

PhD selection guide

# How to get the right PhD candidate



## Colophon

This *PhD selection guide* aims at providing PhD supervisors with the knowledge and tools needed to get the right PhD candidate.

The information in this document is based on interviews with HR advisors and experienced supervisors as well as best practices from the field.

The competences, as mentioned in this selection guide, are linked to the competences used in the Doctoral Education of PhD candidates.

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# How to get the right PhD candidate

Selecting the right PhD candidate is an important first step in a successful PhD programme. If you ask around, you will also hear that many people find it to be one of the most difficult steps. How can you tell from just an interview whether there is potential for a high quality dissertation four years down the line?

Of course, this selection guide cannot guarantee that either. However, it will help you through this tricky process. On what selection criteria should you base your decision? How to assess these criteria? And how to structure your selection process? From defining the project through to appointing the PhD candidate, this selection guide enables a professional recruitment and selection of PhD candidates, the largest group of TU Delft staff.

## **For which type of PhD's can I use this selection guide?**

Some PhD candidates are appointed as an employee of TU Delft, others have a scholarship, do their PhD project for the company they're currently working for or even work on their project self-funded.

Either way, you commit yourself to supervising and guiding the candidate to a successful PhD project. So at the start of each of these projects the decision has to be made whether to work on this specific project with this specific candidate, which makes this selection guide applicable to the selection of all types of PhD candidates.

## **Outline**

This selection guide starts with how to set up the profile of an ideal PhD candidate for your project, the competences of the PhD candidate, how to assess these competences and the selection process. In the final chapter we focus on how to make the decision and your role as a selector.

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*The competences that make for an ideal PhD candidate*



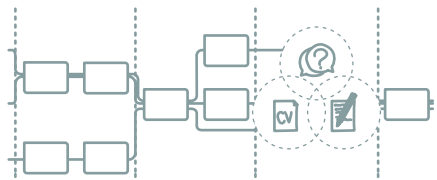
## Part 2: Selection tools

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# Selection criteria

the competences that make for an ideal PhD candidate

## Selection criteria

There are no hard-and-fast rules for selecting the right candidate, but there are some general competences that an 'ideal' candidate must have according to various studies, interviews and competency profiles.

In order to have a clear idea of the ideal candidate for the position you start by **determining the profile** for such a candidate.

At the core of this profile are the competences. These competences for the PhD candidate can be divided into three categories; **knowledge, skills** and **attitude**.

In this section you'll find a description of each competence. Keep in mind that the candidate that meets all of the competences at the desired level probably doesn't exist. It is up to you to decide if the candidate has what it takes to be able to successfully finish a PhD project.

Next to a description of each competence, this section also provides you with suggestions on means of assessing these competences. A more detailed description of each assessment method is given in the **selection tools section** of this selection guide.

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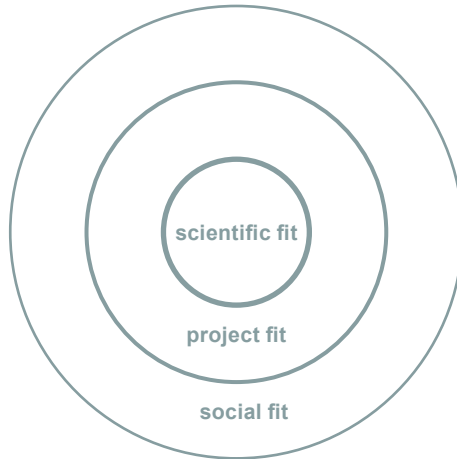
## Determining the profile of an ideal candidate

To prepare for the recruitment and selection of a PhD candidate, it's important that you have a clear idea of what it is you are looking for. Start the selection procedure by determining the profile of an ideal candidate for this particular project.

Some projects require excellent (intercultural) communication skills, while other projects need more of a creative approach to the research and a high level of autonomy. Deciding on the criteria for the best possible candidate beforehand can help you create a mental framework to rank candidates on.

### Profile categories

The profile for the ideal candidate is built up of 3 categories. At the core of the profile is the scientific fit. The second layer is the project fit and the last layer is the social fit. When assessing a candidate you work from inside to out.



- **Scientific fit:** the fit of the candidate to the scientific aspects of the project. This profile category is based on the **knowledge** and **skills** of the candidate.
- **Project fit:** the fit of the candidate to the project he or she will be working on. Each project requires a different mix of **skills** and **attitude**.
- **Social fit:** the fit of the candidate within the working environment, the team and with you as a supervisor. This category is based on the **attitude** of the candidate as well as on the personality and cultural background.

