

Summary Employment Conditions Monitor 2019

Promovendi Netwerk Nederland presents the Monitor Working Conditions 2019. This monitor looks at the working conditions for PhD candidates in the Netherlands, based on vacancies published by AcademicTransfer, the scientific vacancy database in the Netherlands. As in the previous editions, we looked at contract duration, appointment size and education share. In addition, the differences between (types of) institutions, transparency and fringe benefits were examined. These are the main findings:

- **In 2019, a total of 231 dubious contracts were offered.** This is 12.3% of the total number of vacancies published in 2019. Unfortunately, this picture is consistent with previous years: a year earlier, this was 11.2% of the contracts.
- **There are significant differences between universities in the share of dubious contracts they offer.** The percentage of dubious contracts offered per university in 2019 varies between 20.3% and only 1.5%. In addition, there is sometimes a large share of vacancies where no contract duration is stated: sometimes up to 11.7% of the positions offered per university.
- **The length of the PhD contract differs per type of institution.** In 2019, 84.9% of positions were offered at research institutions for a four-year period, and 82.6% at universities. This while only 59.0% of the positions in other healthcare institutions are for four years, 57.4% of the UMCs, and only 41.4% of the other providers. The latter group also most often omits the contract duration completely (44.8%).
- **How often information is given about the formal evaluation moment varies per discipline.** This varies from 91.2% of vacancies (Language and Culture) to only 34.4% of vacancies (Technology).
- **The amount of teaching duties is usually not specified.** Of the vacancies in which something is stated about teaching, as many as 70.4% of the vacancies does not specify the amount. This appears to be considerably higher than in previous years. If the amount of teaching duties is specified, 0.1 fte is most popular for appointments from 3 to 4 years. Relatively more often, the teaching load is 0.2 FTE for vacancies for 5 years.
- **Most vacancies for PhD candidates are not very transparent about employment conditions.** Only 3% of all 1,872 vacancies were able to meet all basic criteria, such as the applicable collective labour agreement, the duration of the contract, the salary, and the presence of teaching duties. 1.9% of vacancies - 91 in total - did not even meet any transparency criterion.
- **Transparency differs per discipline and per institution.** For example, three-quarters of vacancies in Law score well or completely on the criteria for transparency. This is different for Economics, where less than half of the vacancies can fill this. At the institutional level, Delft University of Technology meets three or more criteria in more than 98% of its vacancies. Far on the other side of the spectrum are Radboud University Nijmegen, VU University Amsterdam, and Wageningen University, where a maximum of only 15% of vacancies meet three or more criteria.
- **Attention to secondary benefits in vacancies is poor.** For the first time, this Monitor focuses on secondary employment conditions in the vacancies. Holiday bonus (62.9%) and thirteenth month (39.5%) are cited most often, followed at a greater distance by the use of facilities (29.0%) and pension accrual (23.7%). The other conditions such as pregnancy and parental leave follow at a much greater distance.
- **The discussion of fringe benefits can also differ greatly per institution.** For example, in almost all of its vacancies, TU Delft suffices with a reference to the collective labour agreement, without substantively discussing the employment conditions that can be

derived from it. This is quite different at Utrecht University and Leiden University, where relatively much attention is paid to secondary benefits.

Based on the findings from this Employment Conditions Monitor, PNN makes three recommendations:

- **Stop offering dubious contracts.** Dubious contracts have long been a small, but substantial percentage of the vacancies offered. We see that the great majority of vacancies offer good terms of employment and working conditions, but the proportion of dubious contracts is still substantial. Since we only see the formal vacancies here, this is probably the tip of the iceberg. With this as a starting point, we call on universities and graduate schools to take a critical look at the places where contract look for the margins of working conditions, to learn to recognize and discourage dubious contracts.
- **Work on transparency.** Universities must be more transparent about the appointments of PhD candidates. This not only concerns the most basic components such as contract length and contract size, but also features that are specifically relevant to the PhD trajectory and the well-being of PhD candidates: what is the teaching load? Is there a go-to moment? Finally, we draw attention to the display of fringe benefits. Employers should take an active role in educating their workers about the rights they have under the collective agreement.
- **Take example from well-performing institutions.** This monitor makes it clear for the first time that the differences between (types of) institutions can be large. With this we want to convey the message that there are not only bad developments, but that there are also institutions that demonstrate good employment practices and that they do have an eye for the doctoral candidate as an employee. Employers can therefore take an example of the results presented in this Monitor.