Charter of the PhD researcher and the supervisor

The charter of the PhD researcher and the supervisor is an appendix to the regulation concerning the attainment of doctoral degrees at the KU Leuven[1].

The importance of proper supervision for the smooth running of doctoral research and training cannot be overestimated. The supervisor, possibly supported by one or more co-supervisors[2] and the supervisory committee are the people responsible for supervising and supporting the PhD researcher. The charter of the PhD researcher and the supervisor outlines the role of the (co)supervisor *and* the PhD researcher in the doctoral process. It outlines the mutual expectations and responsibilities of (co)supervisors and PhD researchers and should be used as a basis for effective supervision and a fruitful scientific collaboration. At the start of their collaboration the supervisor and PhD researcher go through the charter for the PhD researcher and the supervisor, using it as a basis upon which to make the necessary arrangements concerning scientific supervision. Any other aspects that may be related to their collaboration (e.g. if the PhD researcher is a salaried staff member) are covered by the relevant regulations.

The profile of a good PhD researcher

Setting up research and acquiring the necessary skills in problem solving and communication is in the first place the responsibility of the PhD researcher. The PhD researcher is also expected to take responsibility for cultivating his/her talents and developing his/her career, within or outside academia, and for meeting the commitments linked to the funding of his/her doctoral research

A good PhD researcher possesses and acquires the qualities necessary to mature into an independent researcher:

- The PhD researcher is **proactive** and undertakes the necessary efforts to ensure good progress in his/her doctoral research project. The PhD researcher:
    - actively engages in setting up the research questions that are addressed in the doctoral project,
    - is jointly responsible for developing the research methodology that will be used to address the research questions,
    - is responsible for planning, implementing and where necessary modifying the research,
    - is responsible for interpreting and analysing the research results obtained,
    - puts the research in a broader context,
    - reflects critically on the research process undertaken.
  The PhD researcher can rely on close supervision from the (co)supervisor and members of the supervisory team. The active contribution made by the PhD researcher in the research planning, and the interpretation and analysis of the results increases as the doctoral research progresses resulting in an **independent researcher** who can design, develop, implement and adapt an extensive research process.

- The PhD researcher takes advantage of the opportunities offered by the (co)supervisor and others to be part of suitable **research networks** and builds up networks of his/her own where possible and recommended (e.g. by actively participating in conferences, by working at another research institution,...).

- The PhD researcher together with the (co)supervisor ensures that the doctoral research results in **publications and/or other realisations** and is entitled to be named as first (co)author, taking into account the common practices within the discipline. The PhD researcher prepares the publications and can rely on the support of the (co)supervisor and the supervisory team.

---

[1] https://admin.kuleuven.be/rd/doctoraatsreglement/en/index

[2] The supervisor and co-supervisor(s) are jointly responsible for setting the right context and providing support for the PhD researcher and adhere to the 'profile of a good supervisor'. The formal tasks and qualifications of the supervisor and co-supervisor are laid down in art. 11 of the regulation concerning the attainment of doctoral degrees at the KU Leuven: https://admin.kuleuven.be/rd/doctoraatsreglement/en/index

- The PhD researcher is aware of and adheres to the generally accepted norms of **fair and honest scientific conduct** (see checklist[3])**.**

- The PhD researcher ensures that **data** generated during the research are always available on request. In this matter the PhD researcher abides by the principles of correct data management according to the current methods in the research unit and of the KU Leuven policy concerning research data management[4]. The PhD researcher respects the intellectual property rights relating to concepts and findings of the KU Leuven and takes proper care of materials and equipment.[5]

- The PhD researcher together with the (co)supervisor compiles a plan for the **doctoral programme**. In this plan, attention is focused on activities and training for doctoral research on the one hand, and the acquisition of various competences that advance the quality and efficiency of the doctoral research and prepare the PhD researcher for a professional career within or outside the university after the doctoral degree, on the other hand. The PhD researcher ensures that the activities in the context of the doctoral programme are completed within the proposed deadlines.

- The PhD researcher is jointly responsible for the **efficient progress** of the doctoral process and endeavours to finalise his/her doctoral thesis within a reasonable timeline. For doctoral researchers with funding, it is recommended not to exceed the funding term of 4 to 6 years.

- To the best of his/her ability the PhD researcher **integrates** in the research group and respects the cooperation agreements made in this respect.

- The PhD researcher brings to light any **problems and challenges** as quickly as possible, first informing the (co)supervisor and the supervisory committee, so that a suitable solution can be found.

The profile of a good (co)supervisor

The (co)supervisor is responsible for the physical and intellectual climate in which the PhD researcher develops and carries out his/her research project. He/she plays a stimulating, coordinating and evaluating role for the entire duration of the doctoral process. In addition, the (co)supervisor ensures that during his/her training the PhD researcher can also acquire other essential skills that will enable him/her to move on to another job, within or outside academia, after the completion of the doctoral programme.

A good (co)supervisor has the qualities necessary to ensure the correct context and support for each of his/her PhD researchers:

- The (co)supervisor is an **active researcher** and has built up a **solid reputation**. Depending on the length of the academic career and the research area, this can be deduced from scientific publications, citations, invitations to contribute at conferences and successful bids for research funding, amongst other things.

- The (co)supervisor has built up his/her reputation in a **research area** that is sufficiently related to the area in which the PhD researcher is carrying out his/her research, so as to be able to give the necessary supervision.

- The (co)supervisor is responsible for the **quality of the research plan** of the PhD researcher.

