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INTRODUCTION
Hora Finita is the PhD tracking system at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Tracking the PhD process in Hora Finita encompasses the steps Admission, Programme and Defence. The Match step is beyond the scope of the system.

These individuals are usually involved throughout the PhD process. They are part of the organization at the graduate school(s) and/or at the secretariat of the faculty board. We call them key users. These key users have insight into all PhD registrations and PhD processes at the faculty.

University administration
Administration takes place not only at faculty level but also at university level. There are two aspects to this: the administrative tasks carried out by the Beadle’s Office, which has its own key user, and the IT management that keeps Hora Finita operational.

The Beadle’s Office takes care of administration at university level in relation to the PhD process (incl. implementation and verification of the relevant doctorate regulations) and the use of Hora Finita. Barbara Zegveld is the point of contact for the PhD process and Ellis Verkerk fulfils this role for all key users at faculty level. If there is a new faculty key user, the Beadle’s Office will, at the faculty’s request, arrange the necessary introduction and training with regard to Hora Finita.

In addition, an operational IT manager ensures that the system continues to run and that any required changes are implemented, including new versions over time. These duties also include maintaining contact with the supplier of Hora Finita.

Key user meetings
Key user meetings are held at least three times a year and representatives of all parties are expected to attend. The faculties are mainly represented by the key users (up to an agreed maximum), while Institutional affairs will be represented by the senior policy officer for research and the Beadle’s Office. The meetings are complemented by Hora Finita’s operational IT management.

ORGANIZATION
Faculty organization & management
The people involved in the PhD process belong to three broad categories:
1. all PhD candidates;
2. all persons who may be directly involved in a PhD programme, such as professors (incl. those occupying an endowed chair), associate professors and assistant professors;
3. all persons involved in a PhD programme from an organizational perspective.

Administration
Faculty administration
Each faculty has one or more members of staff who are the faculty’s point of contact for the PhD process and Hora Finita.

Match is geared towards finding a successful combination of available PhD programmes, a first supervisor and a PhD candidate. This step is not covered by Hora Finita and is therefore not described in the manual.
PhD PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

The faculty process complies with the doctorate regulations at all times. The latest version of these regulations can be downloaded from the VU website. Tracking the PhD process in Hora Finita encompasses the steps Admission, Programme and Defence.

Admission
This step consists of the PhD candidate’s entry into the PhD programme and his/her first steps on the programme.

The output of the Match step is a message that a new PhD candidate is due to start. This message is sent by the supervisor to the relevant key user, and signals the start of the Admission step in Hora Finita. This step is described below.

Hora Finita’s Admission step consists of two parts. The first is registration of final admission details. These details include the PhD candidate’s personal details, information on the faculty, the candidate’s educational background and the nature of the research, the supervisors, the Training and Supervision Plan (TSP) and the financial arrangements. When registering details in the digital admission form, the user is presented with information that is already available from other sources, such as the personnel system. The rest of the information is entered manually or using various tools (lists, check boxes, radio buttons, etc.) and of course the required attachments are added (various formats are supported).

Registration of the digital admission form can be handled by two actors: the faculty’s key user or the PhD candidate. There are two options:

- The key user takes care of the entire registration based on the information provided about the PhD candidate and the PhD programme.
- The key user takes care of basic registration and asks the PhD candidate to provide additional details.

The functionality of the system supports requests for additional details and the provision of this additional details. This step can be repeated several times until the details are complete. When the details are submitted, the key user initiates the second part.

The second part consists of obtaining approval from the various actors. The final approval comes from the Rector Magnificus. The formal decision on PhD admission lies with him and those involved are then notified that the decision has been taken. Once the decision has been taken, the registration is automatically converted to a PhD programme.

Programme
This step consists of the PhD programme at the faculty, which covers the following components: conducting research, educational activities and teaching activities. These components are undertaken within the framework of the Training and Supervision Plan (TSP). It is possible to amend the PhD portfolio if necessary.

