



Everyone Professor! Title, professorial gown, and the doctoral degree conferral right – for university lecturers, senior lecturers, and full professors

The Young Academy

Yes, but..... Some likely critical questions, with answers

As we know, every “yes, but....” is in fact a “no”. That’s why we’re providing this explanation of some potential “yes, but’s”, and why “yes, everyone *can* become a professor”, even if some details require further discussion.

Yes, but.....: Do young *UD*'s have the necessary capabilities?

In terms of actual substance, *ud*'s are indeed experts, and are able to supervise (or co-supervise) a PhD programme. It is precisely by giving them greater responsibility within the PhD programme that young *ud*'s will be able to develop the relevant leadership qualities. And if they are the primary initiator of a project, have secured the necessary funding, and have taken on the primary supervision role, then being the main PhD supervisor is a highly appropriate role for them. The Young Academy supports the obligation to be supervised by at least two supervisors (the four eyes principle). In this way, 'experienced years' can also be included in the supervision of a PhD candidate by choosing a colleague with more seniority and experience as the second supervisor. If funding and a project of their own are still to come, a *ud* is already perfectly able to sit on dissertation-assessment committees, wear a professorial gown and hold the title of professor, and act as assistant supervisor for the conferral of a doctorate on PhD candidates whom they have supervised. We are eager to enter the discussion with universities on how to ensure high-quality supervision of PhD candidates by supervisors within all job profiles, and how to enable experience to play a role in the composition of the doctoral supervision team.

Yes, but.....: Won't the quality of doctorate supervision be jeopardised?

No, the [final evaluation of extension of the *ius promovendi*](#) has in fact concluded that extending the *ius promovendi* has a positive effect on the quality of supervision because it will facilitate more tailor-made arrangements as regards the composition of the supervision team, and *ud*'s and *uhd*'s, generally speaking, will have more time and scope to provide intensive supervision. Being a *hoogleraar* does not automatically make someone the best supervisor for a PhD programme. In fact, that is often not the case simply because the *hoogleraar* has little time available. It is therefore almost universal practice – fortunately – for PhD candidates to be supervised by a team of at least two supervisors. That reduces the candidate's dependence on a single individual and increases the likelihood of effective supervision. Regardless of the composition of the supervision team, The Young Academy believes that the quality of supervision and the progress of the programme needs to be the subject of discussion and assessment.

Yes, but.....: Then surely science will sacrifice credibility?

No, by insisting on the distinction between the titles of *ud*, *uhd* and *hoogleraar*, one implies that some academics are “more genuine” scientists than others, and that is precisely detrimental to



the credibility of *ud's* and *uhd's* when they engage in public debate. Designating everyone a professor does justice to the reality that every academic in the Netherlands is a full-fledged scientist.

Yes, but....: Not everyone will be able to deliver an inaugural address, will they?

No, with an average of three or four doctoral ceremonies a day, there isn't the scope at many universities for all the *ud's*, *uhd's* and *hoogleraren* to deliver an inaugural address. So let's do things differently! Here's a suggestion: make space for forty inaugural addresses a year in each university, and let people submit a proper plan for a public lecture, from ten years after receiving their PhD. That will provide an excellent overview of what the line of research built up will contribute in the future. The advantage of this is that the moment itself can be chosen, consideration can be given to how research can be shaped over the course of the next ten years and the inaugural address itself will be more valuable.

Yes, but....: Then why not just get rid of professorial gowns completely?

Opinions differ about that. We think the most important thing is that everyone with the same duties should also have the same rights, and we therefore advocate a title, a professorial gown, and the *ius promovendi* for everyone. Wearing a professorial gown in fact emphasises the impartiality and the formal status and role of the academic (just as it does for lawyers and judges, or uniformed police officers). That status is appropriate for all academics, which is why we are in favour of every *ud*, *uhd*, and *hoogleraar* wearing a professorial gown.

Yes, but....: Then why don't we get rid of the designations *ud*, *uhd*, and *hoogleraar*?

There are various ways of shaping the hierarchy of duties and responsibilities, for example by abolishing the "ranks" of *ud*, *uhd*, and *hoogleraar*, [as proposed by Jan Smits in the NRC newspaper](#). As far as we're concerned, that's a separate issue, and one which shouldn't get in the way of extending the *ius promovendi* and the associated title of professor and the professorial gown. That's why we refer in this plan to the job profiles as we know them today.

Yes, but....: Surely we just don't have the money to make everyone a professor?

No, we don't and the scarcity of positions is a problem. "Everyone Professor!" doesn't mean that everyone will become a *hoogleraar* or receives a higher salary. The job title of *hoogleraar* is associated with substantive duties, based on experience, responsibility, competencies, vision, and achievement. In addition, an appointment often depends on the availability or creation of a position for a *hoogleraar*. "Everyone Professor!" refers to the fact that all academic staff are expected to assess the quality of research and can collaborate to supervise high-quality research. That substantive expertise is sufficient to be allowed to supervise one's own PhD candidates and assess other candidates' dissertations. And that will be reconfirmed by the title and the professorial gown that you get with it (well, get..., you can in fact spend almost a month's salary on buying one, or you can borrow it from the university).

Yes, but....: Then won't you remove the incentive to work for promotion?

No, that incentive will remain. Virtually all university researchers are very ambitious people. They tend to make things harder for themselves rather than easier. We believe everyone will remain ambitious to develop within a variety of impact profiles (teaching, leadership, clinical, social impact, and, of course, research).

**Yes, but....: Isn't this contrary to law?**

No, it's allowed by law. Every *ud* can be granted the *ius promovendi*. That was regulated by the [Higher Education and Research Act](#) (the "WHW") in 2017.

Yes, but.....: I had to wait fifteen years and I didn't mind that at all.

We think waiting for obtaining a right doesn't make sense. We think it's senseless and a waste if people's capacities aren't utilised. And those substantive capacities are already up to scratch in the case of a *ud* or *uhd*, and sufficient for taking on the role of main supervisor and review the content of other dissertations. Regarding the actual substance, the visible hierarchy isn't really relevant, and it's sometimes even detrimental to substantive debate.

Yes, but.....: Won't "Everyone Professor!" become just a kind of sop to prevent promotion to a more senior job profile?

No, appointment as a *ud* and promotion to successive job profiles need to take place according to clear and transparent criteria, with the university job profiles (the "UFO" profiles) and competency assessment being used. This then involves responsibilities for management of a department/faculty, for teaching, or for fulfilling other administrative positions/activities in other bodies. Mind you, in the light of "Everyone Professor!" , these job profiles do need to be revised. The timing is right because the Recognition and Rewards programme also needs to be included. We recommend in that connection that these abilities also be used to conduct a career development interview, and not just to test whether or not someone is good enough for promotion to a more senior job level. We think that better use of these approaches, a different type of development interview, and making other responsibilities within a department open for discussion can lead to greater job satisfaction and less competition for the scarce new positions of *uhd* or *hoogleraar*.