



## Thinking of Doing a PhD?

There are many reasons why a person will consider doing a PhD. For our students, the reasons include personal interest in a subject, vocational responsibilities or aspirations, and professional requirements. Undergirding this is normally a sense of Christian call and a concern for the Church.

PhD study can be an exciting and transformative experience, allowing in-depth study of a particular aspect of a subject of interest. Some would say that PhD study offers the greatest transformative and formative period in educational attainment.

PhD study, however, also carries substantial financial and time commitments. It will involve a candidate operating at a level of academic competence and intensity different from anything previously undertaken. The leap from Master's study to PhD studies is quite significant.

To 'do' a PhD means learning to become an independent researcher. It will require focusing on a specific area in considerable 'expert' depth. Becoming such a researcher is part of the process of doing a PhD.

In our programme and through the supervision we offer, we aim to help this development as a person moves through what are various stages of research and writing.

PhD study cannot be carried out with an hour here and there, once or twice a week. The nature of the conceptual thinking means that having several hours at a time to do the work is important, as 'getting into it' can be difficult to if treated on an occasional basis.

The normal time associated with doing a PhD full-time is three years. Part-time PhD study is often accordingly allowed six years. This requires some consideration, as we would encourage students to aim for a six-year completion from the point of their registration with the Vrije Universiteit Graduate School. This implies that over a six-year period a part-time student will have to find the equivalent of between two and two and a half days a week (based on a five-day working week) to do their PhD study. This time commitment has to be considered seriously and progress is monitored by the Vrije Universiteit, with the possibility of studies that are not progressing being brought to a halt. The nature of PhD study is that it cannot be done without such a time commitment.

There are many ways in which people do manage the time required. This can be by dedicating a day a week on a regular basis and periods of more sustained study at different times. Some take regular study weeks or sabbatical periods. In applying for PhD studies, thinking through the various commitments early will help prevent later frustration and disappointment and make the experience more rewarding and satisfying.