If applicable, the PhD candidate is obliged to register his/her educational activities in Hora Finita, to apply for the defence and to submit the title page of the dissertation for approval by the Rector Magnificus. For all other activities, Hora Finita offers the candidate features that enable him/her to register his/her work schedule, decision documents and progress interviews.
Work schedule
The work schedule of the PhD programme can be registered, changed and of course deleted using the planning function. A number of mandatory elements known as ‘milestones’ are filled in automatically on the basis of a target date. The work schedule can only be viewed by the PhD candidate and is designed to help him/her distribute the workload evenly.

Educational activities
The educational activities in which the candidate participates (e.g. courses, training tracks, conferences) are separately registered, modified and removed using the Portfolio function. In addition to the title and description of the relevant conference or course, a date or period is also registered. Once the candidate has attended the conference or course, he/she provides proof of participation by uploading a digital file of the certificate or other valid document. It is also possible to register exemptions up to a certain number of ECTS credits. Throughout the four years, approval may be given for attending each conference or course. This approval can come from the supervisor, the graduate school or a key user. Final approval for the full complement of 30 ECTS credits is given in the Defence step.

Progress interviews
The progress interviews are held in accordance with faculty policy or as agreed between the relevant parties and can be registered by the PhD candidate. The date of each interview is registered in advance. One month prior to the date, the PhD candidate is reminded to schedule the interview with the parties concerned. By way of preparation, it is possible to share documents. As an outcome of the interview, a report can be added or the interview can be registered as completed. This function is handy for the formal interviews, which often take place six months or nine/ten months into the programme and which take the form of a go/no go evaluation.

Changes to the PhD portfolio
Once the relevant details have been registered, amendments can still be made to the PhD portfolio. Any change in the supervisors is made in Hora Finita by the key user at the secretariat of the faculty board, following notification by the chair of the doctorate board (often the dean). Confirmation is then sent to the relevant parties.

Defence
This step consists of the final defence of a dissertation by the PhD candidate and the conferral of the doctorate degree. The defence consists of many steps involving a large number of actors. The first part consists of the application for the defence, the assessments of the manuscript and approval of admission to the defence. This process can be broken down into the following steps:

Application for the defence
1. The candidate applies for the opportunity to defend his/her PhD dissertation. He/she uploads the manuscript and fills in the title of the manuscript on the form.
2. The first supervisor approves the manuscript and the application.
3. The supervisor submits a proposal for members of the doctorate board to assess the manuscript. The supervisor has already approached the members informally to ask whether they are willing to serve on the board.
4. The dean (or a delegate) approves the doctorate board. At this stage an invitation is sent to all members of the doctorate board for the assessment of the manuscript.
5. The relevant graduate school draws up (or generates) a certificate stating that the candidate has obtained the requisite total of 30 credits.
6. The members of the doctorate board assess the manuscript within 30 days.
7. The chair of the doctorate board draws up a well-reasoned summary of the assessment of the manuscript and formulates a recommendation for the dean.
8. The dean approves this recommendation, thereby granting the candidate admission to the defence.

Note: If it is necessary to deviate from this standard process, the deadline for assessing the manuscript may be extended by an additional 30 days. In addition, the system enables registration as cum laude if the supervisor or members of the doctorate board have indicated that the dissertation merits this distinction.

Preparations for the ceremony
The second part concerns making the necessary preparations for the ceremony. This process can be broken down into the following steps:
1. In consultation with the Beadle’s Office, the candidate schedules two possible dates for the ceremony on the PhD calendar.
2. In consultation with the Beadle’s Office, the candidate confirms the final date for the ceremony on the PhD calendar.
3. The Beadle’s Office processes the final date in Hora Finita so that confirmation can be sent to everyone involved and instructions can be sent to the PhD candidate.
4. The PhD candidate submits a title page to the Beadle’s Office and selects a degree (doctor/doctor or philosophy).
5. The Beadle’s Office approves the title page on behalf of the Rector Magnificus.
6. The Beadle’s Office registers receipt of the printed and bound dissertations.

