



NUTRIM School of Nutrition and Translational Research in Metabolism



PHD GUIDE





1 | Welcome to NUTRIM

1.1 | What is NUTRIM?

NUTRIM School of Nutrition and Translational Research in Metabolism aims to contribute to excellence in health maintenance and personalized medicine by unraveling lifestyle- and disease-induced derangements in metabolism and by developing targeted nutritional, exercise and drug interventions. This is facilitated by a state-of-the-art research infrastructure and close interaction between scientists, clinicians and master and PhD students.

NUTRIM is a multidisciplinary research school of approximately 150 researchers, 245 PhD students and 70 support staff. Our core research program is organized around integrated multidisciplinary themes in 3 research lines including 16 clinical and basic science departments of Maastricht University Medical Centre+ (MUMC+).

Division 1

Obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular health

Division 1 focuses on research on metabolism to better understand the mechanisms behind metabolic diseases. Using human intervention studies and developing intervention programmes, research findings can be directly implemented to support health and prevent negative consequences of metabolic diseases such as type 2 diabetes.

Division 2

Liver and digestive health

The focus of division 2 lies on the gut-liver axis and related diseases. To gain more insight into the pathophysiology and inter-organ crosstalk (including digestive organs as well as the cardiovascular system and the human microbiota), human intervention studies as well as more fundamental in vitro research is conducted and can be translated into clinical practice.

Division 3

Respiratory and age-related health

Division 3 studies the effect of aging and their related diseases (mainly respiratory diseases, such as COPD) and changes in life style. Researchers explore the metabolic consequences studying the effect of nutrition, smoking and physical activity with the goal to support healthy aging and preventing the early onset of chronic metabolic disorders.

1.2 | Important people of NUTRIM



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2 | How to get started

10 Golden rules for PhD students

- 01 You are stakeholder #1 in your project - be the captain of your ship
- 02 Discuss mutual expectations about supervision
- 03 Get an overview - make a project plan with your supervisors
- 04 Manage your time well - and make sure you do it your way
- 05 Work hard, play hard
- 06 Ask for what you need - and address it if you don't get it
- 07 Make use of all available sources of support
- 08 Organize peer support
- 09 Invest in your future - build your network, expand activities and skills and LEARN as much as possible
- 10 Remember you're smart - YES YOU CAN!

2.1 | Types of PhD students

There are various types of PhD students:

- PhD students with a contract for 4 years (or 3 years)
- PhD students with a scholarship
- PhD students or clinicians working at the hospital and doing a promotion track
- External PhD students who are being supervised by a NUTRIM staff member and are registered at UM
- External PhD students working abroad being supervised by NUTRIM staff

2.2 | Goals of a PhD programme

The aims of a PhD programme within NUTRIM are to cultivate research capabilities and a broad understanding of human nutrition and metabolism to provide PhD students with specific knowledge and skills needed for top-level research and to stimulate interdisciplinary training. You will complete the PhD programme after successfully defending your dissertation.

2.3 | Employment

The requirements for entering a PhD trajectory at Maastricht University vary, but a Master's degree, a high level of English proficiency and a strong academic record are basic prerequisites. Conducting a PhD at Maastricht University means that you are seen as a regular employee of the institution. You can inform about your working hours, conditions

etc. with your HR assistant. The [Regulation governing the attainment of doctoral degrees](#) offers an overview of the requirements, regulations and steps to take for obtaining a PhD within Maastricht University. PhD students within NUTRIM are generally committed to a 4-year programme of education and supervision. Within 3 months after appointment, each PhD student and his / her supervisor jointly design a Training and Supervision Plan (TSP) and a Personal Research Plan (PRP). Courses are planned, as much as desired, when you need the knowledge and skills for a particular topic, depending on the stage of the research project. You may select external courses, exchange visits and international conferences and include them in the NUTRIM portfolio after positive evaluation. Your progress is evaluated during the annual assessment interviews during the PhD trajectory, using the TSP and PRP.

2.4 | PhD student tasks

A PhD student's task comprises three elements: research, education (self-development) and teaching. A PhD student in a clinical setting also provides patient and health care. At least 75% of the employment is reserved for research. Details are stated in the Training and Supervision Plan (TSP).

Research

A PhD student will perform scientific research that will eventually lead to the writing of a dissertation. As time and financial means are limited, NUTRIM expects dedication, perseverance, diligence, initiative and a great feeling of responsibility towards the research you will be carrying out. The research topic is checked for viability and scientific content by the division leader, scientific director and head of the department. The title of the project, the division and the programme are stated. By signing the TSP, both the supervisor and PhD student declare that they have seen the document and agree to its contents.

