

# Memo – Faculty approach to the deployment of appointed PhD candidates for teaching activities

7 January 2020

In response to the personnel monitor 2018, the Faculty Board wishes to provide a clear framework in relation to teaching activities of PhD candidates. The following action has been taken:

- At the request of the Faculty Board, the Academic Directors have made a list of best practices at their Institute;
- An overview of the teaching load of PhD candidates has been taken from the 2019 PhD survey;
- The experience of Deans of PhD Studies in relation to this issue has been analysed.

The aim of the above was to prepare guidelines on what may be expected of internal PhD candidates in relation to teaching. The guidelines are intended to create clarity and to serve as a point of departure for the Heads of Department when determining the amount of teaching PhD candidates will be involved in.

## *PhD candidates with an appointment*

This memo only concerns internal PhD candidates (i.e. appointed PhD candidates on a salary, with funding) and NOT external PhD candidates or Contract PhD candidates.

The type of appointment (i.e. PhD candidate or PhD fellow), and not the method of funding (i.e. first/second/third flow of funding), is what determines the teaching load. If rules concerning a grant (e.g. an NWO grant) make no mention of teaching, or explicitly oppose it, clear agreements about teaching must be made at the start of the research project. Taking the principle of equality as a point of departure, the Faculty Board believes - also in exceptional cases - that it is preferable that all appointed PhD candidates are involved to the same degree in teaching. This is also in keeping with the general vision of the Faculty Board in relation to the professional development of its PhD candidates and the added value they can gain from teaching, also in relation to preparing for the job market and supporting their integration within the department.

## **Guiding principles**

The 'rules & policies' state that the workload of internal PhD candidates is distributed over three key activities as follows (given in percentages on a yearly basis):

- 4-year PhD candidate: research (77.5%), teaching (10%) and training (12.5%);
- 6-year PhD fellow: research (58.33%), teaching (33.33%) and training (8.33%).

The 'rules & policies' in relation to the research plan, state that a teaching-free year is possible. But this is no hard entitlement, and is at the discretion of the Head of Department.

Besides the distribution percentage given above, the following basic principles apply in relation to the deployment of PhD candidates for teaching:

- It is fun and valuable experience for PhD candidates to become involved in teaching. It helps them prepare for future employment and provides opportunities to exchange thoughts with students about their PhD research;
- In particular, acquiring the Basic Teaching Qualification (BKO), or modular certificate, together with actual teaching experience, provides opportunities for a future academic career;
- PhD candidates who correct exams, theses or other written work, must be officially authorized for this purpose by the Board of Examiners;
- PhD candidates contribute to the professional teaching activities of a department.<sup>1</sup> They may indicate their preferences, but do not decide themselves which courses they will teach;
- The teaching activities of PhD candidates do not have to be related to the topic of their research, but can also cover more general areas;
- Heads of Department, supervisors and co-supervisors, should display caution when allocating teaching tasks to PhD candidates as they are not full-fledged lecturers. They deserve to be given adequate supervision by colleagues in relation to their teaching tasks;
- PhD candidates have to learn how to carry out the teaching tasks they are given within the allocated time. This is a professional responsibility, and a coaching role exists in this regard for colleagues at the department who have more experience - in particular the PhD candidate's supervisors and the Head of Department;
- PhD candidates with a 4-year appointment do not fulfil coordination tasks;
- It must be entirely clear to a PhD candidate who within their department is responsible for the allocation of the teaching load. The Head of Department has ultimate responsibility;
- The teaching load is discussed and evaluated every year as part of the PhD candidate's Performance & Development (P&D) interview (ROG in Dutch).

## Best practices

Departments can use the best practices provided below to create clarity about what is expected from internal PhD candidates in relation to teaching. The Faculty Board suggests that guidelines at department level must be clear and sufficiently specific so that it is not possible to overburden or underburden the PhD candidates. These best practices should be seen as the ideal situation, from which it is possible to deviate if necessary. The various elements of the teaching tasks function in that case like 'change'. If a PhD candidate, for example, is more heavily burdened in one element (e.g. an extra mid-term assignment), then some of the burden in another element will have to be removed (e.g. theses). Possible deviations, and what the consequences are for the PhD research, will be discussed at the next P&D interview.

