



University of Twente / P-NUT
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To whom it may concern,

The PhD Network of the University of Twente has taken notice of the Charter for PhD candidates that has been recently introduced in the Agenda of the University Council. <http://www.utwente.nl/uraad/intranet/Cyclus%202013/Cyclus2013-06-19/Agendapunten/082%20Promovendibeleid.pdf>

We have appreciated the opportunity to advise the Twente Graduate School in developing this Charter, and we welcome several aspects of it. These include, but are not limited to, the role P-NUT will have as the PhD Council, the requirement that all PhD candidates will have a supervisor and a daily supervisor, and the explicit statement that departments should secure funding for the complete project (including expenses) before the PhD project can start, and the instalment of a standardized training and supervision plan.

However, we also have several concerns regarding the current arrangements suggested in the Charter. These concerns all have been raised before. We mention five.

1. The required training program of 30 credits is too extensive. This especially applies to PhD programs of only three years, that have become increasingly common and are likely to become even more prevalent in the years to come (as a result of European guidelines and NWO funding). P-NUT proposes to make the training program optional.
2. By organizing a training program of local courses (organized by TGS), the training program lacks ambition. PhD candidates will benefit more from attending national and international courses, as these are much more specialized. These courses outside the (own) university have the additional benefit of providing excellent network opportunities. So, rather than investing time, money and energy in organizing a local course program, P-NUT proposes that the University of Twente would better stimulate and facilitate PhD candidates to take training outside the university.
3. The Charter states that the TGS training program will be without costs for PhD candidates. However, the TGS will be funded by a percentage of the PhD graduation bonus. Hence, the departments will end up with fewer funds to facilitate their PhD candidates to develop themselves outside the university. The Charter also states that PhD candidates can receive waivers for the training program, based on research-related activities. For many PhD candidates, we recognize, this will mean that their program does not change, as they will participate in (inter)national graduate training programs and by presenting their work in international conferences. P-NUT proposes that PhD candidates who obtain their training outside the university will receive a personal budget for doing so from TGS.
4. During the transition phase the charter will apply to all PhD candidates, although the training requirement does not apply to PhD candidates that started before January 2013. Our concern is that departments will still have to financially contribute to the TGS, even though their candidates did not benefit from the TGS training program. In line with our second suggestion, P-NUT proposes that departments will be allowed to invest this money in the training of their own PhD candidates.
5. We are concerned that the requirements stipulated in the Charter will conflict with the requirements stated by external employers of PhDs (business, Saxion, FOM) and funding agencies

(NWO, EU-FP7). It is not made clear that all these agencies and businesses will approve that 'their' PhD candidates spend 30 EC worth of time on training programs. P-NUT proposes that this will be investigated before the Charter comes into effect.

Doing a PhD represents several years of supervised training, developing oneself to become a researcher capable of independently contributing to, and participating in, a scientific discipline with the skills needed for a further career. P-NUT regards PhD candidates as highly trained professionals that can decide on their own training needs, in collaboration with their supervisor.

There is increasing pressure on graduating on time, and on the university to facilitate efficient PhD programs. This will be even more so with the advent of three-year programs/funding. In this light, P-NUT welcomes several of the regulations in the PhD Charter, such as the requirement that all PhD candidates will have a supervisor and a daily supervisor, and the explicit statement that departments should secure funding for the complete project (including expenses) before the PhD project can start, and the instalment of a standardized training and supervision plan. Other aspects of the Charter, as outlined above, do not comply with the need for efficient PhD programs. We hope that the Charter can be adapted in line with the five suggestions outlined above, so that PhD candidates will have a training programs that facilitates them towards mastering their field of expertise.

On behalf of the P-NUT board,
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