Education/Self-development

Each PhD student is entitled to have education and supervision

Four categories are distinguished:

- Category 1 - Discipline-specific activities
- Category 2 - General support courses
- Category 3 - School-specific activities
- Category 4 - Free category

In the TSP the titles of courses you will attend are listed by category. Apart from attending scientific courses (see [Section 3.1](#)) each PhD student is expected to participate in congresses, symposia, seminars, lecture series, literature clubs and school research meetings. However, as participation mostly involves fees and other travel expenses, the supervisor must approve plans for attending congresses etc. You can use TRACK to schedule these activities and to provide an overview of them.

Some activities yield extra credits:

Presentations at scientific meetings (poster or oral)	0.2 ECTS
Complete attendance of a Capita Selecta lecture series	0.8 ECTS
Division meetings	0.15 ECTS / year
Writing a MEC / DEC application	1.0 ECTS
Writing a research proposal	1.0 ECTS
Visiting another (foreign) institution	0.15 ECTS / day *

* maximum 8 ECTS in total

Attending the two-day Introductory NUTRIM Course is compulsory for all first-year PhD students. During these days you will be introduced to NUTRIM and its variety of research topics. The programme includes relevant talks and discussions about the do's and don'ts in a PhD project. First-year PhD students will be invited by the NUTRIM office. The course yields 0.84 ECTS. To benefit from all the ECTS you have collected, you need to request a NUTRIM certificate. For this, you provide the NUTRIM secretary with an overview of educational activities attended, in Excel format, at least one week before your defense ceremony. The secretary will make the certificate and add the educational activities in the accompanying letter.

Teaching

Being a member of the departmental staff, the third aspect of a PhD student's job is teaching. PhD students teach bachelor and master students at the Faculty of Health, Medicine and Life Sciences (FHML). The amount of time of input may vary. FHML regulations state a maximum of 10% of a full employment. Teaching may comprise for instance being a tutor in a tutorial group; supervising a student during traineeship or during writing a master's thesis, lecturing, or giving practical skills training.

2.5 | TRACK

FHML uses the programme ‘**TRACK**’ to monitor PhD students. TRACK is a digital portfolio and can be used to plan and document courses to take, visits to make and conferences to attend. In the beginning of the PhD, you can reflect on your skills and competences and use this reflection to set up your goals you want to achieve during your PhD training programme. Within the first 3 months, you need to complete the TSP and PRP in which you agree with your supervisor on how your projects will be planned, what your responsibilities are and which courses and other activities you will attend or perform. On regular time points, you will evaluate (and adapt) the PRP with your supervisor and add activities that you plan or have performed.

