

# SUMMARY

The Dutch PhD system is generally regarded as a solid system that produces skilled PhDs. At the same time, however, various national and international trends could influence the future and quality of that system. They include the trend towards shorter PhD tracks, the wish – both in political circles and in society – to match the supply of PhDs more closely to the demand, and the Government’s wish to extend the right to award PhDs (*ius promovendi*) beyond university full professors. Points of concern in that connection include the nominal length of PhD tracks and the form they take, and the job opportunities available to PhDs both within and outside academia. The Academy has explored these trends and concerns and arrived at the following conclusions and recommendations:

- The quality of the Dutch academic PhD system is excellent and its quality assurance system is sound. The Dutch PhD system works, is future-proof, and produces highly qualified, independent-minded PhDs. They have absolutely no trouble building their careers, either in academia or beyond.
- The excellent quality of Dutch PhDs is partly owing to the nominal length of the PhD track, which is still four years. A PhD track with a nominal length of three years is satisfactory if the candidate completes a two-year solid research Master’s beforehand. The Academy advises against shortening the nominal length.
- With regard to the employment status of the PhD candidate (student/fellow, employee, etc.), one option is to allow different models to co-exist side-by-side, as in other countries. However, like others, the Academy is concerned that this will lead to inequality before the law. It would therefore rather see PhD candidates being taken on as employees (financial resources permitting).

- There are many different types of dissertations. The two most common are the monograph and the collection of publications. There are no strict criteria for dissertations, but quality control is usually exercised at the international level. If the dissertation consists of a collection of multi-author publications, the role of the PhD candidate – and especially his or her contribution to the publications – should be made explicit.
- Almost 75% of Dutch PhD candidates end up working in industry or other sectors. That is why the PhD track should focus more on careers beyond academia, preferably in cooperation with potential employers.
- The Minister of Education, Culture and Science, the industry, and the national government are on the verge of concluding a ‘PhD agreement’ meant to increase the number of PhD candidates who end up working in industry and for the national government. Given this background, it would be advisable to carry out a comprehensive study of their employment prospects. The study should also investigate employers’ need for other types of PhD programmes.