

PHD PSYCHOLOGISTS NEWS

September, October, November 2026

PhD Psychologists team

Because Well-Being Builds
Empowered Professionals and a
Thriving University.



Universiteit
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1. YOUR PERSPECTIVE MATTERS

Help us to know what it is important for you regarding PhD psychological support

The position of PhD Student Psychologist has been in place at Leiden University since April 2022. PhD candidates experiencing mental health difficulties can reach out to the PhD Psychologist for mental health support. This service is highly valued by PhD candidates and is seen as an important and easily accessible resource provided by Leiden University.

We would now like to hear from the people who work closely with PhD candidates, (such as supervisors, deans, PhD coaches, PhD coordinators, PhD advisors, and others), how is the role of the PhD Psychologist perceived by those who support PhD candidates in their daily work?

As a PhD supporter receiving our newsletter, your perspective is particularly valuable to us.



1. 2.YOUR PERSPECTIVE MATTERS

Continue

Your feedback can help us better understand what is working well, identify opportunities for improvement, and strengthen collaboration around the wellbeing of PhD candidates.

Would you be willing to share your perspective by completing the short questionnaire below?

It takes approximately 5 minutes to complete.

And please feel free to forward the questionnaire to colleagues who support PhD candidates.

[Your perspective matters: Help us to know what it is important for you! – Fill in form](#)

Thank you in advance for your collaboration



2.1. ONE YEAR JOURNEY OF THE GIFTEDNESS PHD PEER

Giftedness in the PhD community: Reflections of the past, present, and future directions

Past: Creating a space for recognition and connection

About a year ago, we introduced the [Giftedness PhD Peer Support Group](#), creating a space for recognition, connection, and exploring solutions to everyday challenges. Giftedness can bring valuable strengths, but also challenges such as perfectionism, overthinking, procrastination, high sensitivity, or feeling “out of sync” with others. The group offers participants an opportunity to share experiences, learn from one another, and discover they are not alone.

The response has been very positive. As one participant reflected, learning about giftedness opened up “a whole new world,” helping them recognize experiences they had previously thought of as overreacting. Another described the challenges as “very recognizable, and sometimes painfully.”



2.2. ONE YEAR JOURNEY OF THE GIFTEDNESS PHD PEER

Present: From understanding to empowerment

Today, the group continues to help PhD candidates better understand themselves and navigate challenges that may arise during their PhD trajectory. Learning about giftedness among peers had helped them discover and appreciate a side of themselves they had not fully recognized before.

“I would like to thank you for the opportunity to participate in this Gifted group. Learning about giftedness has opened my eyes to a side of myself that I wasn’t fully appreciating, and meeting with the group gave me the opportunity to get to know people who express their giftedness in different ways. My life has taken a very positive and lasting turn thanks to your support, and I will always be grateful for it.” – Participant’s feedback

At the same time, conversations within the group are pointing towards a broader need: greater awareness of giftedness within the academic environment.

Some gifted PhD candidates would like supervisors to have more knowledge about giftedness: what it is, how it can be recognized, and how it may influence the way a PhD candidate works, learns, communicates, and responds to academic expectations. They also expressed a wish for supervisors to become better equipped to navigate neurodiversity more broadly.

2.3. ONE YEAR JOURNEY OF THE GIFTEDNESS PHD PEER

Future: Building awareness across the PhD community

Group participants want to bring a reflection for future steps in the academic community. For example, the next step may be to make giftedness more visible within the PhD community.

An important question remains: **How many PhD candidates are struggling with challenges related to giftedness without realizing that giftedness may be part of the picture?**

As well, participants have suggested that more accessible information about neurodiversity such as giftedness, ADHD and ASD, could be included in PhD orientation and other educational resources. Greater visibility could help candidates recognize their experiences earlier and seek appropriate support.

There is also a clear call for greater awareness among supervisors and advisors. To be able to recognize potential challenges more easily, reduce stigma, and offer more effective guidance.

Let's reflect as a community:

How can we work together to create greater awareness and support for neurodiversity within the academic community?

3. IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Navigating a New Culture: Breaking the Invisible Barriers to Success in Your Academic Journey Starting September 22, 2026

Living and studying abroad can be exciting, but also emotionally and professionally challenging. International PhD candidates and Master's students often face invisible barriers such as adapting to a new academic culture, communication differences, isolation, and uncertainty about their performance or belonging.

This workshop helps participants better understand the cultural adaptation process and develop practical tools to navigate multicultural academic environments with more confidence, connection, and resilience.

This workshop series is open to all PhD candidates and Master's students at Leiden University, especially those working or studying in an international environment.

How to register?

Send an email to phdpsychologist@SEA.leidenuniv.nl with the subject line: **Navigating a New Culture**. In your email, briefly explain why joining this group would be beneficial for you.



4.1. UPCOMING ACTIVITIES



ACT TRAINING For Dutch speakers

Next edition:
September 29

In deze ACT-training leer je anders met moeilijke situaties om te gaan, vanuit acceptatie en aanvaarding.

[Link ACT TRAINING](#)

NAVIGATING A NEW CULTURE WORKSHOP SERIES

Next edition:
September 22

International PhD candidates face many challenges living abroad. Overcoming cultural barriers boosts their success.

[Link NAVIGATING A NEW
CULTURE WORKSHOP SERIES](#)

ROUWGROEP/ GRIEF GOUP For Dutch speakers

Next edition:
October 6

Connect with peers experiencing loss and find support to move forward in your PhD journey.