2.6 | Support

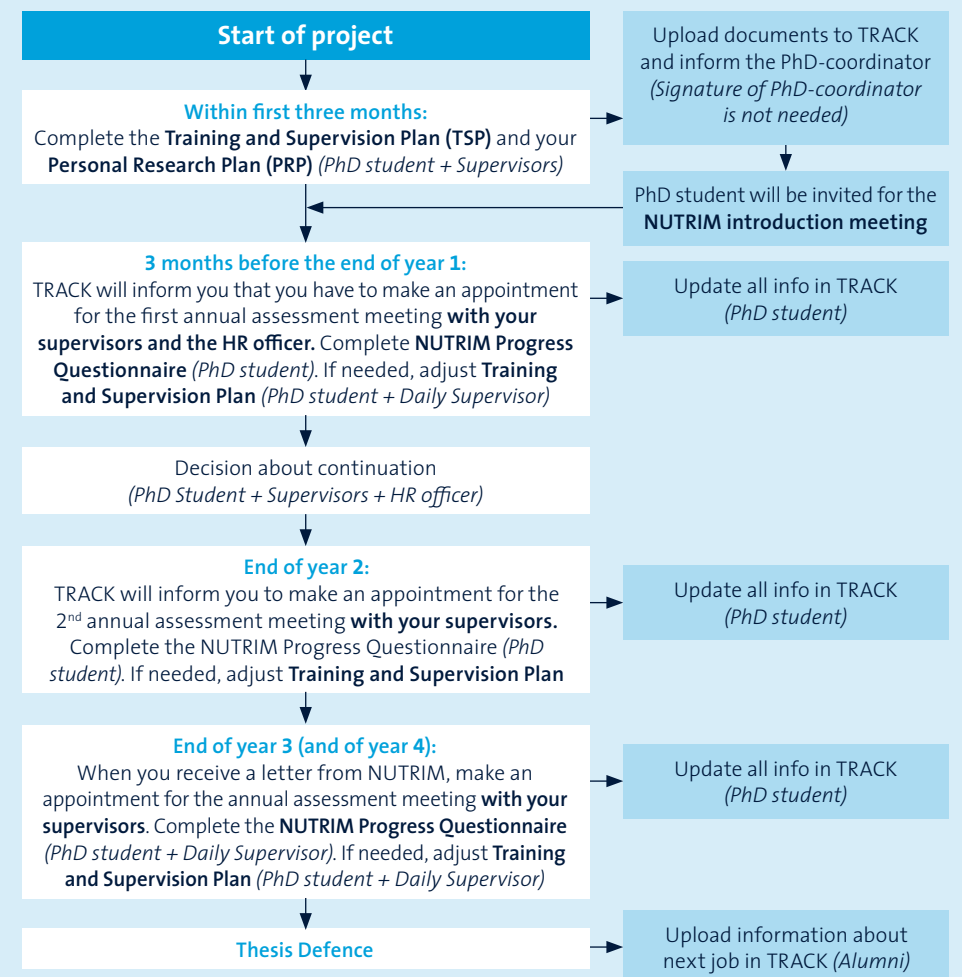
If you have questions or run into issues during your PhD which you cannot solve with your colleagues, the NUTRIM PhD council is available for support at the peer-to-peer level. Dr. Roger Godschalk, Assistant Professor at the Department of Toxicology, is the PhD student coordinator within NUTRIM. The PhD student coordinator monitors the continuity of progress of each individual PhD student using the NUTRIM progress monitoring procedure, approves the TSP within 3 months after employment of a PhD student and ensures their annual adaptation. He furthermore acts as an impartial ombudsman and trust person for PhD students, organizes the courses program, represents PhD students at school council meetings, and represents NUTRIM at the Interfaculty PhD Students’ Committee (IPC). Sometimes you run into problems with regards to your PhD project. If you want to discuss this with an independent person, you can reach out to the NUTRIM PhD council (nutrim-phd-council@maastrichtuniversity.nl) or the PhD students’ coordinator, dr. Roger Godschalk (r.godschalk@maastrichtuniversity.nl). When other actions need to be taken, he can refer you to the right person or can take actions for you. If you think he might be too much involved in your project, he can refer you to another trust person.

2.7 | Evaluation

The first evaluation meeting (the so-called ‘go / no-go meeting’) takes place approximately 10 months after appointment, in order to determine whether you are allowed to continue. The supervising team (promotor and co-promotor), the HR manager, and you will be present at this meeting. If the employment is extended, you will receive a new contract for the remaining three years. An evaluation meeting with the supervising team will take place each following year. If, at evaluation meetings or any moment during the employment, you decide to end your PhD programme, or the supervising team decides that your work is of too low a quality or shows too little progress, the Scientific Director and the PhD student coordinator

are informed immediately. To prepare for your yearly meetings, it might be useful to take a look at some of the questions in the appendix.

NUTRIM PhD Progress Monitoring



3 | Work in progress...

3.1 | Education/Self-development

Skills development

You can choose to improve your skills by attending workshops and courses. The Staff Development Centre of Maastricht University offers **different courses**, for example about writing a cover letter and your CV, a training on networking skills or self-management.

The **university library** offers different courses on information skills, such as how to search in different databases, how to use EndNote and to determine in which journal to publish. Some types of research require additional certificates, such as the **BROK certificate** for human studies. These courses should be funded by your research group. Further, you can attend courses, which are specifically related to your research topic or the skills that you need to obtain and analyze your data. To make sure that your supervisor agrees with you taking these courses, discuss it beforehand and integrate it into TRACK.

Development days

As employee you have the right for two **development days** per year. You may use these days to develop skills or knowledge which helps you not only for your PhD project, but also improves your future opportunities on the job market. That means, that the development days may not necessarily be related to your project.

3.2 | Supervision

Supervision

During your project, you may be asked to supervise Bachelor or Master students who want to do an internship at your lab and eventually write their thesis about this internship. During this period, you will help the student to develop some scientific skills and in return, he/she will help you with conducting your project. If you want to benefit from this option, you can, together with your supervisor, publish a proposal for students from Maastricht University on the **dedicated portal**.

Tutorials

Maastricht University is known for its special Problem Based Learning (PBL) system. This is an interactive system which uses realistic cases as starting point for actively gaining or deepening knowledge. To provide interactive sessions, students follow weekly tutorials to set up and solve learning goals. These tutorials are guided by someone familiar with the topic, who can gently guide the way through the course content and stimulate the independency of the students. You, as a PhD-student, can use this teaching activity as starting point to develop your teaching skills for groups. To successfully fulfill your tutor role, you need to follow the PBL introduction course. At the end of your PhD programme, you should at least have conducted one tutorship.

