

Charter Courses for PhD candidates

The university granted individual Boards of Studies full freedom in structuring their Graduate School, thereby offering the possibility to adjust each Graduate School to the relevant research area as good as possible. While PrOUT fully supports this policy, PrOUT is concerned about the effects of the current organization structure and the dismantling of the national research schools on the offer, quality and diversity of courses for PhD candidates.

Current situation

In the current situation, it is the Graduate Schools' main responsibility to offer high quality education and supervision to MSc students and PhD candidates. Within a PhD project, PhD candidates can partake in two types of courses: transferable skills courses and specialized theoretical courses.

Transferable skills courses

In transferable skills courses, PhD candidates acquire general academic skills that increase their 'value' as employee, for example 'presenting in English'. Such skills are useful to the PhD candidate during his or her PhD project and improve the PhD candidate's prospects for future employment. In the current situation, substantial differences exist between Graduate Schools in terms of (1) the minimum number of transferable skills courses that can be followed, (2) the maximum number of courses that can be followed, and (3) the courses on offer.

All PhD candidates associated with our university should be given the right to follow a minimum amount of transferable skills courses. This minimum amount should be stipulated university-wide. PhD candidates should be able to choose these courses from a varied offer that is available to all PhD candidates within the university. Offering these courses university-wide (1) allows for a large and varied offer of courses; (2) guarantees a significant number of partakers per course and (3) reduces costs, since certain courses may only need to be given a couple of times a year university-wide with a higher number of partakers, than each Graduate School alone could attain.

Specialized theoretical courses

Currently, specialized theoretical courses are mainly offered by the research institutes and/or (national) research schools, since the expertise for these specialized theoretical courses of a research area can only be found at the specialized level of these research institutes. This organization results in a variety of specialized theoretical courses, which is often unattainable within one university. It should be ensured that the specialized theoretical courses available within these highly specialized institutes do not disappear within the Graduate Schools when the (national) research schools are further dismantled. PrOUT urges the Graduate Schools to ensure that every PhD candidate has the opportunity to follow a minimum number of specialized theoretical courses, and that these courses can be chosen from a relevant and diverse offer.



Concluding

As the research fields in which the different Graduate Schools operate are highly distinctive, it is important that Graduate Schools have the freedom to adapt to their research field. These specialized environments are suitable to ensure and guarantee an offer of high quality specialized theoretical courses with relevance to a PhD candidates project, possibly in national co operations with other Graduate Schools in the same field; a role previously often taken by (national) research schools.

Transferable skills courses are generic for all PhD candidates within the university. To improve and ensure the quality, diversity and offer of such courses to PhD candidates, PrOUT envisions these courses to be given university-wide. Centralizing this responsibility also reduces costs, since the maximum number of partakers per course is easier to reach university-wide, than it is per Graduate School.

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