

Practical Information for International PhD students at the University of Groningen

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WELCOME

Welcome at the University of Groningen, where you are about to enter a new phase in your scientific education by starting your PhD.

This short brochure aims to give you information on the University of Groningen and the present PhD Programmes and to inform you on all kinds of practical issues you may encounter on coming to Groningen. Most information given here can be found on our Website as well:

<http://www.rug.nl/corporate/informatievoor/phd/>

UNIVERSITY OF GRONINGEN

For almost four centuries the University of Groningen has prepared men and women for careers across many disciplines. Both teaching and research have always been at the heart of the exceptional breadth of the university's degree programmes. Our Graduate Schools offer exceptional services, activities and events that enhance graduate study, bring together distinguished staff members and talented students who share a common interest, and create a supporting environment with scholars excelling in a specified field of expertise. An important facet is the interaction between graduate schools, research institutes and faculties, ensuring an interdisciplinary approach and profiting from a wide range of (external) networks.

The university has an excellent record in a wide variety of research disciplines and is in the top 3 of European research universities in the fields of Ecology, Material Sciences, Chemistry and Astronomy. Other strong research groups are Nanoscience, Physics, Molecular Biology, Microbiology, Medical Sciences, Neurosciences, Sociology, Philosophy, Theology, Archaeology and Arts. Research at the University of Groningen is innovative, international and interdisciplinary. Every year more than 4,300 research publications go to print and an average of 260 students are awarded PhD degrees. Nearly half of the 860 PhD students currently conducting research in Groningen are international students.

Excellent reasons to get your PhD in Groningen

- The Ubbo Emmius programme will offer you a high-level education, designed to give you an excellent theoretical background for your research project.
- As an Ubbo Emmius student you will perform research within one of the research institutes of the University of Groningen, under the supervision of one or more experienced scientists. Facilities needed for the successful completion of the project will be supplied by the University
- During the research project, you will write a thesis based on the results of your project. The public defense of your thesis will earn you a highly ranked PhD degree.
- During your four-year stay in the Netherlands you can be granted an 'Ubbo Emmius' scholarship.

PhD PROGRAMMES

The university is committed to recognizing excellence in academic achievement through offering a number of scholarships for international students and researchers. The Ubbo Emmius programme is a scholarship programme for international Ph.D. students. Every year some 70 students from all over the world are admitted to this programme. During the past 10 years, over 500 international students have entered the programme and successfully completed their PhD education, thus obtaining an internationally highly esteemed PhD degree.

All PhD programmes at the University of Groningen are associated with a ***Graduate School*** and last 4 years. The University provides a balanced mix of expert supervision, tailor-made postgraduate training with courses (aimed both at acquiring advanced academic skills and specific research skills) and the freedom to pursue your own ideas within a set research theme or project. The results are written down in a PhD thesis, often including papers published in scientific journals. In addition to 4-year full-time programmes, other variants are possible in which the PhD programme can be combined with work outside the university. Furthermore, in some cases it is possible to do part of the research abroad, often in a student's home country.

The University of Groningen offers PhD-programmes in the following fields/Graduate Schools:

<i>Humanities and Social Sciences</i>	<i>Economics and Business</i>	<i>Law</i>	<i>Natural Sciences and Technology</i>	<i>Life Sciences</i>
Humanities	Economics and Business	Law	Mathematics and Computing Science	Behavioral and Cognitive Neuroscience
Theology and Religious Studies			Materials Science	Drug Exploration and Biomedical Engineering
Philosophy			Astronomy	Ecological and Evolutionary Studies
Behavioural and Social Sciences			Atomic and Nuclear Physics	Biomolecular Science and Biotechnology
Spatial Science			Chemistry and Chemical Engineering	Medical Sciences

After a successful defence, you will be awarded a Dutch doctorate. This internationally highly esteemed PhD degree has a very good international reputation; scientists with this degree are respected throughout the international scientific community.

Obtaining a PhD position

Every year the University of Groningen offers a number of PhD scholarships in different scientific fields: Life Sciences & Medical Sciences, Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Computer Sciences, Humanities and Social Sciences, Law, Economics & Business. The best ways to look for a PhD position at the University of Groningen are:

- 1) Check our website www.rug.nl for job opportunities. A number of PhD positions are posted there. Please be aware that these positions are usually within a set research theme or are part of a larger research project. You need to officially apply to obtain one of these positions.
- 2) Look for positions offered by Research Institutes on their respective websites.
- 3) Contact the PhD co-ordinator of the Research Institute or Graduate School covering your field of interest. When your own ideas for a PhD project do not match the positions that are currently offered, the co-ordinator can inform you about the possibilities for accommodating your proposal.

