

MHeNs Guide for PhD Candidates

This MHeNs [PhD Guide](#) contains information on all aspects of doing a PhD at MHeNs, ranging from information on the training programme, guidelines for supervision and training, and the PhD defence. It contains information for current and prospective PhD candidates as well as for supervisors.

Contact persons of the MHeNs Office:

Tom van den Crommenacker: managing director MHeNs and head of coordinating office MHeNs. Financial aspects of the PhD position and trajectory have to be discussed with the managing director. Such discussions tend to be taken care of by your supervisor. Email: t.vandencrommenacker@maastrichtuniversity.nl

Ankie Hochstenbach: financial and administrative officer; coordinates administrative procedures (eligibility check and registration) and personal data in PhD TRACK. She liaises with Human Resources Department regarding the completion of employee records (TSP/PRPs). Email: a.hochstenbach@maastrichtuniversity.nl

Nicole Senden: policy officer and EURON programme coordinator; is chairing the Educational committee of MHeNs and is the contact person for joint doctorates. Email: n.senden@maastrichtuniversity.nl

Martin van Boxtel: MHeNs PhD coordinator and confidential advisor for PhD candidates; has access to all PhD Track information (including confidential questionnaires) related to the school, in order to signal problems of PhD candidates, monitor the duration of PhD trajectories, and the quality of supervision— including taking required steps when appropriate; introduces students and supervisors to the use of PhD TRACK and support the appropriate use of TSP and PRP; reports back to the school managing board and prepares PhD policies; may be contacted when PhD candidates are in need of independent/confidential support or advice regarding their PhD trajectory. Email: martin.vanboxtel@maastrichtuniversity.nl

CONTENT

1. Before the start of the PhD trajectory
2. Registration and requirements
3. Training programme
4. PhD Community and representation
5. MHeNs and UM procedure of submitting your PhD thesis
6. Financial allowances
7. After your PhD

1. BEFORE THE START OF THE PHD TRAJECTORY

Items to be checked before the start of the PhD candidate with the MHeNs office:

1. Appointed (internal) PhD candidates will go through the normal HR process; external/ self-funded/ scholarship-funded PhD candidates will need to be discussed with the MHeNs scientific director and staff first.
2. Eligibility of the candidate for doing a PhD: diploma check for admission to the PhD trajectory UM (this check is necessary if the diploma is from a non-EU member state country and must be arranged via the MHeNs office in contact with the central UM Student Service Center).
3. Financial situation of the PhD candidate (minimal financial requirements are necessary).
4. Is the candidate under a joint supervision programme? If yes, preparation of a joint supervision agreement.

2. REGISTRATION AND REQUIREMENTS

MHeNs registration as PhD candidate:

You need to be registered at MHeNs (and thereby you will be registered automatically for the Faculty and Maastricht University). You do not need to pay tuition fee at MHeNs.

If you will not be employed as a PhD candidate at Maastricht University, you still need to be registered. A hospitality agreement needs to be arranged, to obtain access to the facilities of Maastricht University and to be enrolled for the PhD programme.

PhD monitoring system - PhD TRACK:

You (and your supervisors) are required to use [PhD TRACK](#) to document and keep track of your PhD trajectory, regarding research, teaching and educational activities. The MHeNs PhD coordinator and office administer the PhD TRACK system and are contact persons for both PhD candidates and supervisors. MHeNs will provide access to the PhD TRACK registration and monitoring system. TRACK will ask you to fill out a Declaration of scientific integrity (which must be sent to the Office for Academic Ceremonies at the end of your trajectory). You will also be asked to fill out an annual questionnaire about your progress. This survey covers all aspects of their PhD trajectory, including the quality of the supervision. Grades given by you to the supervisors are strictly confidential and can only be viewed by the PhD coordinator of the school. Supervisors only receive averaged feedback on their grading, based on grades given by at least 5 different PhD candidates. Your supervisors will report the progress of your PhD trajectory every half year in the PhD TRACK.