Ceremony
The third part consists of the ceremony itself. This can be broken down into the following steps:
1. The supervisor proposes members of the doctorate board to act as opponents during the ceremony.
2. The dean (or a delegate) approves the doctorate board to act as opponents during the ceremony. At this stage an invitation is sent to all members of the doctorate board with the relevant details regarding the ceremony.
3. The Beadle’s Office prints the degree certificate for the ceremony.
4. The Beadle’s Office changes the status of the programme to ‘doctorate obtained’ in Hora Finita.
HORA FINITA: GENERAL

Saving data
All data must be saved before closing or performing another action. If you click the button with a single arrow you return to the previous page. If you click the button with a double arrow you stay on the same page.

Return to previous page
It makes no difference whether you use the button or the button in the internet browser. However, it is important to save all the data you have entered before you use these buttons.

Required fields
The fields marked with an asterisk (*) are required fields. They must be filled in.

Who works with Hora Finita?
There are two categories of users:
1. users who have to carry out an action;
2. users who want to view the HF portfolio.

Hora Finita is set up in such a way that if someone has to carry out an action, they receive an email notification requesting them to do so. The same email provides a link that enables the user to carry out the action.

Other users are assigned an account that allows them to view the PhD programme. These users are identified in advance. The first category of users is linked to a PhD programme and this role grants them an insight into the PhD programme. The supervisor, for example, gains insight into the PhD programmes through the PhD candidates he/she supervises.

The second category is more general, consisting of users who work for a faculty, department, graduate school or research institute. These users are created manually and are given rights to view the relevant PhD programmes.

Logging in
Go to https://horafinita.vu.nl. Switch to English by using the flag icons . Use your VU-net ID and password if you have one. If not, use the login name and password sent to you once admission to the PhD programme has been granted.

Rejection
Throughout all three steps in the process – admission, the PhD programme and the defence – there are moments of approval. If everything goes smoothly, approval is given and the candidate continues to advance through the process. If an actor in the process rejects a request, the process is temporarily suspended, the key user is automatically informed by email and takes the necessary action to restart the process.

Help
Go to www.vu.nl/en-horafinita for:
• FAQ
• the point of contact at your faculty
When you log in as a graduate school, you will see a screen with a number of menu options at the top.

**Menu options**

Select a menu option above the line to see the sub-menu options below the line.

In the example on the left, the menu option 'PhD programme' is shown along with its sub-menu options: PhD programmes, PhD registrations, Interviews etc.

**Sub-menu option PhD registrations**

It is important to know that the sub-menu option 'PhD registrations' contains an overview of the registrations that are still being processed. In other words, the prospective candidate’s personal details and the details of the research programme are filled in, the TSP is still being filled and approvals by the various actors have yet to be given. Designated graduate school staff can only view the PhD registrations linked to his/her graduate school.

For each programme, the details can be viewed by clicking the name of the candidate. Two tabs are then displayed for the registration phase: 'General' and 'Personal details'. The general tab contains information about the status of the registration, the approvals, the PhD programme (e.g. working title, faculty, supervision, educational background, documents, funding, etc.). The personal details tab contains information such as the candidate’s name, date of birth and contact details.
Sub-menu option PhD programmes

Once all details have been filled in, all approvals have been received and the Rector Magnificus has taken the final decision, the registration is converted to a PhD programme. From that moment on, the details can be found in the sub-menu option called 'PhD programmes'. Designated graduate school staff can only view the PhD programmes linked to his/her faculty.

Here too, the details for each programme can be viewed by clicking the name of the candidate. The following tabs are displayed:

