

Party Program

Utrecht PhD Party

March 14, 2017

As UPP we want a sustainable and successful future for PhD candidates, which is why we need representatives in the university council (u-raad) to protect the rights of PhD candidates, and to make our voice heard. There are seven key goals that are important in this battle.

Preserving employee status for PhD candidates

We are against a Dutch bursary PhD system. In the Netherlands, PhD candidates are employees of the university and it should stay this way. The current system has three main benefits. It offers Dutch universities a competitive edge over other universities and companies in attracting talent. It provides PhD candidates with financial stability and all the benefits of a job, like parental leave and unemployment benefits. Having a contract also means that candidates are eligible for mortgages. And finally, it enables most PhD candidates to gain teaching experience. We will work to maintain the employee status of PhD candidates.

Preserving research and teaching balance

We want to safeguard the balance between research and teaching for PhD candidates. No less than 70% of PhD candidates at Dutch universities spend more time on education than is prescribed in their contract [6]. Figures specific for PhD candidates at Utrecht University are not available, but a survey conducted by the graduate school of Natural Sciences shows that at some institutes, teaching workload is more than what is agreed upon [1]. This balance should be monitored systematically and current faculty regulation should be enforced to ensure PhD candidates have enough time for their research.

The right to didactic training

We find that many PhD candidates would like to be better equipped to provide education. Graduate School of Natural Sciences found that PhD candidates would like to be able to take didactic training [1], PhD Network Netherlands found that the majority of PhD candidates are not satisfied with the support they receive in their teaching obligations [6]. In order to support PhD candidates in their teaching, we want to provide them with courses that fit their needs and didactic skill level. This will help them prepare for their tasks and increases the quality of the education they provide. These courses should be paid for by the University.

The right to obtain a teaching degree (BKO)

93% of all PhD candidates in the Netherlands feel they should have the right to obtain their base teaching qualification (BKO) [5]. We agree, for two reasons. It increases PhD candidates' chances on the academic job market and it increases the quality of the courses they teach. Currently, eligibility for obtaining a BKO is decided on a faculty level, creating unequal opportunities among PhD candidates. We think there should be a university wide policy that grants PhD candidates the right to obtain a teaching degree (BKO).

The right to professional development

Every PhD candidate should have the right to take part in courses that benefit their career, and have the freedom to shape their own education. The Graduate Schools are responsible for offering courses to PhD candidates, but the number of courses offered varies heavily between schools. Where Life Sciences offers 50 different courses [2], Natural Sciences currently only offers four [3], and refers to other institutes like the learning center (COLUU). It is also not always clear who pays for these courses. The courses offered by Life Sciences are free for both bursary and employed PhD candidates, but this is not the case for courses offered by other graduate schools and COLUU courses. A variety of personal development courses should be offered for free, by each Graduate School.

Policy participation also in English

Currently, all information and communication in the university council is in Dutch, which means that a large population of the academic community is excluded in discussions concerning policy making discussions. Utrecht University wants to become an internationally oriented University, as envisioned in the strategic plan 2016-2020 [8]. We believe that a move towards becoming an internationally oriented University should start within the organization itself, by also conducting all communication in English.

Stimulation of a more diverse University

We believe the university should be more active in achieving more diversity at all levels of the organization. We don't want to achieve diversity by imposing rules and quota, but by stimulating debate and (grassroots) initiatives that create opportunities for a diverse academic community. Some examples of the kind of initiatives we would like to stimulate are the diversity council of the Natural Sciences faculty [4] and the InclUusion initiative [7].

References

- [1] PhD council of the Graduate School of Natural Sciences. PhD Survey 2014. https://gsns-pc.science.uu.nl/index.php/PhD_Survey_2014, 2014.
- [2] Graduate School of Life Sciences. PhD Course Centre. <https://www.uu.nl/en/education/graduate-school-of-life-sciences/phd-programmes/phd-course-centre>.
- [3] Graduate School of Natural Sciences. PhD Courses. <https://www.uu.nl/en/organisation/faculty-of-science/about-us/organisation/schools/graduate-school-of-natural-sciences/phd-courses>.
- [4] Faculty of Science. Faculty of Science diversity committee. <https://www.uu.nl/en/organisation/faculty-of-science/about-us/diversity>.
- [5] Expertisenetwerk Hoger Onderwijs. De BKO in de praktijk. <http://www.ehon.nl/ehon/de-bko-in-de-praktijk/>, 2016.
- [6] PNN. De promovendus als docent. <http://www.hetpnn.nl/files/Onderzoek-De-promovendus-als-docent.pdf>, 2016.
- [7] Utrecht University. InclUusion. <https://www.uu.nl/en/education/incluusion>.
- [8] Utrecht University. Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020. <http://sp20.sites.uu.nl/en/>, 2016.