

## **Memorandum on VU Policy Framework International Scholarship PhD candidates with additions from Science Faculty.**

**The Dutch version is communicated to PhD council, PhD coordinators, department managers, department heads and HRM.beta on 02-09-2024.**

**Please note: the documents in Dutch, as adopted by the Executive Board of the VU or the Board of the Faculty of Science are leading**

On June 11, 2024, the BOVU adopted the VU Policy Framework for International Scholarship PhD candidates ([Appendix 1 \(Dutch\)](#)) ([Appendix 1 \(English\)](#)).

This spring, the BOVU discussed a proposal for a VU policy framework outlining the conditions for admitting international scholarship PhD candidates. The BOVU advised positively on the framework. With this message goes the request to implement the VU policy framework International Scholarship PhDs. In doing so, some additions for international scholarship PhD candidates affiliated with the Science Faculty are described in the [Faculty Policy Appendix \(Dutch\)](#).

The framework will take effect September 1, 2024.

In addition, we explain a number of developments within the UNL context.

### **Implementation of VU policy framework international scholarship PhD candidates.**

The purpose of the VU framework for international scholarship PhD candidates is to create clarity about mutual expectations, feasibility and contents of the PhD trajectory, even before the formal start of the PhD trajectory. It should be clear to both the intended supervisor and the future PhD candidate whether there is a basis for a successful completion of the PhD trajectory. The framework provides guidance on how to follow a procedure to obtain that clarity. An important starting point is that someone who will not be involved in the supervision will form an idea of whether there is a basis for a successful completion of the doctoral program (in short, a multi-eye principle that can be arranged at the discretion of the faculty). The framework includes a further explanation of the conditions relevant to the admission of international scholarship PhD candidates.

The VU Policy Framework for international scholarship PhD candidates will take effect September 1, 2024. The following will then apply to international scholarship PhD candidates admitted from then on:

1. It must be clear that the quality of an initial research proposal is up to standard, that English proficiency has been verified, that the Knowledge Security Framework has been followed, and that there is a budget plan for the entire duration of the PhD trajectory. For an explanation, see the procedure description as included in the VU Policy Framework for international scholarship PhD candidates ([Appendix 1 \(Dutch\)](#)) ([Appendix 1 \(English\)](#)).
2. The minimum amount for the scholarship is the IND standard. If the scholarship is not sufficient, the faculty will provide a top-up. An explanation for providing that top up is in [Appendix 2 \(Dutch\)](#) [Appendix 2 \(English\)](#); a format for the set-up of agreements concerning the top up is in [Appendix 3](#). For top up, we refer to the [additional faculty policy \(Dutch\)](#), see also below.
3. Access to necessary research facilities and embedding in the VU community is ensured.

Implementation of the policy framework will be evaluated in spring 2025.

### **Faculty policy**

Previously, a guideline for the international scholarship PhD candidates policy was established in the Science Faculty.

As of September 1, 2024, the new VU guideline will be leading and replace the previous guideline of the Science Faculty. Yet, some specific issues for the Science Faculty are leading. These are indicated in document [Internationale Beurspromovendi - Facultair beleid 240822](#) (Dutch).

An English translation is here:

*Financial situation during the PhD track*

Since a top-up would have to be paid from the direct funding, and since the Science Faculty - due to budget cuts - does not want to finance appointments (other than those approved by the FB), this also applies to the top-up arrangement. This means that the Science Faculty has decided not to grant a top-up arrangement for international scholarship PhD candidates with a scholarship below the IND norm.

There are a few exceptions for current projects:

- Scholarship PhD candidates with a start date before March 1, 2023 and for whom the scholarship is insufficient, may receive a top-up for the remainder of their trajectory. This is due to any ongoing agreements and/or to the fact that the IND norm has recently been indexed quite high.
- PhD candidates with a start date after May 1, 2023 and for whom the grant is insufficient, may not receive a top-up from the direct funding for the remainder of their track. This is due to the fact that from then on, the rule applies that no direct funding will be used for appointments. However, a top-up is available for this group of PhD candidates if they can be funded from an (ongoing) research project.
- Furthermore, it has been decided by the faculty not to admit CSC fellowship PhD candidates from September 1, 2023.

*Procedure - step 3: Testing for prerequisites for admission.*

The graduate schools (cq. departments) can decide which independent party will test the quality of the research proposal and language skills.

*Procedure - step 4: Submit application to dean for approval*

The application for approval can be submitted with a mandatory advice of the HR advisor to the department head of the department, and not to the dean. It should be noted that the test around knowledge security follows the normal route.

*Collaboration China Scholarship Council (CSC)*

The Faculty Board has decided to not admit PhD candidates with so-called CSC scholarships as of September 1, 2023, due to the following reasons:

1. Good employment practice: the CSC scholarship does not provide PhD candidates with sufficient financial resources to cover living expenses in the Netherlands. The CSC contribution is below social security level, and the FB considers it no longer desirable - in the context of good employment practice - to admit a group of PhD candidates, who are not sufficiently financially supported by their grantor.
2. In response to Parliamentary questions concerning possible "loyalty declarations" of CSC PhD candidates, Minister Dijkgraaf indicated, "However, it is also conceivable that states, such as China, use this type of grant program for other purposes, such as the acquisition of high-quality knowledge and technology (for the state)." From the perspective of knowledge security, it is necessary to carefully consider the extent to which entering into agreements with CSC candidates is desirable.
3. With some CSC candidates, double degree agreements are made. Due to the fact that the Dutch and Chinese laws do not match well in the case of a double degree, it is difficult and complex to realize this double degree.

4. Grants/scholarships should break even for both direct and also indirect costs. In the case of CSC grants, there is insufficient coverage for overhead costs and the direct costs involved in conducting the PhD research at the VU. This situation is no longer considered desirable by the FB.

This decision means that Beta employees will no longer be involved in any recruitment actions concerning CSC candidates.

**UNL: acting together towards international scholarship providers**

Other universities are also considering under what circumstances it is desirable and feasible to host international fellowship PhD candidates. Within UNL, universities have agreed to adopt the IND standard as the minimum scholarship amount for international scholarship PhD candidates by January 1, 2025. If the scholarship is not sufficient, then a top-up will be offered. The VU policy framework is in line with that agreement and anticipates on this. The universities will additionally cooperate in entering into negotiations with scholarship providers, among others, with the goal of increasing scholarship amounts.