- **General**: information such as name of PhD candidate, appointment, faculty, funding, status, working title, whether or not it is a joint PhD project, etc.
- **Supervision**: details of the supervisors and co-supervisors.
- **Admission**: includes information about admission status and educational background.
- **TSP**: details of the Training and Supervision Plan including the training plan, educational plan, progress expressed in number of credits, and print option for a certificate for the educational activities completed.
- **Manuscript**: to be filled in when the candidate has submitted the application for the defence and uploaded the manuscript.
- **Assessment**: includes the proposal for the doctorate board’s assessment of the manuscript, the outcome and final assessment, and the board’s decision granting admission to the defence of the dissertation.
- **Cum laude**: proposal and composition of examiners and the agreement (or provisional agreement) on the distinction ‘cum laude’.
- **Doctorate Board**: includes the proposal for and the approved doctorate board (as opponents).
- **Ceremony**: includes date and location of defence.
- **Documents**: other relevant documentation that does not belong on another tab.
Actions in the Admission phase
Once it has been agreed that a candidate will enter a PhD programme at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the first supervisor sends an email to the relevant member of staff at the graduate school to provide them with the candidate’s main details. These include first name, surname, gender and email address, along with relevant faculty, department and graduate school.

Admission / Registration
Admission to the PhD programme involves the following steps:
- registration of all admission details, such as name and address, PhD programme and TSP;
- obtaining all approvals required from the parties involved.

Upon receiving this email, the graduate school initiates registration for the PhD programme and asks the prospective candidate to provide any missing admission details.

Click the sub-menu option ʿPhD registrationsʿ in the ʿPhD programmesʿ menu and click the button to start a new registration. Enter the details available to you, including any attachments. If the prospective candidate’s personnel details have already been entered in VU Amsterdam’s HRM system, then the details can be uploaded using the ʿselect existing personʿ field. If not, enter the candidate’s details manually.

Record the personal details with an initial capital letter, insert full stops between the initials and enter any surname prefixes in the field provided.
Please note: if you wish to have the option of contacting the prospective PhD candidate directly, it is important to enter his/her email address.
If the prospective candidate has to provide additional details, the graduate school can request this details by saving the registration and then requesting additional details using the button.

As soon as the prospective candidate has completed the details and submitted his/her registration, the graduate school receives notification and subsequently checks those items and documents described in the Doctorate Regulations as being crucial to the faculty. The agreements in the TSP must also be confirmed.

The graduate school then initiates the ‘chain of approval’: a number of actors have to grant approval (this used to be done by signing off) before the registration is converted into a PhD programme.

Click the button and the first email is automatically sent to the first actor in the chain of approval: the supervisor.

You can monitor the progress in the chain of approvals by looking up the prospective candidate’s details in ‘PhD registrations’ and selecting the ‘General’ tab.

If approval from a certain actor has been on hold for some time, you can send this person an additional request for approval. Click the ‘envelope with arrow’ icon on the line of the relevant actor. The draft email appears on your screen. Click the button to send.

Once all the actors have granted approval, the graduate school automatically receives notification and the registration of the PhD
The PhD candidate has been admitted to the PhD programme.

**Actions in the Programme phase**

**Approving educational activities**
During the PhD programme, the PhD candidate registers his/her educational activities in a portfolio. The graduate school receives an email each time the PhD candidate enters details and it is up to the graduate school to check these details, make any necessary changes and then grant its approval.

Open the PhD programme for the candidate in question and click the [Courses] button at the bottom right of your screen. A list of the courses entered is displayed. Open the course by clicking it, so that you can assess the details and make changes if necessary. If the PhD candidate has proof of participation, he/she can upload it. The document can then be viewed by the graduate school.
If the details are correct and the course satisfies the requirements, it can be approved by ticking the box next to ‘approved’. Remember to save the changes!
A new course can also be introduced by the graduate school. Click the **New** button in the list of courses for the relevant PhD candidate. The standard training courses, seminars etc. have been entered in Hora Finita and can be called up in the ‘search catalogue’ field. Enter the abbreviation for the faculty to view a list of existing courses and make your selection. If the course you are looking for is not included in the drop-down list, it can be entered manually.

**Printing credits certificate**

The graduate school can monitor the progress of the PhD candidate. Open the relevant PhD programme and then open the TSP tab. On this tab, the details under the heading ‘Progress’ shows how many credits have been obtained and how many have yet to be obtained. When the required number of credits have been obtained, the graduate school prints the certificate from the same screen. Click the **Create PDF** button under the heading ‘Certificate’. Open the PDF and print.
Information and actions in the Defence phase

Doctorate Board

Once the supervisor and the PhD candidate agree that the manuscript is ready for assessment, the candidate submits the application for the defence via Hora Finita. When the supervisor has given his/her approval, the dean will receive an email request for approval via Hora Finita.