You also need to draw up a [Training & Supervision Plan \(TSP\)](#) – in which you list your planned courses, conferences and teaching activities – and a [Personal Research Plan \(PRP\)](#), including feasible planning of your research. Both Plans need to be discussed with and approved by the supervisors, handed in to the School's PhD coordinator and the MHeNs office (Ankie Hochstenbach) **within the first three months** and updated every year to discuss in your annual appraisal interview with the supervisors. Also, the plans should be uploaded in PhD TRACK within 3 months after the start of the PhD trajectory.

For more information see [MHeNs PhD program info](#) and [Track info](#).

TRACK privileges and responsibilities:

PhD candidate:

- has access to their own personal data
- is responsible for supplementation of personal data and data about the PhD trajectory
- fills in the declaration of scientific integrity, PRP, and TSP within three months after the start of their affiliation with the school
- fills in a yearly (confidential) questionnaire on progress and assessment of the supervision, as preparation for the yearly appraisal interview with the supervisory team
- can use the system to build a PhD portfolio (research and training) and apply for a MHeNs certificate at the end of the trajectory

Supervisor (promotor / daily supervisor):

- provides adequate description of his/her role in the TSP
- will assess the progress of the candidate twice per year and arrange a yearly assessment interview
- has access to the TRACK pages of supervised PhD candidates (excluding contents of the confidential parts of the yearly PhD candidate questionnaire)
- can view average performance indicators when > 5 PhD candidates have provided feedback

For general information about a PhD trajectory, you can also visit the [FHML](#) and [UM](#) web pages dedicated to this.

3. TRAINING PROGRAMME

Doctoral Training MHeNs:

MHeNs is a research school, which means that education is an essential part of a PhD trajectory. A large part of the PhD training occurs in the context of conducting a research project, supervised by an expert/ a group of experts. In addition, all PhD candidates will engage in more specific or generic educational activities, which may vary based on their category (e.g., different agreements can be made for internal vs. external PhD candidates). PhD candidates outline and regularly update (at least once per year) their personal research plan (PRP) and training and supervision plan (TSP), together with their supervisors (promotor and co-promotor). Their choices are based on a thorough assessment of previously acquired competencies, skills that are specifically required for the PhD research, more generic knowledge and skills, and future career plans. When writing the first version of the Training and Supervision Plan (TSP), it is strongly advised to discuss with the supervisory team how required training activities are to be funded. If this cannot be resolved satisfactorily, advice may be asked from the PhD coordinator or school director.

For PhD candidates with a 4-year PhD position, training activities should add up to at least 20 European credits (EC, or ECTS). This requirement is in line with the 2011 NFU Guidelines for PhD tracks in biomedical sciences in the Netherlands, which recommends 20-30 EC for doctoral level academic training programs. The total credit requirement for PhD candidates, who complete their PhD on a 3-year contract and who have previously completed a 2-year research master (or equivalent), is reduced to 15 EC. PhD candidates can still obtain a PhD degree, without meeting the MHeNs EC and activity distribution guidelines.

Credits allowed for each category of activity are summarized in the table on the MHeNs [website](#).

[Here](#) you may check the training programme of MHeNs, EURON and other courses.

In the autumn of 2023, MHeNs starts a pilot training programme with 20 newly starting PhD candidates. The programme entails assessment and monitoring by a professional coach and a 4-year structured transferrable skills curriculum. Eligible candidates will be invited via email.

MHeNs certificate:

When at least 20 ECTS points have been obtained, a candidate can apply for a MHeNs Certificate at the end of the PhD period using TRACK. This certificate may be used to demonstrate to future employers what kind of post-graduate education you have received as part of your PhD training programme. It may also be of value when a candidate applies for a grant or position at UM after completion of the PhD period.

EURON PhD Certificate of Excellence:

EURON offers an additional EURON PhD Certificate of Excellence, which will be awarded if the PhD candidate fulfils the required criteria in terms of training, networking, international mobility, and scientific publications. The EURON PhD Certificate of Excellence is recognized by the Governing Boards of the participating universities. Since one important requirement for the certificate is mobility, PhD candidates are encouraged to spend a period of at least 3 months abroad to receive international experience.