The competences given in this section are a good starting point for determining the ideal candidate profile for your project. As these are the basic building blocks for the profile.

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## Knowledge

*The theoretical or practical understanding about the subject of the PhD project.*

### Scientific knowledge

The educational/career background of the candidate within the field of the PhD subject including technical skills and research related knowledge.

#### means of assessment

- Degree/Diploma
- Previous work
- Selection interview
- Tests

# Skills

*The proficiencies developed through training or experience.*

## Analytical thinking

The ability to separate a complex whole into its constituent parts in order to study these parts and their relations and come up with plans and solutions.

### means of assessment

- Previous work
- Selection interview
- Tests

## Conceptual thinking

The ability to identify patterns or connections between situations that are not obviously related, and to identify key or underlying issues in complex situations.

### means of assessment

- Previous work
- Selection interview
- Tests

## Creativity

The ability to come up with new/innovative ideas and concepts.

### means of assessment

- Previous work
- Selection interview
- Tests

## Project management

The ability to plan and organise the project as well as delegating and negotiating tasks among project members.

### means of assessment

- Selection interview

## Presentation and communication

The ability to transfer an idea to others in an understandable and effective way.

### means of assessment

- Selection interview
- Tests

## Language

The level at which the candidate can read, write and speak English and other required languages.

### means of assessment

- Degree/Diploma
- Tests

## Scientific integrity

The adherence to moral and ethical principles.

### means of assessment

- Selection interview



# Attitude

*The personality, values and world perception of the candidate.*

## **Perseverance**

The drive and determination to continue and finish a project.

means of assessment

- Selection interview

## **Autonomy / Independence**

The ability and confidence to self-manage and execute tasks individually as deemed right by the candidate.

means of assessment

- Selection interview

## **Working with others**

The openness to feedback and input from others as well as the ability to collaborate, negotiate and influence others.

means of assessment

- Selection interview

## **Supervising and coaching**

The ability to transfer knowledge and inspire others.

means of assessment

- Selection interview





# Selection tools

the means of assessing these specific competences

## Selection tools

How do you test for the level of competence of a candidate? In this section we provide you with some selection tools and information on how to put these to use in your selection process. Keep in mind what competences you want to assess when picking your selection tools.

Please note that this list is by no means a comprehensive summary of all tools available, but rather a collection of the main selection tools and starting point for finding the tools that suit you and your situation best.

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## Degree/diploma

### MSc diploma

According to Dutch law and the TU Delft Doctoral Regulations a PhD candidate should be in possession of a Dutch Master's degree. This may be a Master of Science or a Master of Arts degree from a University or College of Higher Education.

Naturally, PhD candidates with foreign Master degrees are also admitted to TU Delft. For foreign degrees you can ask the TU Delft Admissions Office to evaluate the quality of the diploma. This office determines whether the foreign degree can be considered as an equivalent of the Dutch Master's degree.

In some exceptional cases, it's possible to admit PhD candidates that do not have a Master's degree (yet). In that case the Board for Doctorates has to decide before the PhD candidate can start. Contact your faculty's Graduate Office for the procedure.

### IELTS/TOEFL certificate

IELTS and TOEFL are excellent tools for assessing the English language proficiency level of the candidate. There are currently no minimum requirements for PhD candidates, but you can use the MSc student requirements as a guideline.

*A TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) with an overall Band score of at least 90 and a minimum score of 21 for each section. Or an IELTS (academic version) with an overall Band score of at least 6.5 and a minimum of 6.0 for each section.*

### Language certificate

Depending on the area of research of the PhD candidate, additional language certificates may be required or desired.

## Previous work

### Resume

A recent resume is a requirement when selecting any kind of PhD candidate. It gives you an overall picture of the professional development of the candidate. The resume can mainly be used in the early phases of the selection process, as a quick way to get a first impression of the candidate and as a trigger for questions during the interview.

### Master thesis or publications

To test the writing skills and the overall level of knowledge of your future PhD candidate, you can consider asking for a recent publication or (an extract of) the candidate's master thesis.

### References

It's possible to ask your future PhD candidate for one or more references, for example the name and phone number of the master thesis supervisor. Contacting these references can give you insight in the kind of work that the candidate has done, how the candidate organises his or her work and the quality of work that the candidate delivers. Be aware that in some cultures it's considered inappropriate to give negative feedback. So ask for experiences with the candidate instead of a judgement.

