

December 2, 2019

To whom it may concern,

We, the PhD students¹ of the University of Groningen Scholarship Experiment (UG and Experiment), present this shortened Manifesto to address the financial inequality and insecurity induced by the Experiment, which affect our research, our working prospects and our private life.² Due to our student status, we are not represented by a labour union (such as the *Vakbond voor de Wetenschap*). Therefore, we are compelled to take action ourselves.

The official aim of the Experiment as stated in the Decree on the PhD training programme experiment is: '(...) to investigate whether, by introducing a new PhD programme as the third cycle in the Bachelor's-Master's system (...), the number of university PhD graduates will increase, whether opportunities for PhD students to submit and carry out their own research proposals will improve and whether the position of PhD graduates in the labour market will improve, thereby advancing the knowledge society'.³

Even though the Experiment has facilitated the creation of more PhD positions than there would usually be available, the Experiment fails to take into account the well-being of the PhD students. On the one hand, PhD students principally do the same work as PhD employee, regardless of the differences in the contractual positions⁴. Therefore, the unequal and unfavourable treatment of PhD students is unjustified. On the other hand, the Experiment has disproportionately negative consequences for all important aspects of the life of a PhD student as the 'advantages' that the Experiment should bring about do not exist in practice (such as writing one's own research proposals, which is also a conventional practice among PhD employees); PhD students lack a significant amount of (financial) benefits and legal protection; PhD students teach for free (whereas PhD employees and student-assistants are paid for the same work); PhD students are represented by Bachelor's and Master's students (and not by PhD candidates or other employees) who are unable to understand and represent our interests; and PhD students were not provided with adequate information prior to signing the scholarship contract.

Hence, the Experiment has adverse effects on the research climate in the UG, which by the Decree can be taken as a basis for termination of the Experiment.⁵ In the event the Experiment ends prematurely or otherwise, the Decree states that: '(...) the universities will give the PhD training-programme students who have not yet graduated the opportunity to complete the PhD programme as employees of the university'.⁶ We, the signatories, therefore ask for:

1. **Termination** of the Experiment in the UG/University Medical Center Groningen (UMCG).
2. **Equality**, meaning that, in accordance with the Decree, PhD scholarship students are given the choice to convert their scholarship contract to an appointment (or as of 1 January 2020 an employment contract)⁷ as there are no significant differences between both positions.

¹Contact: rug.scholarship.phd@gmail.com

²The full document is available through www.hetpnn.nl/manifest.

³Art. 2 of the Decree.

⁴In short, PhD students have the status of a student and receive a scholarship where PhD employees have an appointment and receive salary

⁵Art. 14 of the Decree.

⁶Art. 8.3 of the Decree.

⁷Currently, PhD employees still have an appointment at the UG because of their status as public servant. As of 1 January 2020, The Public Servants Standardisation of Legal Status Act enters into force and will convert appointments to employment contracts.

3. **Compensation** for the work done on a scholarship contract by the exact payment differences, including vacation allowance and 13th-month bonus.

Sincerely,

The PhD scholarship students of the UG

[Signature gathering is in progress, see www.hetpnn.nl/manifest for more details and <https://forms.gle/c16h2WCtsLNopbmH7> for signing/supporting]

Supported by:

PhD Councils of the UG:

The PhD Council of the Graduate School of Science and Engineering

The PhD Council of the Spatial Sciences

The PhD Council of the Faculty of Philosophy

The PhD Council of the Faculty of Law

The PhD Council of the Graduate School of Medical Sciences

The PhD Council of the Graduate School Campus Fryslân

The PhD Council of the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies

The PhD Council of the Faculty of Arts' Graduate School for the Humanities

Supporting organisations:

Promovendi Netwerk Nederland

Landelijke Studentenvakbond

Interstedelijk Studenten Overleg

FNV Onderwijs en Onderzoek

Vakbond voor de Wetenschap

PostdocNL

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