Réponse F** : "Hem...."

Correct      Correct      Correct

I was wondering whether it would not have been more appropriate to study the sociocognitive conflict in the light of cognitive psychology taking into account in particular what could be called the conative factors?

**Audition "PhD Academy"**

### SUBMITTING YOUR THESIS

Depending on the progress of the thesis, the thesis committee provides the doctoral college with a report approving the submission of the thesis and proposing that the PhD candidate's jury be constituted. The college subsequently checks that the doctoral training has been successfully completed, which is required to be able to constitute the jury.

Once the faculty has appointed the jury, the faculty administrator inputs the members of the jury as well as the information linked to the public defence into the PhD candidate's file in myULg. This information is automatically integrated into the [schedule of upcoming PhD defences](#). The PhD candidate uploads their thesis to [ORBi](#) and communicates the handle to the faculty administrator so that the latter can integrate it into the PhD candidate's file.

### PREPARING FOR THE PHD DEFENCE

The PhD defence has to take place at least one month after the appointment of the jury or after the private defence (for domains where a private defence is provided).

Defending one's thesis is an unforgettable moment for the PhD candidate. Watch the video with an overview of PhD thesis defences at ULg!



➤ *How to prepare for the defence of your thesis?*

The first step is to attend PhD defences, even in other domains, from the very beginning of your PhD programme. Although no PhD defence is ever identical to another, it is still a fairly standard event, which you need to discover beforehand.

The second step is to prepare and rehearse your presentation in accordance with the instructions (duration of the presentation, quality of the slides, etc.). If the instructions are not clear, it is advisable to ask for clarification in advance. It is also recommended that you consider, together with your supervisor, possible questions from the jury. Keep in mind that your audience will certainly not only consist of specialists in your domain, but also of your friends and family, so try to address them as well!

In addition, select the location with care. Check the acoustics in the room (is it necessary to provide one or several microphones?), its layout, where your slides will be displayed, where the jury and the audience will be, etc.

Finally, bear in mind that the PhD defence is also a unique opportunity to demonstrate all transversal skills you have developed during your PhD to all members of the jury and the audience, e.g. communications skills, adherence to deadlines, the quality of your slides, and perhaps your knowledge of English if your defence is held in this language... All these elements will be regarded as a bonus on top of your presentation. These elements can only show your thesis in a better light, beyond its high scientific quality. So rehearse your PhD defence in front of an audience, time your performance and ensure that you are as well prepared as possible!

### HANDING-OVER-OF-THE-DIPLOMA

The degree of Doctor is awarded without any honours. You will receive your degree well after your PhD defence; you will be informed of the date by post. If you wish to receive a pass certificate in the meantime, you have to request this from your faculty.

### HONOURING CEREMONY

Since 2010 ULg has honoured its new doctors at a [ceremony](#).

If you want to be invited, remember to activate your [alumni](#) account to keep in touch with the doctoral community of ULg.



Her PhD programme completed, Sophia is now a doctor.

*How can I capitalise on my PhD with regard to potential employers?*

*What qualities and skills should I highlight?*

Expert knowledge **complex problem management** contingency  
**planning flexible** adaptable **mobile** science and technology  
**scouting** cross-disciplinary **curiosity** competences  
*interdisciplinarity* **motivation** relationship **building**  
**capacity** negotiation **argumentation** mobile foreign  
language **organizational** **skills** **flexible** group  
management **entrepreneurial** spirit **curiosity** **self-critical**  
**focused** **passionate** **critical thinking** passion **REFLECTION**  
Perseverance **organizational** talent **writing skills** probing  
**creative** **adaptable** **innovation** complex problem management

Listen

Considering this long list  
of skills and qualities

I would be delighted to offer  
you a job as my boss...



## WHAT HAPPENS AFTER YOUR PHD?

This is evidently an important question. The profession of researcher has interested, captivated and excited you for several years. You feel the need to continue, to go further, to push your limits, to broaden your horizons, to improve... But how? Where? In what capacity?

There are [permanent positions](#) for researchers at universities, but academia is not the only perspective. Industry, and in particular the technology sector, is demanding the skills of young researchers. In addition, a PhD training allows you to acquire skills that are of interest to potential employers: autonomy, diligence, immunity to stress, the ability to deal with difficult situations, scientific expression, profound technical expertise, project management skills, etc. But what matters is that you make use of them.