*see appendix 1 for a list of examples of reference check questions*

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## Tests

To test the level of competence of the candidate, you can devise all kinds of assignments. We have named a few of them below. These tests are most valuable when you give the candidate limited-, or no time in advance to prepare and when the tasks are of a transformative nature (i.e. you supply data and ask the candidate to react to / work upon it).

### Writing an abstract or opinion

To test the candidates writing and presentation skills and the overall level of knowledge in a certain area, you can give them an article, publication or a thesis and ask the candidate to write an abstract or opinion piece.

### **Trial presentation**

Ask the candidate to prepare a 5-10 minute presentation about previous work (e.g. master thesis) in order to test for the candidate's language and presentation skills. Another option is to ask the candidate to prepare a review presentation on specific articles, or the current state of affairs within the field of study. With this second type of presentation you can test both the language and presentation skills as well as the scientific knowledge and analytical- and conceptual thinking skills of the candidate.

### **Trial exercises**

Another way to test your candidates skills is to give them some trial exercises, e.g. complex calculations or exam questions. This tests the scientific knowledge and analytical- and conceptual thinking skills of the candidate.

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## Selection interview

Once you have decided which candidate(s) you want to see in person, you can start planning the selection interview(s). The interview is the most important stage in making a match between the potential PhD candidate, and the desired competences for the position. Even if there is only one possible candidate, a selection interview is imperative in making this match. Not only for you as supervisor or promotor, but also to manage expectations of the potential candidate and to see how the candidate interacts. The section below gives some guidelines for the interview.

### **Selection committee**

Make sure to always have at least two people in a selection committee and preferably more. In this way you're more likely to make an unbiased decision, in which you don't fall for your blind spots. Preferably have at least one experienced member and a person who doesn't have an interest in hiring the candidate.

Some groups or departments have guidelines for the composition of the selection committee, you can check this with your deputy head of department or your HR advisor. Also, make sure there is a chairman to the committee who is responsible for the final decision and leads the interviews.

### **Organising the selection interview(s)**

Make sure the selection procedure (how many interviews, with whom, and when) is clear before you start so you have enough time to plan everything and invite the committee members and the candidate(s). When planning for selection interview(s), it is advised to

have a couple of minutes prior to the actual selection interview to discuss who is going to ask which questions and to discuss your general opinion after reading the material that is available about the candidate.

If you have more than one candidate it's advisable to agree upon the competences that you want to assess. There are different ways of going about this. You can ask all committee members to give a ranking per candidate (hire, don't hire) or you can agree to rank all the candidates on a set of competences and then compare the rankings to each other. You can also rank the materials of the candidate before the interviews and combine these with your impressions of the interviews. However you choose to go about it, ranking multiple candidates on the same criteria in a systematic way gives you more insight on how candidates compare to each other and objectifies your final decision.

*see appendix 2 for a standard selection interview agenda and examples of questions*

### Using Skype (or other teleconferencing programmes)

With potential candidates from all over the world, Skype can be a very useful tool for conducting selection interviews. But it should not replace a face to face meeting. Instead it can be used as a pre-selection method before deciding to have a candidate come over for a real life interview.

We strongly recommend to have potential PhD candidates come to the Netherlands at least once before you make your final decision. In this way you can see how the candidate interacts with the people and the workplace of TU Delft. Also for the candidate this is an excellent opportunity to get an impression of the country, culture and working environment where he or she will be working in for the next four years. This avoids possible disappointments from either side further down the line.

### Interviewing with the STAR technique

To assess skills and attitude of a candidate you can use a well-recognised way of interviewing, called the STAR method. STAR stands for Situation, Task, Action, Result and it is based around the idea that previous behaviour is a better indication of future behaviour than hypothetical situations.

STAR gives insight into future behaviour by asking about:

- A situation from the recent past
- A defined role or task
- Actual behaviour
- With a provable and clear result

#### Situation

- Can you explain the situation?
- Who where involved?

### Task

- What was your specific task or role?
- What was the (formal) goal?
- What did you want to achieve

### Action

- What did you say?
- What did you do?
- What was your contribution?

### Result and reflect

- What was the end result?
- What effect did you have?
- What would you change in the future?
- What did you learn?

### Example

Skill you want to test: **perseverance**

**S:** can you give an example of a situation where you wanted to give up, but persevered?  
This can be either in your studies or in your private life.