For more information about possibilities in developing research skills:

www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/research/institutes/erd/educational-development

Lectures

Next to tutorials, you can give lectures for Bachelor or Master students. If you are interested to give a lecture in your research field, discuss this with your supervisor. At the end of your PhD programme, you should at least have given three lectures.

Digital learning environment

To share information about lectures, tutorials and study material, Maastricht University offers a **digital platform**. Students have access to the information about the courses they are assigned to. As a teacher, you can decide which information your students can access. Further, the official study activities of each course are scheduled in the timetable.

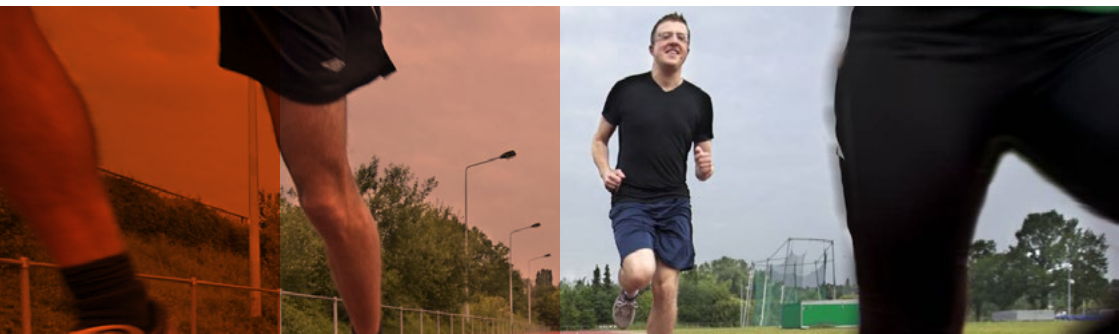
3.3 | NUTRIM PhD Students' Council

NUTRIM's PhD students' council is a committee representing the PhD students from all NUTRIM research lines. The aim of the council is to inform NUTRIM PhD students about issues that are discussed at institute level and to take care of PhD issues, such as supervision and courses, which are brought to the council's attention. The PhD council has an advisory role towards the institute council, meetings of which are attended by the PhD student coordinator and the council chair. The council organizes several events including the yearly NUTRIM symposium in November, a quarterly NUTRIM cafe, and the yearly two-day introduction course for new PhD students. Updates and upcoming events can be found on **the students' council's Facebook page**. If, at any time during your PhD, you would like to comment on issues or suggest new issues for discussion, feel free to **contact the students' council!** The more you keep in touch, the better they can stand up for your interests.

3.4 | After work

Of course it is also important to blow off some steam after a long day at work. **UM Sports** is a popular place to go in the evening for many PhD students. UM Sports is located behind the building at the Debyelaan (DEB), which itself is opposite the main entrance of the hospital. UM Sports has a gym and offers different sports classes and activities, all of which are given both in Dutch and English. You can buy a membership at the counter of UM Sport or online.

Furthermore, the **PhD Academy** organizes many events with the aim of enabling PhD students from all over the university to mingle with each other. They organize weekly improvisational theatre sessions, monthly movie nights at Cinema Lumière, dancing workshops and a yearly boat party at the beginning of the academic year. Many of their activities are also announced on Facebook: www.facebook.com/PhDAcademy



4 | Ready for graduation?

4.1 | Qualifications of a PhD student after 4 years

Science / Research

When you finish your PhD trajectory, you should have reached several goals. In the first place, you should have developed your research skills. For that, you may have attended some courses or trainings (see chapter 3.1) and successfully conducted different projects, attended congresses and published and presented your scientific work. You should be able to think and act evidence-based and be able to implement the newest findings of the field into your ongoing research. Make sure you have achieved a variety of skills, since this will help you to successfully start your next position.

Teaching

As a NUTRIM PhD student, you should have learned to independently supervise and teach Bachelor and Master students. Make sure you have achieved these skills by supervising interns, guiding tutorials or practical trainings and giving lectures. For training options, see section 3.2. The experience you gained by the different teaching activities will help you with your following position especially in research and education.

Management

A NUTRIM PhD student is expected to have some knowledge of managerial tasks. This is not only for those continuing their career in science but also for the majority of PhD students that will have a job in industry, government or health care, or are running their own company. Maastricht University offers **courses** such as 'Time Management', 'Career Management' or 'Leading Complex Projects'.