Entry requirements

In general, to be considered for a PhD programme, you need to meet the following requirements:

- Proof of English proficiency (paper-based TOEFL-score 620 or higher, IELTS 6,5 or higher). Besides excellent reading and writing skills *oral* English proficiency is extremely important.
- An internationally recognized high-quality Master's degree in a field related to the research theme. Your present university degree must meet appropriate standards. The list of diplomas in the appendix may help you decide whether your degree meets the criteria.
- Possibly a solid PhD proposal (only applicable when specifically requested)

What can support you in your application?

- Successful completion of one of our Graduate School Master's

Selection and PhD Training plan

Students and research need to be a perfect match, therefore admission procedures may vary per Graduate School and each application is assessed on an individual basis. Admission for PhD candidates is highly selective and based on academic merit: your best preparation is successful completion of one of our Graduate School Master's. As only a limited number of scholarships are available, you will have to compete with other students to be invited into the programme. Selection will be based on both the results (grades) and orientation of your (research) Master's education and your motivation.

When you pass the selection you will be registered as a RUG PhD student and – together with your promotor- you will design a so-called PhD training plan. This training plan includes information and agreements concerning :

- ✓ Title and description of your research project;
- ✓ Supervision (promotor, daily supervisor, graduate co ordinator, etc.)
- ✓ Progress of study (evaluation dates, exams)
- ✓ Educational programme (courses, participation in seminars, (inter)national conferences etc.);
- ✓ Time schedule and phasing of your research project including the educational part;
- ✓ Facilities (desk, computer, library etc.).

The PhD training plan will be signed by both you and your promotor and will serve as a guiding principle throughout your PhD.

Financial Matters

Scholarship

If you are admitted to the Ubbo Emmius Scholarship Programme you will receive the so-called "Ubbo Emmius scholarship" . The scholarship consists of €1399 gross per month during the four year period (the amount will be corrected annually for inflation). This amount of money is sufficient to cover the costs of living of one person.

An indication of the cost of some basic items on a student budget is:

Monthly Expenditure

Housing:	€250-340 per month per (shared) room
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Food:	€180 per month
Insurance:	€38 or €83 per month (depending on age and home country)

Unique Expenditures

Language courses:	€100-450 per course
Bicycle:	€45-110 (for a solid second hand bike)
Security Deposit:	approximately 2 weeks rent

Tuition Fees

The tuition fee differs between the various Graduate Schools, but varies from €7000 to €15000 per year. Students that receive an Ubbo Emmius scholarship will get a waiver. More information can be obtained from the Graduate Co-ordinator.

Value for money

The latest WorldWide Cost of Living Survey shows that the cost of living is modest compared with cities like New York, Paris, London and Beijing.

Employment possibilities

During the four year period of your PhD training -due to tax regulations- you are not allowed to teach students at the university, nor have a paid job at the university. However, if you are 30 years or older, you are allowed to have a paid job, provided that the University of Groningen is not your employer

Taxes

All foreign bursary students are obliged to pay income tax on their scholarship in the Netherlands. The income tax amounts to approximately 3% of the Ubbo Emmius scholarship. If you are 30 years or older you have to pay social security contributions on top of the income tax. If applicable your scholarship will be raised to compensate for the extra social security costs.

When you have an income in The Netherlands you will need a *social security number (sofi nummer)*. If you are an EU-citizens will receive a Dutch social security number after registering at the City hall. If you are from outside EU you can apply for a sofinummer at the Tax Office (you have to make an

appointment¹). It is only possible to apply for a *sofinummer* if you have a valid residence permit. You must bring your valid passport and residence permit to the Tax Office when you apply.

A HELPING HAND

Visa and immigration

Applying for a visa and dealing with immigration authorities may seem complicated but the International Service Desk and the co-ordinator at the Graduate School will help you to arrange this. The university covers fees for visa and residence permits when the application procedure is processed by the International Service Desk.