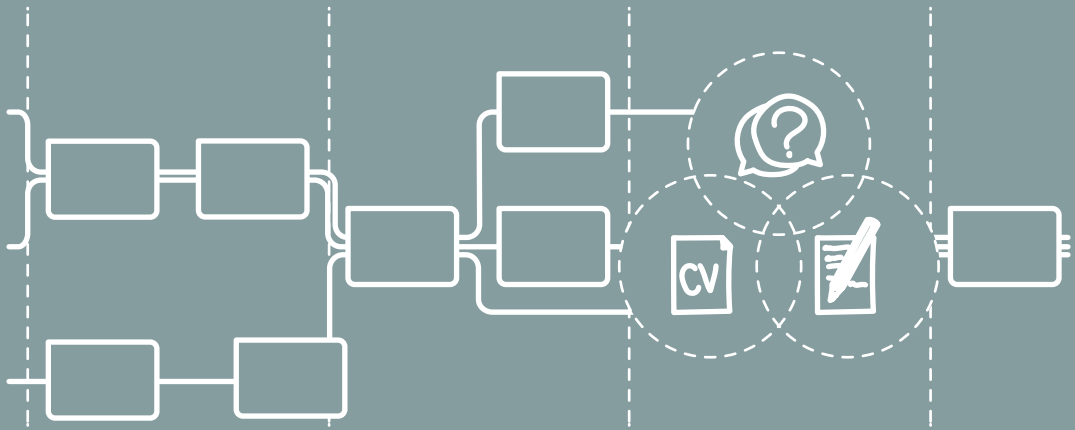
**T:** Can you explain what you wanted to achieve?

**A:** What did you do to achieve your goal

**R:** Did it work? Would you do the same in the future? What did you learn from this?

A variation of the technique can be to reverse the question: Can you give an example of a situation in which you did not persevere, why not, etc..





# Selection process

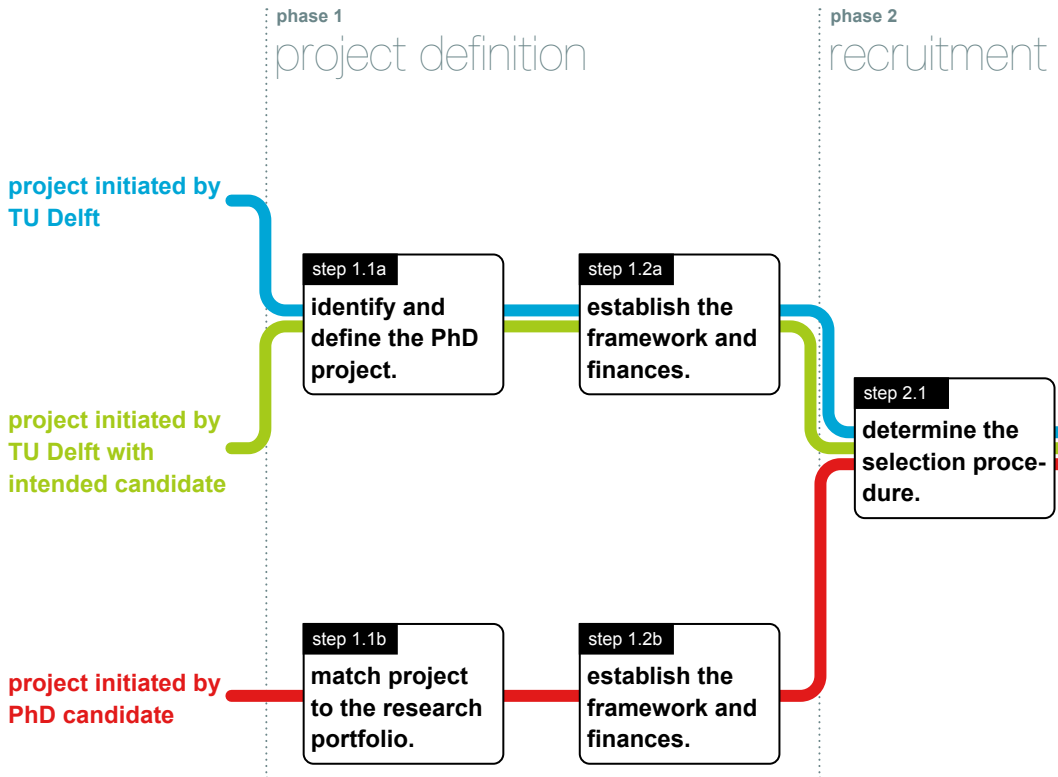
the process for getting the right PhD candidate

# Selection process

Selecting the right PhD candidate is part of the bigger process which starts by defining the PhD project and ends by appointing a new PhD candidate. This part of the selection guide dives deeper into this process. One thing to keep in mind is that the process differs depending on how the project is initiated. The way in which a project is initiated can roughly be divided into three groups. The corresponding colours of these groups are used throughout this part of the selection guide as a means to identify which step applies to which group.