How to apply for a MHeNs and/or EURON Certificate:

PhD candidates who wish to apply for certificate(s) of educational achievement, to be awarded at the time of degree completion, need to follow these steps:

- 1) Have a good look at the requirements for a MHeNs certificate (in TRACK)
- 2) Use the table on the website and insert all relevant activities, each on a separate line, under the appropriate heading. Some activities have fixed credits (ECs); these can be found on the course certificate or in the PhD TRACK system ("professional courses" menu.) For courses, workshops, teaching roles, outreach activities, management roles, etc. that have no assigned ECs, make an estimate of the number of hours you spent on the activity. This means that each activity you list will have either EC or hours entered (not both).
- 3) At least 6 weeks before your scheduled PhD defense, send an e-mail to the MHeNs PhD coordinator to request a MHeNs certificate. Include the completed registration table as attachment.
- 4) Make an appointment with the MHeNs coordinator to go through your overview of activities to make sure that all activities have been correctly listed and that final ECs are correctly estimated. Make sure that you keep record of all obtained certificates that were issued to you for participation in courses, in case you are asked to present these to the PhD coordinator.

To apply for a EURON certificate, please contact the EURON office: secr.euron@maastrichtuniversity.nl

For more information on the MHeNs and EURON certificate contact Martin van Boxtel (PhD coordinator MHeNs: martin.vanboxtel@maastrichtuniversity.nl) or Nicole Senden (Coordinator EURON: n.senden@maastrichtuniversity.nl)

4. PHD COMMUNITY & REPRESENTATION

The MHeNs PhD community consists of approximately 300 PhD's (regular and external PhD candidates), who are represented by PhD candidates from the three MHeNs divisions in the 'MHeNs PhD Committee'. The representatives' role is to facilitate communication between PhD-students, the PhD coordinator, and the MHeNs Board, and to help develop PhD grassroots initiatives.

MHeNs PhD's meet 4-5 times a year during the so-called 'MHeNs Pizza meetings'. Speakers are invited on diverse topics like: "How to publish my work"; Networking; Ethics, Transferable Research Skills" and sometimes content related topics. Afterwards they close off the event in a more informal setting by eating pizza together. In addition, the PhD candidates organize annually a MHeNs Mingle day, to stimulate informal and formal exchanges between MHeNs PhD candidates of the different divisions. They also meet during the annual MHeNs Research day and the EURON PhD days. Activities of MHeNs are announced via email, newsletters and through [UMployee](#).

In addition, at Maastricht University, there is a vibrant PhD community. There are many ways to connect with your peers on a social and professional level, for instance through the [UM PhD Academy](#), and there is a UM-wide platform, the [Central PhD Candidates Platform \(CPCP\)](#) that discusses interfaculty and (inter)national issues that concern PhD candidates. This includes topics such as workload, contractual and other statuses, teaching duties, psychological health and the duration of PhD tracks.

For more general UM PhD information, check [here](#).

5. MHeNs AND UM PROCEDURE OF SUBMITTING YOUR PHD THESIS

The requirements of the MHeNs PhD thesis:

The supervisor(s) will evaluate whether the doctoral thesis requirements have been met for a promotion at Maastricht University in consultation with the MHeNs Scientific director.

After a positive approval the PhD candidate, with support of the supervisor(s), will start the procedure of submission of the concept thesis to the [assessment committee](#) and the UM procedure for arranging the defense.

The supervisor(s) jointly make the decision about submitting the doctoral thesis to the assessment committee. The assessment committee will decide on the question of whether you have provided, by means of the thesis, such evidence of your competence to carry out independent academic work, that the thesis can be accepted as a doctoral thesis and that you can be admitted to the degree ceremony. The Assessment Committee consists of at least four and no more than five members. The (co-)

supervisors are not part of the assessment committee. The chairman of the assessment committee is a professor at UM.

At least 6 months before the date of your public defense:

Consult the latest (2023) version of the [Regulations for obtaining the doctoral degree](#) Maastricht University timely, which can be found [here](#).