If you come from outside the European Union or EER² you need an provisional *entry visa (MVV)* before departure to the Netherlands. The actual procedure for obtaining such an MVV visa may take up to 2 months and as a rule, the following documents are required:

- a valid passport;
- a letter of acceptance or letter of invitation from the University of Groningen stating the purpose and duration of the stay;
- documents such as a legalised birth certificate or (if applicable) a certificate of marriage for your registration in the Municipality Personal Record Database at the City Hall of Groningen. Some Embassies will require this information as well when picking up the MVV.

After arrival in the Netherlands you have to apply for a residence permit, except if you are from the EU or EER. Your Graduate School or the International Service Desk (ISD) can provide you with the required application forms.

(Health Care) Insurance

All international students in the Netherlands must have health insurance. What kind of health insurance applies depends on your country of origin, age and length of stay in the Netherlands. Insurance can be arranged through the International Service Desk.

¹ Tax Office (Belastingdienst), Engelsekamp 6, Groningen, tel. 0800-0543, option 2, 1, 4.

² or from Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Canada and the United States

Healthcare Insurance

- If you are 30 years or older, you need a *basic healthcare insurance* (*basisverzekering*). You can apply for the Collective insurance of Menzis (€ 83 per month) or choose another company if you like.
- If you are under 30 years and from outside EU you need a *private healthcare insurance*. There are two companies (AON and Lippmann (IPS)¹) offering insurance products especially designed for international students. We recommend AON, as they have the most extensive coverage and you can pay monthly. You can apply for the insurance through their websites, www.myaon.nl/students, www.ace-ips-nl.com.
- As a EU-citizen the insurance company in your home country can provide you with an *EU Health Insurance Card (EHIC)* when you are going abroad. With the EHIC you will continue to be covered by the insurance in your home country. You can send the invoices for medical treatment in the Netherlands to AGIS¹ (a Dutch health insurance company) with a copy of your EHIC, as well as your address and bank account, in order to receive a refund for the costs.

Mind that the basic healthcare insurance policy does not include liability insurance, furniture insurance or luggage insurance. Both AON and IPS provide these insurances in an additional insurance package.

¹ Please contact the AGIS if you have any question about insurances.

Housing

Like most Dutch universities, Groningen does not have a main campus. The university buildings are scattered throughout the city. International student housing, organized by the Housing Office, is therefore also spread throughout the city. *The Housing Office* is a non-profit organization that acts as an intermediary in finding temporary furnished accommodation for all international guests on behalf of the University of Groningen. On www.housingoffice.nl you can digitally apply for a house/room by filling in the application form while you are still in your country of residency. You will receive a return e-mail to confirm your request for housing and you will be asked to pay a deposit of €300 and one month's rent, plus an administration charge of €30. The deposit will be refunded at the end of your stay if you leave your room in good condition and if you have paid your rent in full. Once the Housing Office has received your deposit and administration fee, they will start to search for your accommodation. The Housing Office will contact you directly in your home country when suitable accommodation is available.

Facilities

As a PhD student you can make use of all facilities that are available for regular students, such as state-of-the-art computer facilities, high-speed access to e-mail and internet and an online student support

system. Our libraries contain more than three million titles, over 15,000 periodicals and an online electronic library, while the Language Centre offers courses in many languages at various levels. The university sports centre is open 7 days a week, offering a wide range of indoor and outdoor activities, while social and cultural societies are places to socialize and meet likeminded people. If you are creative, the cultural centre's theatre, exhibitions and various courses provide a wide range of entertainment and training options. Lectures and debating sessions, theatres and museums, science shop and courses to improve your study skills are all part of the university's extensive facilities.

CONTACT

International Service Desk (ISD) general information for international students and PhD's