[Link ROUWGROEP](#)

For signing up, please send an e-mail to
phdpsychologist@SEA.leidenuniv.nl

4.2. UPCOMING ACTIVITIES



HOOGBEGAAFDHEID/ GIFTEDNESS PHD PEER SUPPORT GROUP

Status:
**Registration
permanently open**

Gifted individuals may set exceptionally high standards for themselves, leading to potential anxiety and difficulty with self-acceptance.

[Link GIFTEDNESS PHD PEER
SUPPORT GROUP](#)

AD(H)D PHD PEER SUPPORT GROUP

Status:
**Registration
permanently open**

A safe space for PhD candidates with signs of AD(H)D to share, connect, and grow together.

[Link AD\(H\)D PEER SUPPORT
GROUP](#)

PHD PEER SUPPORT GROUP

Status:
**Starting
September 22**

A safe space for PhD candidates to discuss challenges in their PhD trajectory.

[Link PEER SUPPORT GROUP](#)

For signing up, please send an e-mail to
phdpsychologist@SEA.leidenuniv.nl

5. PARENTHOOD DURING THE PHD JOURNEY

Continuing the conversation

Combining parenthood with a PhD journey can mean navigating two roles that are both meaningful and demanding. Alongside practical challenges such as time, childcare, workload and finances, PhD candidates who are parents may also experience emotional and professional tensions.

These experiences can sometimes be reinforced by assumptions such as: “Parenthood and an academic career are not compatible,” or “I should always be available.” Such expectations can make it difficult to recognize personal needs, communicate boundaries, ask for help, or make decisions that take family circumstances into account.

We are currently working on the development of a workshop for PhD candidates who are parents, with the aim of creating a space to recognize challenges, share experiences and explore practical and psychological strategies for navigating parenthood alongside the PhD journey.

This workshop will be ready in 2027. At this moment we are opening the waiting list for PhD parents interested in participating in this group. Please register for the waiting list at phdpsychologist@SEA.leidenuniv.nl



6. BUILDING WELL-BEING AWARENESS TOGETHER



Please let us know how we can help you create well-being awareness in your faculty. Invite us to talk in your event, these are the options that we have to offer you:

- 10 – 15 min presentation. **Introduction to PhD psychologists' services.**
- 45 min presentation. **Bridging the Gap: Building a Safe and Supportive Supervision Relationship**
- 60 min presentation. **Creating Safe Spaces to Promote Resilience Among International PhD Candidates**
- 60 min presentation. **Navigating the Transition Moment: Finding Clarity After the PhD.**
- 90 min (online or live) workshop. **How to deal with stress during the PhD journey**
- 90 min workshop. **From Surviving to Thriving in PhD Life: Leading Your Path to Success by Overcoming Self-sabotage**

Invite us to be part of your event (with anticipation – now planning 1st semester 2027) by sending an e-mail to phdpsychologist@SEA.leidenuniv.nl

7.1. HOW CAN THE PHD PSYCHOLOGIST HELP?

You can turn to the PhD psychologist with problems arising from your PhD trajectory and other related personal problems, for example:

- Excessive (work) pressure, work-life imbalance
- Physical and mental stress
- Exhaustion and burn-out
- Concentration problems
- Motivation problems
- Procrastination
- Anxiety issues, including fear of failure and panic attacks
- Mood issues, including grief
- Perfectionism, imposter syndrome
- Uncertainty (about your future)
- Difficulties being assertive
- Low or negative self-esteem
- Social isolation, loneliness
- Adjustment problems, culture shock
- Neurodiversity (AD(H)D, giftedness, Autism)
- Problems with supervision or other aspects of the working environment

7.2. OUR TEAM, OUR VISION

We believe that every PhD candidate is a human being with unique needs, strengths, and challenges.

In our team:

- We work with empathy and professional expertise
- We offer a place where vulnerability is welcomed and growth is supported



7.3. OUR TEAM, OUR VISION

Through our guidance, those who seek our support find:

- **A sense of being seen and heard**
- **A safe space to reflect, feel, and grow**
- **A stronger foundation for moving forward in life**

They learn to say:

“I am good enough.”

“My emotions are human.”

“Mistakes are part of the PhD journey.”

“I can do this.”

Most importantly, **they discover that seeking help can be a positive and empowering experience.**

7.4. WHO ARE THE PHD PSYCHOLOGISTS?

Agnes van Rossum



Agnes van Rossum worked for many years as a scientist in the position of technician, PhD candidate and post-doc, obtaining her PhD in 2006. She quit science in 2010. Agnes studied clinical and health psychology at Utrecht University, after which she started her own practice as psychologist and walk-and-talk coach. In the role of PhD psychologist, Agnes brings her two worlds together.

Margarita Lourido



Margarita Lourido obtained her PhD in Clinical Psychology in Barcelona in 2016. She has an extensive international background which has included work and study in numerous countries such as Colombia, the USA, Spain and the Netherlands. Since 2018, she has had her own practice as a coach-psychologist through which she channels her passion for helping highly-educated internationals navigate the challenges of establishing a life and career abroad.

CONTACT US



Visit our [website](#) by scanning the QR code.
Don't hesitate to contact us, send an email to:
PhDpsychologist@sea.leidenuniv.nl

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