## Project initiated by TU Delft

Projects that are initiated by the TU Delft (as opposed to projects initiated by the PhD candidate), and for which there is no intended candidate yet. In these types of projects the PhD candidate is mainly recruited via a job offer.

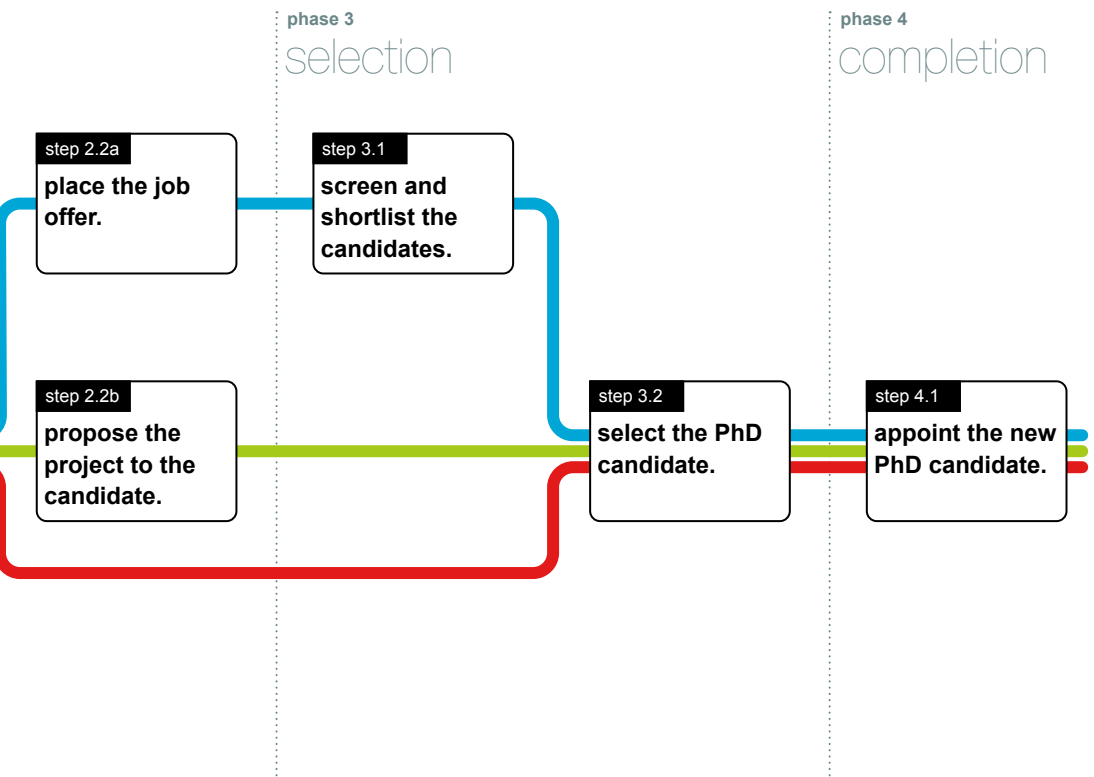


### Project initiated by TU Delft with intended candidate

Projects that are initiated by the TU Delft (as opposed to projects initiated by the PhD candidate), and for which you already have a specific candidate in mind. These projects are typically initiated after a fruitful MSc project.

### Project initiated by PhD candidate

Projects that are initiated by the prospective PhD candidate. These are typically projects initiated by the current employer of the candidate, or projects for which the candidate has received a scholarship.



## phase 1: Project definition

*Prior to recruiting and/or selecting a PhD candidate, the project on which the candidate will be working has to be defined. This means that both the content of the project and the financial framework have to be established.*

### step 1.1a.

## Identify and define the PhD project

applies to:

Whether the PhD project is part of a bigger research project, or a self-contained project, the content of the project should be defined and adjusted to the research portfolio of the faculty and/or the department. You should have a clear project plan before starting the selection process.

### step 1.1b.

## Match the project to the research portfolio

applies to:

See if the proposed project matches the research portfolio of your faculty. If the project doesn't fit your own research area, facilities or opportunities you can either rewrite the proposal (together with the candidate) in order to create a better fit, or you can refer the candidate to another section, faculty or university.