- The (co)supervisor ensures close **supervision**. The supervision includes ample opportunity for the PhD researcher to discuss planning, implementation and results of the research with qualified researchers. Research units and supervisors examine how the PhD researcher can be offered efficient and high-quality supervision. Regular formal and informal contact moments between the PhD researcher, the (co)supervisor and/or the supervisory team are at the heart of good supervision. The contact moments

---

[3] https://www.kuleuven.be/english/research/integrity/Checklist
[4] https://www.kuleuven.be/rdm/en/home
[5] https://admin.kuleuven.be/reglementen/en/research/intranet/intellectual-properties

between the PhD researcher and the (co)supervisor are laid down in the work agreements made during the annual performance reviews. The concrete tasks of the (co)supervisor and/or the supervisory team are:

- o   to help the PhD researcher plan, implement and if necessary adjust the research,
- o   to help the PhD researcher place the research in a broader context,
- o   to help the PhD researcher interpret and analyse the research results obtained,
- o   to encourage the PhD researcher to present his/her work, to be present on these occasions on a regular basis and to give the PhD researcher feedback on his/her performance,
- o   to challenge the PhD researcher to think critically about his/her own research work,
- o   to introduce the PhD researcher to the world of research by (1) involving him/her in research that is being carried out in the research group and (2) by bringing him/her into contact with other researchers within the research area and international network, by for example encouraging him/her to take an active part in conferences and to work at another research institution.
- o   to encourage the PhD researcher to publish his/her work, to point out publication opportunities and to help him/her prepare for publication. The (co)supervisor and the supervisory team bear a considerable part of the responsibility for the doctoral process and for the publications that arise from the doctoral research. They give the PhD researcher as many opportunities as possible to be first (co)author on publications that valorise the work he or she has carried out.

- As a team leader the supervisor ensures that the PhD researcher is monitored and coached as a member of the team. This includes, amongst other things, regular performance and career reviews.

- The (co)supervisor creates a research environment in which **fair and honest scientific conduct** (e.g. good data management, responsible authorship [6] , avoiding conflict of interest [7]) are the norm (see checklist[8]). In addition, the (co)supervisor provides clarity concerning the nature of dishonest conduct within the context of the scientific domain. In the event of any problems the (co)supervisor takes suitable action, in consultation with the PhD researcher.

- The (co) supervisor together with the PhD researcher draws up a plan for the **doctoral programme**. The (co)supervisor informs the PhD researcher about the courses on offer at the KU Leuven (in the context of YouReCa and the Doctoral Schools) and discusses with the PhD researcher how to flesh out the doctoral programme. Furthermore, the (co)supervisor makes the PhD researcher aware of any interesting opportunities in the area of additional training or education within and outside the KU Leuven. The (co)supervisor ensures (together with the dean or head of department) that teaching and other duties of the PhD researcher are organised so as not to jeopardise the completion of the doctoral degree within the time given and so that, if relevant, these duties remain within the limits of the personnel status of the PhD researcher.

- The (co)supervisor is jointly responsible for the **efficient progress** of the doctoral process. The (co)supervisor encourages the PhD researcher to complete his/her thesis within a reasonable timeline. For doctoral degrees with funding, it is recommended not to exceed the funding term of 4 to 6 years.

- The supervisor gives the PhD researcher ample notice about any career opportunities after the doctoral degree has been obtained, or refers him/her to the relevant services in this respect.

- The (co)supervisor is jointly responsible for creating a **pleasant professional** work environment and for the integration of the PhD researcher into the research group. This includes taking into account any personal matters that may have an impact on the research.

---

[6] https://www.kuleuven.be/english/research/integrity/practices/publication-and-authorship/authorship
[7] See, amongst others, article 15 of the Academic Staff Regulations:
https://admin.kuleuven.be/personeel/english_hrdepartment/studpersENG/academic_staff/index.html
[8] https://www.kuleuven.be/english/research/integrity/Checklist

The KU Leuven

The KU Leuven is responsible for creating a suitable framework in which the doctoral process can take place under optimum conditions. The university has authorised various entities to organise and monitor the doctoral process[9]. **The following entities are responsible for monitoring the qualities and proper functioning of (co)supervisors and PhD researchers:**

- The **doctoral schools** organise the doctoral programme, monitor the completion rate, and follow up the activities of the doctoral ombudspersons.

- The **doctoral committees** are responsible, in conjunction with the (co)supervisor and the supervisory committee, for monitoring the progress of the doctoral research and the doctoral programme. They make sure that the doctoral process is being correctly followed and that the supervisory and examination committees contain the right mix of individuals. The doctoral committees also monitor the activities of the doctoral ombudspersons.

- The **doctoral ombudspersons** are the first point of call for all concerned to discuss problems in the doctoral process. The doctoral ombudspersons shall mediate between the parties involved and jointly try and find an acceptable solution for everyone. Every year the doctoral ombudspersons send a general and completely anonymous report to the authorised doctoral committee, which discusses it and presents it to the **doctoral school**, the **executive committee** and the **Vice Rector for Research Policy**.

- The **Commission on Scientific Integrity** deals with reports concerning possible breaches of scientific integrity[10].

---

[9] https://admin.kuleuven.be/rd/doctoraatsreglement/en/index

[10] https://www.kuleuven.be/english/research/integrity

The **PhD researcher** and the (co-)supervisor(s) confirm that they have discussed the mutual expectations and responsibilities and have made the necessary arrangements to guarantee a good cooperation.

PhD researcher	Corresponding supervisor
Name:	Name:
Signature:	Signature:
Date:	Date:

Other (co-)supervisors (if applicable):

Supervisor – co-supervisor *(delete as applicable)*	Supervisor – co-supervisor *(delete as applicable)*
Name:	Name:
Signature:	Signature:
Date:	Date:
Supervisor – co-supervisor *(delete as applicable)*	
Name:	
Signature:	
Date:	