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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.
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
Once you have logged in as a supervisor, your start-up screen will be your dashboard. At a glance you will see an overview of the PhD candidates under your supervision, the tasks yet to be completed in Hora Finita and the latest emails sent within Hora Finita.

Click the photo of a PhD candidate to open his/her PhD programme and view the details.

Click the link ‘Go to overview of my PhD candidates’ to open a list of all the PhD candidates under your supervision. You can view each individual programme by clicking the name of the candidate.

**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, Interviews, Portfolio, Decision documents; Cum Laude awarded.

Once it has been agreed that a candidate will enter a PhD programme at VU 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.

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.

As a supervisor you will receive a 'Request for PhD decision' email, informing you that a new registration is ready for assessment. Click the link in the email to open a screen that displays the registration details. When you have checked and approved the details, you register your approval by clicking the [Accept] button at the bottom right of the screen.

Once you have given your approval, the next actor in the ‘chain of approval’ is contacted to give theirs. When final approval has been given by the Rector Magnificus, you receive the PhD decision by email. This is also confirmation that registration for the PhD programme has been approved by all actors. Of course, the PhD candidate also receives this notification.

If you have not previously been issued login details for Hora Finita, you will receive them by email following receipt of the PhD decision. These details enable you to log in (see the explanation in the introduction to the manual) and follow the programme(s) of your PhD candidate(s).
During the four-year PhD programme, a number of activities in which you may be involved as a supervisor are registered and organized in Hora Finita:

- the schedule for all of the candidate’s activities in relation to the PhD programme [optional]
- the schedule for all interviews, including progress interviews [optional]
- registration of courses and educational activities [compulsory]

**Schedule for candidate’s activities relating to PhD programme**

The candidate can enter all his/her activities relating to the PhD programme in a schedule. Hora Finita’s functionality enables a Gantt chart to be generated. This gives the PhD candidate a visual representation of the total workload spread over the entire PhD period.

The supervisor is able to view this schedule, but has no active role in the registration.

**The schedule for all interviews, including progress interviews [optional]**

If applicable, it is possible to register various types of progress interviews. These include go/no go interviews and periodic progress interviews, held with the PhD candidate every 6 months, for example.

The dates and times of these interviews can be registered in advance, with a reminder sent to the PhD candidate one month in advance so that he/she can plan the interview with the supervisor and/or any other relevant parties.

It is possible to prepare for the interview in Hora Finita by adding documents, which can then be viewed by the relevant parties.
In addition, it is possible to mark a progress interview as ‘completed’ and to add a report of the interview.

Use of this module is optional but the faculty can make it compulsory in line with faculty policy.

Registration of courses and educational activities
All educational activities entered by and for the PhD candidate (seminars, training courses etc.) can be viewed by the supervisor. Log in and click the ‘PhD programme’ menu option and then the sub-menu option ‘Portfolio’ to see a list of all activities. In the right-hand column, you can see whether the activity has been approved (yes/no).

Approving activity
The supervisor regularly receives an automatic email stating that activities have been entered by or for the PhD candidates under his/her supervision. To approve an activity, click it and go to the ‘Assessment’ section, where you can tick the ‘Approved’ box. Remember to save the changes.

An overview for each individual candidate can be viewed and approved. Click the ‘PhD programmes’ menu option to find the sub-menu option called ‘PhD programmes’. Search for the PhD candidate you want and open his/her programme details. Click the [Courses] button at the bottom right of the screen. The screen that opens shows the activities already entered, whether or not they have been approved. Clicking the activity you want will open a screen with the relevant details.

New activity
Click the button at the bottom right of the screen to enter a new activity. The activity can be selected from a catalogue. The name of the activity is preceded by the abbreviation of the faculty:
Some activities are assigned a specific number of credits by the faculty. Others credits can be obtained with an activity of the candidate’s own choosing.

It is also possible to register both a full exemption and a partial exemption using the fields with these names.

**Defence**

Leading up to the defence of the dissertation, various activities take place that require your involvement as a supervisor:

- approval of the manuscript by the first supervisor
- putting together a doctorate board to assess the manuscript
- putting together a doctorate board to provide opposition at the defence

**Approval of the manuscript**

If the PhD candidate is obliged to obtain 30 ECTS credits as part of the programme, he/she must first fulfil this obligation and request a certificate from the relevant graduate school (research institute / PhD coordinator).

Once the PhD candidate and the supervisor(s) agree that the programme can be completed (and that the dissertation can be assessed), the candidate initiates the process by uploading his/her manuscript in Hora Finita and submitting the application for the defence.

The supervisor(s) then receive[s] an email that the manuscript is ready for assessment, with a link that leads to the assessment page.
You can download the manuscript from this page and give your assessment and supporting arguments when you are ready to do so.

The first supervisor should indicate whether he/she considers the dissertation worthy of the distinction ‘cum laude’. If this is the case, the supervisor must provide reasons for this recommendation.

Once the manuscript has been approved by all of the supervisors and co-supervisors, they, the graduate school and the PhD candidate receive an email confirming this. The first supervisor also receives an email asking him to propose members of the doctorate board to assess the manuscript.

**Proposing a doctorate board (to assess the manuscript)**
When all the supervisors and co-supervisors have approved the manuscript, the first supervisor receives an email asking him/her to propose members of the doctorate board to assess the manuscript. This email contains a link that takes the supervisor to the page where he/she can submit the proposal.

The supervisor nominates the members of the doctorate board, having first checked informally whether they want to take part. The area of expertise for each member is included in the ‘remarks’ field. In addition, the supervisor nominates a doctorate board and then submits the proposal to the dean using the button.

The dean receives the email with the supervisor’s proposal and approves it. Following the dean’s approval, an automatic email is sent to the members of the doctorate board as an invitation to open and assess the manuscript.
The board members are asked to indicate whether they consider the dissertation worthy of the distinction ‘cum laude’. In that case, they are asked to propose examiners who can approach the dean and provide an independent recommendation.

When all the board members have submitted an assessment, the chairperson is notified and submits the final assessment and recommendation to the dean.

The dean reviews all assessments and approves the final assessment and recommendation.

The supervisors then receive an email notification.

The first supervisor also receives an email asking him/her to propose members of the doctorate board to serve as opponents at the defence. The PhD candidate receives an email including the notification that he/she can contact the Beadle’s Office to schedule a date for the defence.

Proposing a doctorate board (as opponents 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 first supervisor receives an email asking him/her to propose members of the doctorate board as opponents at the defence. This email contains a link that takes the supervisor to the page where he/she can submit the proposal.

The opponents at the defence and the members of the doctorate board for the assessment of the manuscript are often one and the same. It is therefore possible to adopt the composition proposed for the doctorate board for assessment of the manuscript. Of course, it is also possible to select other people.
In addition, the supervisor nominates a chairperson for the doctorate board and then submits the proposal to the dean using the button [Request approval for composition].

The dean receives the email with the supervisor’s proposal 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. The supervisor receives an email confirming that the doctorate board as opponents at the defence has been approved.

**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, among others. At this stage, the board members receive a final invitation to the defence.

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.