Fundraising

As last year's PhD student, you are expected to be able to write research grant applications. For achieving these skills, you might have helped your supervisors in writing their applications, or you can apply yourself for an FHML Kootstra Talent Fellowship. Kootstra Talent Fellowships are obtained in competition. These fellowships, consisting of a 6-month grant, are made available by the FHML to develop talent amongst young scientific researchers and are matched by NUTRIM. Therefore, they amount to a scholarship of 1 year in total. The fellowship is used to bridge the time between the end of a PhD project and the start of a post-doctoral employment.

4.2 | Graduation

The end terms for graduating are clear from the start of the PhD program and are communicated to you by the (co)promotors and the PhD students' coordinator.

The Maastricht University requirements and regulations can be found in [the Regulation governing the attainment of doctoral degrees](#). The dissertation and all submitted and published papers must be in English.

Once the team of promotors judges the dissertation of sufficient quality, it is presented to a review committee consisting of several independent assessors, assembled by the promotor. This committee will assess the quality of the dissertation and will decide whether the dissertation is of sufficient quality to be defended at Maastricht University. The complete approval procedure, starting with the submission of the dissertation to the review committee and ending with the PhD defense ceremony, takes at least 20 weeks. Estimated printing costs for the dissertation in the Netherlands are 2000 €, and in addition 10 copies are fully reimbursed. Participants are free to choose where they have the dissertation printed. Maastricht University supports financially by reimbursing 0.36 € per page of the ten dissertation copies that have to be sent to the deans' office, and by reimbursing printing costs as well as the costs of the reception after the thesis defense, up to a maximum amount of 2000 €. You can find more information in the form '[Allowance PhD ceremony](#)'.

For more information about all aspects of a PhD trajectory at Maastricht University:
www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/support/phds#Promotion%20regulations

4.3 | Life after a NUTRIM PhD

In the PhD students' progress questionnaire both you and your supervisor(s) are asked to discuss your future career perspectives. It is of great importance to know about (inter)national career possibilities. (Inter)national cooperation sometimes results in jobs; PhD students may use the network of their supervisors. Supervisors will also encourage you to attend career events that are organized yearly. Furthermore, you are stimulated to apply for an FHML Kootstra Talent Fellowship. During this period grant applications can be written and submitted leading to a subsequent job.

Maastricht University has a separate [Career Services department](#), which aims to bring students and the employment market in closer contact with each other. It offers preparation for your future career and acts as a portal for companies and organizations interested in recruiting alumni. The [Staff Development Centre](#) can support and guide you in developing your general competences, in order to develop the qualities you need for your present position or future roles. The Staff Development Centre offers [courses](#) such as "Analytic Storytelling", assertiveness training and "Online personal branding", and workshops about writing a cover letter or conflict management.

NUTRIM keeps record of its graduated PhD students. Figures about their jobs are published in the annual reports. At scientific occasions, such as the NUTRIM symposium or a congress organized by NUTRIM, alumni are invited. Graduated PhD students are kindly requested to upload information about their next job in TRACK.



Appendices

Appendix 1 | Helpful resources

Information PhD regulations

Including the “Regulation of governing the attainment of doctoral degrees”

www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/support/phds

TRACK

<https://nutrim.track.maastrichtuniversity.nl/Public/Login>

The students' council's Facebook

www.facebook.com/PhD-Council-Nutrim-1420521358011144

NUTRIM downloads

The NUTRIM logo and templates for posters and Powerpoint presentations can soon be downloaded from the NUTRIM website

www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/NUTRIM

Appendix 2 | Questions to think about when preparing for your yearly evaluation

These questions are useful as a tool to prepare for your yearly evaluation. Thinking these over might give you a better overview of your PhD project and your role in it.

- How does this PhD project match with your individual interests and motivation?
- What are the team objectives to achieve with regard to the content of the research? (*e.g., generated knowledge, publications*)
- What are the team objectives to achieve with regard to the development of the PhD student as a researcher? (*e.g., developing methodological, statistical and analytical skills, English proficiency, generating new ideas and brainstorming about them, presentation and writing skills*)
- What are your most important roles and tasks for this team work? What expertise do you contribute?
- How would you like to organize communication and feedback in the PhD team? For example with regards to the frequency of meetings and feedback, and the way in which you receive it?
- Where would you want to be autonomous?
- What ambiance do you want to work in together?
- What possible pitfalls might you encounter in your PhD project, and how do you want to act upon them?
- Are there things other team members should know about you that can help in realizing the goals for this team work?
- For 3rd and 4th year PhD students: What does my future as scientist look like? How can my supervisors help in planning / organizing my life after my PhD?



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B1	9
B2	Kinderafdeling
B3	B
B4	B
B5	B
C2	C
C3	C
C4	C
C5	C
D2	D
D3	D
D4	D
D5	D
E2	E
E3	E
F3	F



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