### step 1.2a.

## Establish the framework and finances

applies to:

In general, PhD candidates are (financially) covered by 2nd or 3rd money stream projects. Discuss with the department which costs should be covered by the project. Make sure that there is enough funding to cover the full four years.

In the meantime you can start to look around for a candidate, even if you have not yet fully completed the negotiations on funding. In that way, you can begin with the recruitment as soon as possible after the project has been approved.

**step 1.2b.****Establish the framework and finances***applies to:* ○ ○ ●

Find out (together with the department) whether the scholarship or allowance of the candidate is sufficient to cover all costs of the PhD project.

Also check if there are any special agreements or conditions under which the scholarship or allowance is provided.

Consult the department in case the costs cannot (completely) be covered and in case of unconventional agreements with the scholarship/allowance provider.

**phase 2: Recruitment**

*When all project outlines are clear, the next phase is to jointly agree upon the selection procedure and to draw up the vacancy.*

**step 2.1.****Determine the selection procedure***applies to:* ● ● ●

Make sure the selection procedure is defined at the start of the recruitment phase.

This means that you have defined the selection criteria; how to test these, the number of interviews, the persons involved in the selection committee and the number of candidates you want to invite for an interview. Even if you have only one candidate, it is still important to define the selection criteria and establish the selection procedure.

**step 2.2a.****Place the job offer***applies to:* ● ○ ○

Define the job profile and write the job offer. Keep the selection criteria and required documents in mind while writing. Don't forget to include the standard Graduate School information.

Job offers are by default placed on the TU website and the Academic Transfer website. Contact HR for additional information, formats, specific needs and wishes.

**step 2.2b.**

## **Propose the project to the intended candidate**

*applies to:*

If you already have an intended PhD candidate, propose the project to him or her. If this candidate is not interested, either alter the project to fit the candidate, or continue with placing a job offer (step 2.2a) according to the blue section of this selection guide.

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## phase 3: Selection

*In this phase you decide which candidate is most suited for the project, and whether (s)he will also make a suitable PhD candidate. This is where the selection criteria and selection tools from the previous parts of this selection guide come to play.*

**step 3.1.**

## **Screen and shortlist the candidates**

*applies to:*

After the registration deadline make a selection of candidates who will be invited for a job interview.

**step 3.2.**

## **Select the candidate**

*applies to:*

In all cases the candidate should be interviewed in order to check if the person meets the requirements for being a successful PhD candidate. This means that even if there is only 1 candidate or if the candidate has initiated the project himself, there should still be a selection procedure.

In case of doubt, it's preferable to do some additional interviews or tests or even look for additional candidates rather than rush into a bad decision.

Check the other sections of this selection guide for criteria, helpful tools and guidelines on selecting a PhD candidate.

## phase 4: Completion

*A good completion of the selection procedure ensures that the new PhD candidate can make a good start.*

### step 4.1.

## **Appoint or reject the PhD candidate**

*applies to:* ● ● ●

In case of a positive outcome of the selection phase, the PhD candidate will either get an appointment or a hospitality agreement from the TU Delft. This depends on the PhD category of the candidate. Consult HR before making any commitments to the candidate in terms of salary, starting date and other terms and conditions.

When the selection phase leads to a negative outcome for a particular candidate, inform this candidate of the reason for rejection.

The new PhD candidate becomes part of the Graduate School and will be invited for an intake meeting as soon as he or she has been administered in Digiforms.







# Decision making

aspects to keep in mind during the selection process

## Decision making

In the previous sections we've described an 'ideal' PhD candidate and described the tools and process to assess for these criteria. But then what? Selecting a PhD-candidate is not so much a matter of getting the person that fits the criteria best, it is also a personal decision. In this section we will elaborate some more on your personal role as a decision maker and the do's and don'ts in selecting a PhD candidate.

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## Better safe than sorry

A PhD project is a big commitment from both you and the PhD candidate. Making the wrong decision in the selection phase can cost you a lot of time, money and frustration. With that in mind, it's better to be safe than sorry when it comes to selecting a PhD candidate. This could mean that it's wise to start over the selection process if you end up with a candidate who doesn't seem to fit on a competence, project or social level.

Surveys show that of the newly hired employees that fail within the first year of employment, more than half is caused by a conflict in cultural and social compatibility (e.g. the social fit). So even if the candidate fits all competences, if there is no social fit, you might want to reconsider hiring this candidate.

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## Selection Do's & Don'ts<sup>1</sup>

There are many do's and don'ts in the selection of PhD candidates. We have listed some important ones here.

