Doctoral Program in Health Professions Education
UCSF-UMC Utrecht Collaborative Doctoral Program
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Joint Doctoral Program in Health Professions Education

UCSF-UMC Utrecht Collaborative Doctoral Program in Health Professions Education

About the Program

In 2010, UCSF joined in a collaboration to sponsor a Doctoral Program in Medical Education with Utrecht University Medical Center (UMC Utrecht). This collaboration makes possible an economical but rigorous opportunity for scholarly advancement for promising educational researchers. Successful candidates graduate with a PhD in Medical Education or Health Professions Education from UMC Utrecht.

UMC Utrecht is home to the medical school of Utrecht University in the Netherlands. UMC Utrecht is a strong research-oriented institution, with interest in medical education research. T.J. (Olle) ten Cate, PhD, professor of education at UMC Utrecht, is the director of the program and is based in Utrecht, the Netherlands.

UCSF, as a health sciences campus, is dedicated to post-graduate professional education in dentistry, medicine, nursing, pharmacy and with a graduate division granting academic degrees in biological, biomedical, pharmaceutical, nursing social and behavioral sciences. UCSF’s Pathways to Discovery program in Health Professions Education, its year-long Teaching Scholars Program, and its focus on educational research with five dedicated faculty make it a forerunner in medical education. David Irby, PhD, Patricia O’Sullivan, EdD, Christy K. Boscardin, PhD, Bridget C. O’Brien, PhD, and Arianne Teherani, PhD serve locally as supervisors and “promoters” for the joint program’s PhD candidates in San Francisco.

Goals

The goals of the Doctoral Program are to:

- Provide the tools and guidance to enable the UCSF faculty to advance their scholarly careers in medical education research
- Support and fund protected time for UCSF educational researchers to conduct hypothesis-driven educational research
Deepen the scholarly commitment of UCSF educational researchers to the UCSF research areas:

- Clinical teaching
- Curriculum development outcomes
- Teaching and curriculum in patient care
- Innovating assessment approaches
- Integration of basic and clinical sciences
- Portfolios
- Professionalism
- Reflection

More about the Doctoral Program

Eligibility

Program faculty who agree to act as the primary supervisor (promoter) can propose a PhD candidate for the program based on the candidate’s CV and research plan. Only physicians or academics with the equivalent of a master’s degree in social or biomedical sciences who are faculty or staff in a health professions education program are eligible for the PhD track. The MD diploma is acknowledged in the Netherlands as the equivalent of the Master of Science for purposes of admission to the University of Utrecht.

Support

Supervision

Each PhD student has a primary promoter at UMC Utrecht, a second promoter at UCSF and a daily supervisor at UCSF. All three have expertise in medical or health professions education research.

Costs to candidate

The candidate covers all costs necessary for the execution of research projects, travel, and housing in case of foreign visits.
Institutional support

UMC Utrecht and Utrecht University cover the costs of supervision and other expenses of UMC Utrecht faculty. Costs of supervision by UCSF faculty will be financed in a variety of mechanisms within UCSF. There will be no tuition fees.

Fellowship support

Program participants can apply for a fellowship that provides up to 20% salary support, up to a maximum of $30,000 a year. The purpose of the fellowship is to allow the faculty member protected time during the completion of the PhD.

Program Schedule and Location

Timeline

The maximum length of a part-time PhD track is a total of six years, with a minimum time investment of two days per week devoted to any element of the training.

Regular Meetings

Face-to-face time with promoters and supervisors is the core of this program. Monthly, the cohort and all promoters meet at the UCSF campus with the help of video-conferencing technology to discuss the work of the candidates towards program objectives, based on the Training and Services Agreement. Once a year, the program director is in-residence in San Francisco for the annual progress interview.

International Experience

It is strongly recommended, but not mandatory, that the PhD candidate acquire international experience outside the institution where the research is based by staying and working at another institution for at least one month. This may, but does not have to be, UMC Utrecht.

Thesis Defense

The PhD ceremony and defense of thesis will take place in Utrecht and is mandatory.

Training Objectives

The training objectives described below constitute the completion of 20 EC credits of education (one EC = 28 hours).

Knowledge of the Field

During the training, the PhD candidate should:
• Demonstrate general knowledge of the breadth of medical or health professions education acquired through courses, visits, active contribution to conferences on health professions education, journal club participation, etc.

The effort for this objective should be about 10-15% of the overall time spent on the PhD track, or about 8-12 EC-credits (av. 300 hours). This competence should not be limited to the candidate’s own research project.

Knowledge and Skill in Scientific Methods

During the training, the PhD candidate should:

• Demonstrate sufficient knowledge and skills in research methodology and statistics to be an independent researcher. This may be acquired through courses, individual expert guidance and in other ways.

The effort for this objective should be about 10-15% of the overall time, spent on the PhD track, or about 8-12 EC-credits (av. 300 hours. This competence should not be limited to the candidate’s own research project.

Thesis

At the conclusion of the program, a successful PhD candidate will:

• Complete an overview of the literature on chosen topic
• Describe the theoretical basis of the research
• Propose a major research question to be addressed
• Answer the research question chosen
• Expand on theoretical issues and address limitations
• Suggest relevant future research
• Publish four to six scientific papers on one topic in peer reviewed journals
• Tie the papers together into a coherent thesis with an introduction, discussion and summary chapters (not generally published)

The effort to complete the thesis should be about 75% of the overall time, spent on the PhD track.

Expectations

Reporting

Annually, PhD candidates complete a progress report and a progress interview. On an ongoing basis, candidates maintain a portfolio of all evidence that documents their personal development as a medical or health professions educator and researcher. The portfolio must be available for the Dean of UMC Utrecht at any moment.

Official documentation of progress is kept through ongoing registration in the Utrecht University’s research documentation system Hora Est, including equivalency and eligibility, the approval of a thesis by both promoters, the establishment of a thesis examination committee, and the approval of the thesis by this committee.
Materials and other Resources

ESCape Group Consultations
Weekly, this group meets to give educational scholarship consultations

Journal Club
A monthly Medical Education Journal Club meets to discuss educational research literature and regular attendance is expected.

Wiki Space
UCSF provides a collaborative wiki space for the doctoral cohort and promoters to share and discuss their work and progress.

Video-conferencing
Candidates have access to Movii desktop video-conferencing software through UCSF.

Application Process for the Doctoral Program

Application Timeline

Next Steps

Program faculty who agree to act as the primary supervisor (promoter) can propose a PhD candidate for the program based on the candidate’s CV and research plan. Program leadership then considers the proposal, balancing with research priorities and space considerations. Contact the program faculty.

Application Timeline

Deadline: Applications are accepted to the Doctoral Program on a rolling basis.

Notification of acceptance: Under normal circumstances, you should receive a response within one month of your application date.

Next Steps
After approval of candidacy, the PhD candidate must register in the Utrecht University research documentation system Hora Est. The first step of the ongoing registration is to submit the approved “Request for Exemption and Admission to Doctoral Studies” (Form 1), defining the eligibility to start the PhD track, based on diplomas showing equivalence to the Master of Science level.