When the dean has given his/her approval, the supervisor will receive an email requesting that he/she submit a proposal via Hora Finita for the composition of a doctorate board to assess the manuscript.

The supervisor submits this proposal to the dean, who is informed by email. As soon as the dean has given his/her approval via Hora Finita, letters of invitation are automatically sent to the board members.

The graduate school can view the candidate’s latest status update in his/her PhD programme. Open the ‘Assessment’ tab and view the information under heading ‘2. Doctorate Board’. The secretariat of the faculty board monitors this process.

If one or more board members takes too long to carry out an assessment, the secretariat of the faculty board will send a reminder to those who have not yet responded.
Assessment: cum laude

During their assessment of the manuscript (via Hora Finita), the members of the doctorate board can indicate that the research project merits the distinction ‘cum laude’. They can also put forward suggestions for examiners.

Once all board members have submitted their assessment, the chairperson has submitted the doctorate board’s final verdict to the dean and the dean has granted approval for admission to the defence, the secretariat of the faculty board receives an email confirming this.

The secretariat of the faculty board then checks to see whether the assessment is consistent with the distinction ‘cum laude’. Open the PhD programme for the candidate in question and check the ‘Assessment’ tab under point 2 ‘Doctorate Board’ to see whether cum laude has been proposed.

If cum laude has been proposed, you can view a list of suggested examiners on the ‘Cum laude’ tab. The secretariat of the faculty board checks whether these are the right people for the position and issues a proposal to the dean based on these suggestions.

The dean then receives an email requesting that he/she considers the suggested examiners. The dean clicks the link in the email to open a screen that displays the assessments by the board members, including their supporting arguments and suggestions for the examiners. The dean may make changes before giving his/her approval.

Once the dean has given approval, the examiners will receive an email asking them to assess the manuscript and determine whether it merits the distinction ‘cum laude’. After assessment by the examiners, the secretariat of the faculty board receives an automated
email that the examiners’ decision has been received. If the decision is unanimously positive, the provisional distinction ‘cum laude’ will automatically be recorded in the ‘Cum laude’ tab.

The secretariat of the faculty board then sends an email to the dean via Hora Finita.

**Doctorate board as opposition at the defence**

When all members of the doctorate board have approved the manuscript and the dean has admitted the PhD candidate to the defence, the supervisor receives an email asking him/her to propose members of the doctorate board as opponents at the defence.

The dean receives the supervisor’s proposal by email and approves it. Following the dean’s approval, an automatic email is sent to the members of the doctorate board as an invitation to the PhD award ceremony. 

Please note: at this stage the date of the ceremony has yet to be determined in consultation with the Beadle’s Office, the supervisors, co-supervisors and members of the doctorate board. This action lies with the PhD candidate, who was informed of this responsibility when the manuscript was approved.

The supervisor receives an email confirming that the doctorate board has been approved as opponents at the defence. The graduate school can view the composition of the doctorate board on the ‘Doctorate Board’ tab under the heading ‘Approved Doctorate Board’.

The secretariat of the faculty board contacts the chairperson of the doctorate board about supervising the ceremony and adds his/her details to the list in Hora Finita.
Ceremony
As soon as the PhD candidate has confirmed the date with the Beadle’s Office, an automatically generated email is sent to the graduate school and the supervisors and co-supervisors. The board members can now receive a final invitation to the defence by the secretariat of the faculty board.

The PhD candidate receives an email with instructions on the title page, printing the dissertation, uploading the thesis to the library, the reception, the presentation and the dress code, among other things.

The Beadle’s Office ensures that the degree certificate and statement, signed by the Rector Magnificus, are ready on the day of the PhD ceremony.

After the ceremony, the status of the candidate’s PhD programme will be changed by Hora Finita to ‘doctorate obtained’, signalling the completion of the PhD programme.