---

<sup>1</sup> The experience of Deans of PhD Studies, shows that PhD candidates do not generally make calculations in advance or afterwards of hours in relation to their maximum teaching load. They are willing to help out where necessary. They also don't see it as a problem if their teaching load turns out to be slightly higher than the standard number of hours, as long as they are properly and actively supervised in their research. It is this interaction – too much teaching and too little or poor supervision – which leads to too much work pressure. The Faculty Board views this kind of constructive attitude by PhD candidates as being very important for the job satisfaction of all.

- A PhD candidate is involved each year in the teaching of one course in the bachelor's programme (5 EC): five tutorial groups (lasting seven weeks) and correcting the exam and resit of the five tutorial groups. It is assumed that there are 30 students in each tutorial group. For each first tutorial group hour per week, 3 hours of preparation time is needed (so for a tutorial group lasting 2 hours, there will be 6 hours of preparation time). In addition to this, the PhD candidate supervises (or co-supervises) and corrects (or acts as a second reader) five bachelor's theses (5EC). For this work, the PhD candidate is given 10 hours for each thesis student (for the supervision plus assessment of their own student, as well as the assessment as a second reader of the thesis of another supervisor). These annual tasks are done for three years; the final year will be free of teaching obligations. It is of course also possible that PhD candidates teach in the master's programme or supervise master's theses. PhD candidates who also teach will take at least one of the modules in the Basic Teaching Qualification programme, or take the course on teaching that has been developed especially for PhD candidates (currently called 'Introduction to teaching for PhDs'). These courses count towards the general skills that are part of the PhD training programme.
- In view of the future career prospects of PhD fellows, it will be attempted to allow them to develop as broadly as possible in their teaching, both in relation to content (across the full breadth of the law) and also skills (all aspects of teaching). In this regard, as a rule PhD fellows follow the full BKO programme. The structure given below is followed over six years:

year 1-4: two teaching blocks, two teaching-free blocks (though possible thesis supervision);  
 year 5: completely free of teaching, no involvement at all in teaching activities;  
 year 6: two teaching-free blocks (though possible thesis supervision), two teaching blocks.

PhD fellows should start teaching soon after they are appointed, so that they quickly become 'integrated' within the teaching staff and the department as a whole, and soon become accustomed to the academic 'rhythm'. They teach in one 10 EC bachelor's course (one semester) or in two 5 EC courses (two blocks); there are always at least two blocks each year in which they do no teaching. In principle, PhD fellows teach in the same course for the first four years. Less time is then needed to prepare and the PhD fellow's tasks can be extended in a course to include more organising and/or coordinating tasks which correspond to his or her development and experience. The PhD fellow starts by giving (maximum) four tutorial groups, correcting exams and assisting at oral exams. As the PhD fellow gains more experience, the tasks are extended to include, for example, writing an exam or part of it; updating the teaching materials, or part of these; coordinating the course, or part of the course; and/or supervising teaching staff hired for peak periods. In this way, over the six years of the appointment, the PhD fellow will gain experience with activities that are geared towards a possible future in academic teaching. PhD fellows also supervise, or co-supervise, five bachelor's theses (5 EC). To do so, they are allocated 10 hours for each thesis student (for the supervision and assessment of their own student, plus the assessment as a second reader of the thesis of another supervisor). In order to ensure that the teaching experience of PhD fellows is as broad as possible (also with a view to their career following the completion of the doctorate), in the sixth year teaching will be done preferably in a different bachelor's course. It is of course also possible that PhD fellows teach in a master's programme or supervise master's theses.

NB1: the above teaching load calculations are based on the faculty standard. These standards, for example in relation to preparation time, are based on the hours of an experienced lecturer. PhD candidate and fellows should be properly coached so that the teaching tasks can be performed within the faculty standards. Particularly in the first year, it is possible that teaching tasks will require more preparation time. This can be discussed and it will be considered how to deal with this. In any case,

the teaching load should never be greater than outlined above. Any deviations, and the consequences of such for the PhD research, will be discussed at the next P&D interview.