Submit Model letter 1: Request for exemption as meant in Article 2 under 2 of the Doctoral Degree Regulation, but only in case you do not fulfil the admission criteria for the degree ceremony as mentioned in article 1 sub 2. Model letter can be found [here](#).

Submit Model letter 2: Request for admission to the doctoral degree ceremony at Maastricht University to the Board of Deans, to be found at: <https://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/support/phds>. This request has to be signed by your supervisors as well. As mentioned before, also the MHeNs office is asking for a diploma check already at the start of your PhD trajectory.

Submit Model letter 3: Acceptance of manuscript and proposal for the composition of the Assessment Committee. This letter has to be signed by the supervisors and has to be send to the Dean Faculty of Health Medicine and Life Sciences (FHML).

Once the chairman of the Board of Deans has appointed the assessment committee you can send them the draft of your thesis.

As soon as the assessment committee has evaluated the thesis (which generally take 4 weeks), the chair of the assessment committee will send a Statement of the Assessment Committee concerning the defense of the dissertation (Model letter 4). In article 20 under 3 of the doctoral regulations the topics contemplated by the assessment committee are stipulated.

At least 3 months before the public defense:

Fix a (provisional) date for the public defense by calling the Office for Academic Ceremonies: 31-(0)433883096/82551.

When the date is fixed, e-mail your title page and the backside of the title page (Model letter 5a and 5b) to the Office for Academic Ceremonies (PhD-office@maastrichtuniversity.nl).

The supervisor has to submit Model letter 6 to the Board of Deans: The propositions.

At least 1 month before the public defense:

The supervisor has to submit Model letter 7 to the Board of Deans: The names of the members of the defense committee.

At least 3 weeks before the public defense:

the doctoral candidate must send a digital version of the thesis with its propositions to the University Library. The doctoral candidate shall submit the following files:

- a. the thesis in PDF format with due observance of the requirements in Article 12.
- b. the propositions as referred to in Article 12 paragraph 9 in PDF format.
- c. the summaries as referred to in Article 12 paragraph 11 in PDF format.
- d. the cover in JPG format or similar.

The doctoral candidate decides whether an embargo on (parts of) the thesis is necessary. As soon as the definitive date of the doctoral degree ceremony has been determined, the doctoral candidate will receive a form from the PhD Office for notification of an embargo.

If you have read this and you still have questions on the above, you can contact the UM Office for Academic Ceremonies: Phd-office@maastrichtuniversity.nl

6. FINANCIAL ALLOWANCES

MHeNs specific financial provisions for PhD candidates:

The required bench fee (consumables, courses, travel costs, conference visits etc.) for the PhD candidate to conduct the research needs to be covered by the supervision team and may be arranged differently for different PhD candidates. Such arrangements need to be aligned upfront with the MHeNs Managing Director: t.vandencrommenacker@maastrichtuniversity.nl

The PhD candidate is, under certain conditions, entitled to an allowance for costs associated with the PhD ceremony. These conditions are listed in the Regulations printing and reception costs PhD's Maastricht University ([more info](#)).

At this site you can find the form you will have to fill out to get the allowance.

7. AFTER YOUR PHD

Already during your PhD time, the question will arise what you want to do after your PhD. There are several facilities and programmes available at MHeNs, FHML and UM more widely to support you with the planning of your post-PhD career, including training programmes for personal grant applications, mentoring sessions with senior academics, advice from the career office and a competitive internal postdoctoral fellowship programme at FHML, the [Kootstra Talent Fellowship](#). Internal grant applications may benefit from having obtained a MHeNs PhD certificate at the end of the PhD trajectory.

Alumni Network

The [UM Alumni Office](#) would like to welcome you to its Alumni Community, a network of over 80,000 graduates. The UM Alumni Office regularly organizes (online) events around the world, where you meet fellow alumni. They may be able to help you with a job, new contacts, and so on. Follow the UM Alumni Office on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and via its website for news, alumni stories, vacancies, information about Maastricht, events and more. You can also contact them in case you have any questions via: alumni@maastrichtuniversity.nl.