### Do's

#### Cultural awareness

In recent years more and more PhD candidates are from outside of the Netherlands. This is something to take into account when recruiting. For example: in some cultures it is rude to say no or it is very uncommon to say you need improvement in certain skills. This might affect the answers you get when interviewing and it can require you to explore some skills and traits a bit more than others.

1: this list is based on Wijchers, L., van den Berg, J., Barning. (2009). *Handboek Werving en Selectie*. Alphen aan den Rijn / Deventer: Kluwer (via [www.hr5.nl](http://www.hr5.nl))

### First impression

First impressions, either positive or negative, work as a filter on communication. People label each other when they first meet and this also happens in selection meetings. But what does a feeble handshake or an eyesore of a tie say about the knowledge and experience of an applicant? It says nothing at all. So as a selector it is very important to give someone a second chance to either confirm or negate the first impression.

## Don'ts

### Overvaluation of rare traits

If an applicant has participated in the Olympic games, and then applies for a job as a salesman, he/she is ahead even before the selection meeting has started. Every selector knows that participation in a sporting event doesn't say anything about his or her qualities as a salesman, but still the applicant is seen in a more positive light than others.

### Attractiveness

In every organisation certain jobs are preferably attributed to a certain gender. These stereotypes disturb an objective decision-making process. Research shows that attractive women have less chance with male selectors when they apply for typical 'male' jobs. It is also often said that 'pretty women' and 'handsome men' get hired quicker.

### Halo-effect

Applicants that have one distinctive positive attribute or experience are not always judged correctly. This one attribute shines like the sun and has a halo effect over other points of experience and this can blind the selector in making an objective decision.

'The applicant is very friendly to customers (he has even received an award for it!), so he must also be analytically sound, is able to prioritise and is surely very creative'.

### Horn-effect

The horn-effect has the opposite result of the halo effect; one negative attribute puts the applicant in a bad light. The negative attribute overshadows other experiences.

'He took 6 years to finish his master, so he is someone that let's things just run it's course'

### Favoured topics and mirroring

If an applicant describes a subject vividly, and this is a subject that interests the selector greatly, he/she must be very aware not to draw conclusions too fast without seriously questioning the subject. An applicant that has some clear similarities with the selector

will be judged more sympathetic and can be overvaluated. Examples: applicants and selectors that share a hobby or that studied at the same university.

### **Having experience in something is not the same thing as being good at it**

Lots of experience in a certain topic often leads to high appraisal. But being experienced, is not the same thing as excelling. The selector has to be able to measure the results of this experience. Being in the kitchen a lot, does not make someone a good cook. The way he/she cooked and how the work was performed is just as important.

### **Applicants that influence each other**

If you invite more than one candidate at a time, there is a great risk that an applicant that follows a really good applicant will be seen as not suitable. The contrast effect can be very strong. This goes both ways.

### **Giving more weight to negative information**

This is a very common error. In a selection meeting, the selector expects the applicant to put his best foot forward. If the selector finds a negative point, this is contradictory to this expectation and this can result in weighing the negative points stronger than the positive points.

### **Fear of own position**

If the direct supervisor or colleague is in the selection meetings, he might ask himself if this person can be a threat to his own position on the long term. This can be a risk for excellent applicants.

### **Liking something is not the same as being good at it**

There might be a correlation between liking something, and being good at it, but to make this a causal connection would go too far. Every applicant that reads the vacancy text, knows what he/she is expected to like. Avoid asking for the obvious by interviewing with the STAR method. Select on proven competence not on enthusiasm.

### **Avoid asking suggestive, theoretical or leading questions**

Theoretical (what if), leading and/or suggestive questions are often closed (yes/no) or give limited options ('would you do a, b or c'. Or, 'wouldn't you agree that...') and will lead to theoretical or 'ideal' answers and do not give proof of actual skills. To ensure you get proof of actual experience, you can use the STAR method for interviewing.

## A 'free' PhD candidate doesn't exist

Some special mention is necessary for potential PhD candidates that want to pursue a PhD project with a scholarship or another way of self-funding. These candidates may seem attractive at first sight, but you should be just as critical with selecting these candidates as you would be with selecting a candidate for a paid position.