phone: +31 50 363 8181

fax: +31 50 363 7100

E-mail: isd@rug.nl

The Groningen Graduate School website

<http://www.rug.nl/prospectivestudents/research/graduateschoolsxml>

APPENDIX

Rights and duties of the different categories of PhD students

Type of PhD student	SCHOLARSHIP PhD student ³	30+ Grant
BASIC DETAILS		
Nationality	Non-Dutch	
Status	Student	
Type of relationship with the RUG	Agreement with the RUG and registered with CSA	
Duration of relationship with the RUG	1 year, annual extension, max. 4 years	
Training aspects	Follows modules set out in the PhD plan	
Teaching aspects	Does not carry out any teaching	
Financing	Ubbo Emmius grant January 2007: €1422 gross p/m	Ubbo Emmius grant January 2007: €1422 gross p/m, supplemented by the monthly national insurance premiums
RIGHTS AND DUTIES		
Agreements concerning the relationship between the RUG and PhD students	<p>The scholarship PhD student and the RUG sign an Ubbo Emmius agreement. The scholarship student thereby undertakes to devote his/her best efforts to the programme by following the plan prepared for that programme and to complete the programme by defending a thesis.</p> <p>The RUG commits itself to organizing modules relevant to the PhD programme of the scholarship PhD student and to the supervision of the PhD student while he/she is carrying out research.</p>	
Rights	<p>A scholarship PhD student is eligible for a Ubbo Emmius grant for The duration of his/her agreement.</p> <p>The scholarship PhD student is entitled to make use of the same university facilities as a RUG student as defined in the WHW.</p>	
Terminating the relationship between the RUG and PhD students	If the scholarship PhD student does not keep to the PhD plan and exceeds the deadlines set out therein, and has not responded to warnings issued, the RUG (Board of the University) has the right to	

³ UE scholarship students will be registered as PhD students in 2007.

	declare the agreement with the candidate no longer valid.	
Evaluation	Evaluations take place in accordance with the agreements set out in the PhD plan that was prepared in consultation with the supervisor before the commencement of the period of collaboration.	
Representative participation	Scholarship PhD students are represented in the PhD programme committee of the Graduate School	
FISCAL ASPECTS		
Income tax ⁴	Pays income tax (2.45 % over max EUR 17,046 1 st bracket of the grant)	Pays income tax (2.45 % over max EUR 17,046 = 1 st bracket, then 9.75% over max EUR 13,585 = 2 nd bracket, of the grant)
National insurance premiums	Does <i>not</i> pay national insurance premiums	Pays national insurance premiums
Manner of payment	Receives an income tax form each year	
Tax due discounts ⁶	Eligible for a small portion of the general tax due discount, not for the in-work discount; other tax discounts depend on the personal situation (on condition that the student has elected to pay taxes in the NL)	Eligible for the general tax due discount, not for the in-work discount; other tax discounts depend on the personal situation
Health care allowance	Not eligible	Eligible if there is a Basic insurance but the request will be turned down because of the amount of the grant. ⁸
Rent allowance	Eligible for rent allowance, <i>provided</i> ≥18 yr, valid residence permit, registered with the municipality, income ≤= K€20, living alone.	
Child care allowance ⁷	Not eligible for child care allowance (because not recognized as a student as defined by the municipality, i.e. as defined by the Student Finance Act)	
Child allowance (kinderbijslag)	Eligible for child allowance	
HEALTH CARE INSURANCE AND CHILD CARE		
Health care insurance	EU: possibly insured from own country (depends on	Eligible for health care insurance through the group contract

⁴ Figures 2006

⁵ A scholarship PhD student who is aged 30 or older is liable for the payment of national insurance premiums according to the Tax authorities.

⁶ Tax discounts are discounts that the tax authorities award on the tax due. What discounts apply depends on the personal situation (info on <http://www.belastingdienst.nl/particulier/veranderingen2006/veranderingen2006-05.html>)

⁷ There are 3 types of allowances: health care allowance, rent allowance and child care allowance. More information can be found on <http://www.toeslagen.nl>

	insurer), if not then private (AON ⁸) Non-EU: private (AON)	RUG/Menzis ⁹
Child care benefit	Eligible from the 1 st of January 2007 for the RUG child care benefit regulation ¹⁰ on the conditions that: 1. if the annual income < €16.000, than 3.5% of the gross costs child care has to be contributed; 2. if the student has a partner with a private income, the partner has to contribute to the costs of child care. This contribution will be based on his/her income, analogous to the contribution that is handled by the tax authorities; If the student has a partner without income, the student is <i>not</i> eligible for the RUG childcare benefit regulation (partner is assumed to take care of the child(ren)). Request for child care benefit can be submitted to: Universitaire Fondsencommissie (UFC, e-mail UFC@rug.nl ; adres:RUG, Universitaire Fondsencommissie, Postbus 72, 9700 AB Groningen.	
WHAT HAPPENS IN THE EVENT OF ILLNESS?		
Illness or other form of force majeure	In the event of illness or other form of force majeure (including pregnancy) the PhD student may be incapacitated for a maximum of 6 months without endangering his/her PhD programme at the expense of the RUG. If the force majeure lasts for longer than six months there is no obligation to complete the PhD and also no payment of the grant; if the force majeure is long term, the agreement will be ended after prior consultation between the PhD student and the supervisor about a possible emergency modification of the PhD plan. ¹¹	
University medical service	None	
Student psychologist/study support	Available to scholarship PhD students	
Emergency fund¹²	Available to scholarship PhD students	

⁸ AON is the cheapest option for scholarship students who are not eligible for the Basic insurance. For more info: ISD Ms A. Toxopeus, tel. 8181) **NB:** The Menzis worldwide policy is significantly more expensive than the AON insurance and also has an own risk.

