

Please note: The text below is a translation of the original Dutch version. The Dutch version always takes precedence.

China Scholarship Council (CSC) – procedure for BETA

13 February 2026

The CSC procedure has been set up in accordance with the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VUA) policy on International Scholarship PhD Candidates (ISPC policy). The frameworks for Knowledge Security and international collaborations also apply.

Appointing a CSC candidate

The prospective supervising professor initiates all the steps listed below and is responsible for submitting a file on the basis of which the Faculty Board can decide on admission. The procedure for candidates can be found on the [Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam website \(under China Scholarship Council\)](#).

1. Exploring the possibility of a PhD programme by the prospective PhD student and the prospective supervising professor.

2. Involving the faculty. The prospective supervising professor informs the faculty (via the head of department/department manager) of the desire to embark on a PhD programme, so that the assessment of conditions can be started.

Conditions:

- The first (draft) proposal for the intended research is reviewed for (financial) feasibility and level by an independent party within the faculty/department. Depending on the department, this may be a peer within the department or a scientific committee.
- Verification of English language proficiency; the prospective supervising professor assesses the language level (indication is TOEFL (100) and/or IELTS (7.0)), including speaking skills. The prospective supervising professor involves a colleague/independent party in the assessment. If the prospective PhD student has already demonstrated a sufficient level of language proficiency in another way (e.g. by obtaining an English-language research master's degree and/or completing an English-language master's thesis), this can be considered sufficient verification of the desired level of language proficiency.

3. Check on [Knowledge Security & Assessment Framework for International Collaborations](#)

The prospective supervising professor follows the knowledge security framework and the framework for international collaborations, assesses the candidate for any risks and contacts the faculty contact persons with questions and/or for assessment and for the decision via: internationalsecurity.beta@vu.nl.

4. Test the candidate's finances (grant amount) regarding accommodation and residence permit

The financial situation of international scholarship PhD candidates must be adequate. Incoming international scholarship PhD candidates must in any case meet the IND standard.¹ According to the IND standard, scholarship PhD candidates must have €1,734.57 per month at their disposal from 1 January 2026 (the standard is based on 70% of the minimum wage). Since 2025, CSC candidates have received a scholarship of €2,000 per month at the start of their PhD

¹ <https://ind.nl/nl/inkomenseisen-normbedragen#aanvraag-voor-verblijfsvergunning-als-onderzoeker-arts-in-opleiding-of-gastdocent>

programme, the amount of which remains the same throughout the entire PhD programme. When determining the total amount of the scholarship, it must be taken into account that this IND standard is indexed every six months.² The prospective supervisor must therefore ascertain the amount of the scholarship in relation to the expected IND standard for the next four years. If the scholarship is insufficient, there is the option of providing a top-up from the department. In this case, the following applies:

1. **no top-up from the first funding stream** may be provided,
2. the award of a top-up must take into account the above-mentioned six-monthly indexation of the IND standard and the cost of living in Amsterdam. This is to ensure that the monthly amount received by the scholarship PhD candidate meets at least the IND standard throughout the entire duration of the research.
3. There must be no quid pro quo for the top-up.
4. In practice, the scholarship PhD candidate will not perform any work for VU Amsterdam (not including work on the thesis) that would normally be performed in the context of an employment contract.

The department must therefore, in consultation with the researchers/supervisors involved from the VU, establish a plan in advance for how any top-up will be financed, including in the event of, for example, an unexpected increase in the IND standard during the PhD programme. The responsibility for this lies at all times with the supervisor on the VU side/the department of the CSC-funded PhD candidate to ensure that this financial condition is met throughout the entire process.

5. Drawing up a budget plan for the PhD programme

The prospective supervising professor and the PhD student draw up a budget plan showing how the research programme will be financed for its entire duration. All costs of the PhD programme, such as bench fees and guest appointments, must be included in the budget plan. These costs must be covered by the scholarship or other funds, but may **not** be funded **from the first-stream funding**. For an example of how to draw up a budget plan, see the document used by the Graduate School of Social Science (Budget Plan Template in the appendix).

6. Double degree

In the case of a double degree, the agreement must stipulate that the degree must first be obtained in the Netherlands at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and then in China (not the other way around).

7. Submitting the application to the Faculty Board for approval via

bestuurssecretariaat.beta@vu.nl

The entire file consists of:

- Research proposal and recommendation
- Explanatory notes on verification of English language proficiency
- Recommendation on Knowledge Security/International Collaborations
- Budget plan

8. Contact the coordinator of the International Scholarship PhD Candidates

² Based on an average increase in the standard, it appears that from 1 January 2030, and possibly as early as 1 January 2029, this grant will not exceed the IND standard expected at that time. This means that, based on a four-year programme, the CSC candidate can only meet the requirement that the scholarship amount paid out must exceed the IND standard applicable at that time at any point during the entire duration of the programme if they start on 1 January 2026 or a date prior to that.

The prospective supervising professor contacts the ISPC coordinator via phd@vu.nl to initiate the necessary steps for applying for the scholarship. The ISPC coordinator facilitates the CSC procedure with:

- Format for a 'conditional admission letter' (the condition here is that the candidate is awarded the CSC scholarship).
- A 'VU offer letter'. Once the application for the candidate's admission to the faculty has been approved, the ISPC coordinator will issue an offer letter. With the 'conditional admission letter' and the 'VU offer letter', the candidate can submit the application to the CSC.
- The ISPC coordinator will send the final list of potential CSC candidates to the CSC office (deadline 31 March 2026).

9. Accommodation and visa (accommodation office)

The International Office assists in arranging the necessary residence and/or work permits and is automatically involved as soon as the onboarding process indicates that the employee or guest is a non-Dutch national. The application must be submitted via the regular onboarding process at least 3 months before the desired start date. For more information and recommendations, please contact immigration@vu.nl.

It is also advisable to coordinate the arrival date in advance with the accommodation office; they have an overview of room availability: staffaccommodation@vu.nl.

10. Confirming the arrival of CSC candidates

The results of the CSC scholarships awarded to candidates will follow in *May/June*.

- Prepare and sign a model agreement with the candidate (in accordance with the appendix, drawn up by the Administrative and Legal Affairs Department, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam). This agreement contains provisions that clarify the applicable labour law conditions and mitigate the risks of the appearance of employment.
- The prospective PhD student will be registered in Hora Finita as soon as possible for formal admission to the PhD programme in accordance with the doctorate regulations.

11. Arrival and stay

A few things that are useful to know:

- The [PhD page](#) contains an informative flyer about the '[PhD journey in the Netherlands](#)'.
- The VU PhD council, together with the team for policy regarding PhD candidates, organises a PhD onboarding day once a year.
- Three times a year, a PhD newsletter is sent to all PhD candidates registered in Hora Finita.
- The ISPC coordinator is the point of contact for candidates and is in regular contact with them.