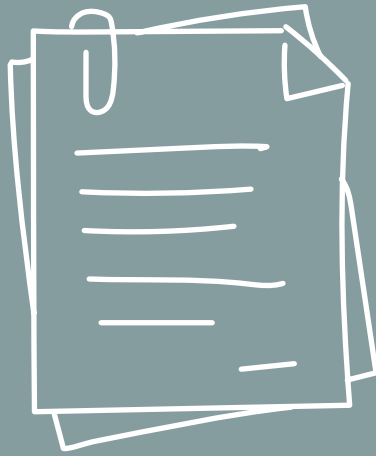
You should even be more critical when it comes to the conditions and circumstances of these PhD candidates. Find out what the terms and conditions are under which the candidate receives the scholarship. These can have serious (personal) consequences for the candidate, if they're not met (e.g. when the candidate fails to finish the PhD project). Secondly, they are sometimes paid less than PhD candidates with a contract and this can cause financial issues.

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## Training and support

If you are inexperienced as a selector you can follow a training course or workshop on interviewing techniques. Ask your HR Advisor about the possibilities. You can also ask your HR Advisor and/or someone in your network that has more experience in selecting PhD candidates to join you for the interview sessions or help you with the preparations.





# Appendices

additional documents to get the most out of the selection process

## Appendix 1: Checking references<sup>1</sup>

The questions provided here are meant as a guide for checking references and can be modified to meet your particular needs. Remember to give candidates advanced notice that you will be checking their references

### Reference conversation basics

- Introduce yourself and state the purpose of your call.
- Confirm that it's a convenient time to talk.
- Briefly describe the position for which the candidate has applied.
- Confirm the relationship between the person giving the reference and the candidate.
- Verify basic duties such as job title, duties and dates of employment.
- Ask for examples when the reference gives a judgement.
- Be consistent. Ask the same questions about all final candidates and weigh the information equally; what disqualifies one should be the basis for disqualifying any others.

### Sample reference check questions

- What was the nature and length of your relationship with the candidate?
- What kind of duties and responsibilities were assigned to the candidate? Did he or she complete them satisfactorily? Did they go above and beyond what was required without being asked?
- What were the candidate's strengths as an employee? Would you describe him or her a hard worker?
- Would you hire or want to work with the candidate again? And why?
- Where do you see the candidate in 10 years?
- Why did he/she leave the position? (if relevant)
- Is there anything else I should take into consideration before I hire this candidate?

<sup>1</sup>: this list is based on the *Reference Check Form* by University of California, Berkeley, completed with questions from recruitmentsites like Monsterboard.



## Appendix 2: Selection interview agenda and sample questions

This is a standard agenda for the selection interview, which might be useful to make sure you cover all topics. We've also added some examples of standard interview questions for each topic on the agenda.

### 1. Introduction

- Welcome the candidate
- Make sure everyone is present and that you are ready to start the interview
- Introduce the members of the selection committee

### 2. Explain the goal of the meeting and the rest of the procedure

### 3. Explain the structure of the meeting and the duration

### 4. Introduce the TU Delft and your own dept./group

- Explain the general idea of a PhD trajectory (Go/No-Go, Graduate School, etc.)

### 5. Ask for the motivation of the candidate

Example questions can be:

- Can you tell us something about yourself?
- What made you apply to this specific job?
- What do you know about the TU Delft and this faculty/department/group?
- Why would you want to work here?
- What do you think the job entails?
- How do you view your future career?
- Where do you want to be in 3/5/10 years time?

### 6. Ask content related questions, ask about competences and discuss the outcomes of the assignments or tests (as described in the selection tools section of this guide)

Content related questions can be:

- Can you give us a summary of your (research) work so far?
- Can you describe what you did in your last job/project?
- What do you consider to be your weak/strong points?

Interviewing techniques about specific competences can be found in the selection tools part of this guide.

## **7. Discuss expectations**

Example questions can be:

- How do you feel about working in the Netherlands?
- Do you want to have a career in academia?
- What is your family situation?
- What do you look for in an employer and/or job?
- When can you start?
- Are there any conditions or obstacles for you to move here or start working?

## **8. Give the candidate room to ask questions as well**

## **9. Explain other terms and conditions that have not been addressed yet**

## **10. Thank the candidate and close the meeting**



# TU Delft - PhD selection guide

Selecting the right PhD candidate is an important first step in a successful PhD programme. If you ask around, you will also hear that many people find it to be one of the most difficult steps. How can you tell from just an interview whether there is potential for a dissertation four years down the line?

Of course, this selection guide cannot guarantee that either. However, it will help you through this tricky process. On what selection criteria should you base your decision? How to assess these criteria? And how to structure your selection process. From defining the project through to appointing the PhD candidate, this selection guide enables the professional recruitment and selection of PhD candidates, the largest group of TU Delft staff.