⁹ A valid residence permit and social security number are required before it is possible to apply for the Basic insurance. Until then it is necessary to be insured through AON.

¹⁰ Tax must be paid over this benefit, it must be declared under “*overige inkomsten*” (other income) as a taxable benefit on the income tax declaration.

¹¹ See art. 5 and the corresponding explanation in the Ubbo Emmius agreement signed by the scholarship PhD student for the exact regulations.

¹² For additional information and criteria see:

<http://www.rug.nl/studenten/voorzieningen/studentenAdviesBureauSTAG/producten/noodfonds>

Contact persons for matters concerning PhD students (general)	
Fiscal aspects (incl. completion of tax declaration)	isd@rug.nl Anneke Toxopeus (ISD, tel. 8181)
Fiscal aspects (tax due discounts and allowances)	n.anholt@rug.nl Natalie Anholt (BOA, tel. 6720)
Payment of grant Annual indexation of grant	b.p.barij-scholz@rug.nl or a.bergsma@rug.nl Brigitte Barij or André Bergsma (FED, tel. 5471)
Registration of PhD students	Central Student Administration (tel. 5274)
MVV (entry visa), visa etc.	isd@rug.nl Anneke Toxopeus (ISD, tel. 8181)
Health care insurance	isd@rug.nl Anneke Toxopeus (ISD, tel. 8181)
Child care	J.C.Wolters@rug.nl Jacomijn Wolters (JZAV, tel. 5342)
Ending of agreement/ Legal aspects	Noor van Schaik of Janny van Jaarsveld (ABJZ, tel.5444)

Contact persons for matters concerning PhD students (specific)		
Graduate School for Behavioral and Cognitive Neuroscience (FMW)	Britta Kust (tel. 7702) B.M.Kust@med.umcg.nl	
Graduate School for Drug Exploration and Biomedical Engineering (FWN)	Riekje Banus (tel. 2853) H.M.M.Banus@med.umcg.nl	
Graduate School for Healthcare Research (i.o., FMW)	Robbert Sanderman (tel. 6275) R.sanderman@med.umcg.nl	
Graduate School for Ecological and Evolutionary Studies (FWN)	Carola Elling (tel. 2321) C.E.W.Elling@rug.nl	
Graduate School for Biomolecular Science and Biotechnology (FWN)	Engel Vrieling (tel. 4180) e.g.vrieling@rug.nl	
Graduate School for the Humanities (LET)	Rita Landeweerd (tel.5900) R.J.Landeweerd@rug.nl	Marijke Wubbolts (tel. 7336) m.r.b.wubbolts@rug.nl
Graduate School for Philosophy (FWF)	Jorine Janssen (tel. 6171) Jorine.Janssen@rug.nl	
Graduate School for Theology (FGG)	Andy Sanders (tel. 4583) A.F.Sanders@rug.nl	Mirjam Buigel (tel. 5588) M.C.Buigel-de.witte@rug.nl
Graduate School for Materials Science (FWN)	Koos Mars (tel. 8464) N.J.I.Mars@rug.nl	
Graduate School for Chemistry and Chemical Engineering (FWN)	Yvonne Jeuken (tel. 7360) Y.e.f.m.Jeuken@rug.nl	
Graduate School for Mathematics and Computing Science (FWN)		
Graduate School for Astronomy (FWN)		
Graduate School for Atomic and subAtomic Physics (KVI)	Marjan Koopmans (tel. 7437) m.koopmans@rug.nl	
Graduate School for Economics and Business (FEW/FBK)	Rina Koning (tel. 3815) A.C.Koning@rug.nl	
Graduate School for Social Science (GMW)	Henk Kiers (tel. 6339) H.a.l.kiers@rug.nl	
Graduate School for Spatial Science (FRW)	Inge Hutter (tel. 3907) I.hutter@rug.nl	