A doctor is not always fully aware of all the skills which the PhD experience has enabled him to master. The trick is to be able to make the implicit explicit to a potential employer. This is not always easy, and that is why several [soft skill trainings](#) are offered, mainly aimed at helping young doctors or PhD candidates whose PhD defence is approaching to assess their skills.

Watch the report on of doctors' skills



A long-term post-doc stay is indispensable for an academic career. It allows you to open yourself up to the world of research abroad, to learn other practices and to think bigger.

ULg assists researches in this process by means of [international mobility](#) subsidies granted by the university or by means of the contacts of the [mobility centre](#).

For personalised assistance in finding a job after your PhD, the [Employment Unit](#) and the [doctorat.be](#) Service can help you

## MORE INFORMATION ...

- [Objectif recherche n° 32 \(1/2011\)](#) dedicated to the topic "Le doctorat : un atout en dehors de l'unif?"
- [Survey statistics regarding PhD graduates from the French Community of Belgium](#)
- [CAREER survey](#) : this French survey demonstrated doctors have a specific pool of skills. Taken in isolation, these skills are not specific to doctors, but the combination of these skills is specific to doctors.
- [VITAE](#) : the UK organisation championing the personal, professional and career development of doctoral researchers and research staff in higher education institutions and research institutes



## TEXTS AND REGULATIONS RELATING TO PHD AT ULG

These different documents will be useful to you during your PhD:

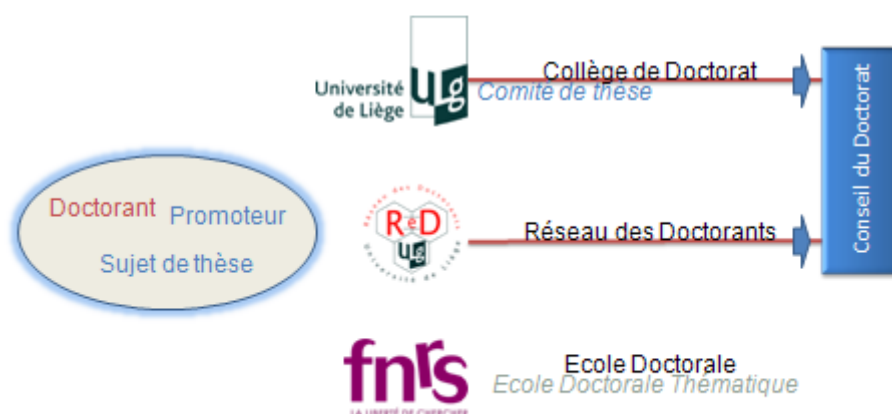
- ❖ [The European Charter for Researchers](#)
- ❖ [The 'Paysage' decree](#)
- ❖ [The doctoral thesis regulations](#)
- ❖ [Specific regulations](#) per domain
- ❖ [PhD scholarship regulations](#)
- ❖ The [FNRS regulations](#) concerning scholarships, and FRIA, FRESH and Télévie scholarships

## DOCTORAL AUTHORITIES

- [Doctoral Council](#)

## Ecole, Collège, Conseil ... ?

- Le doctorant et son environnement







## USEFUL LINKS

- University of Liège:
  - [Human Resources Department](#)
  - [Admission to a PhD programme](#)
  - [Agenda of transversal trainings for PhD candidates](#)
  - [Alumni](#)
  - [ARD - General information about PhD](#)
  - [Bictel, the institutional server of PhD theses](#)
  - [Diplomas](#)
  - [Joint doctoral thesis](#)
  - [Doc'café: information](#)
    - [View previous doc'cafés](#)
  - [Euraxess](#)
  - [Enrollment in a PhD programme](#)
  - [Livre des docteurs 2013](#)
  - [ORBi: online library of ULg](#)
  - [myULg portal](#)
  - [Upcoming PhD defences](#)
  - [Reflexions](#)
  - [Library network](#)
  - [Network of PhD students](#)
  - [ULg TV](#)
  
- Other useful links:
  - [ABG- Intelli'Agence](#)
  - [Doctorat.be](#)
  - [EUA-CDE](#) : Council for Doctoral Education, European University Association
  - [FRS-FNRS](#)
    - [FNRS News « un doctorat et après »](#)



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[www.ulg.ac.be/books/en/pars-en-these](http://www.ulg.ac.be/books/en/pars-en-these)

All your suggestions for improving this guide are welcome!

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