

Fitness for purpose: Preparing doctoral candidates for societal engagement

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Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
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**Societal engagement in
universities**



Trust in **teamwork** of bees bridging two bee swarm parts

Reciprocity





History







History

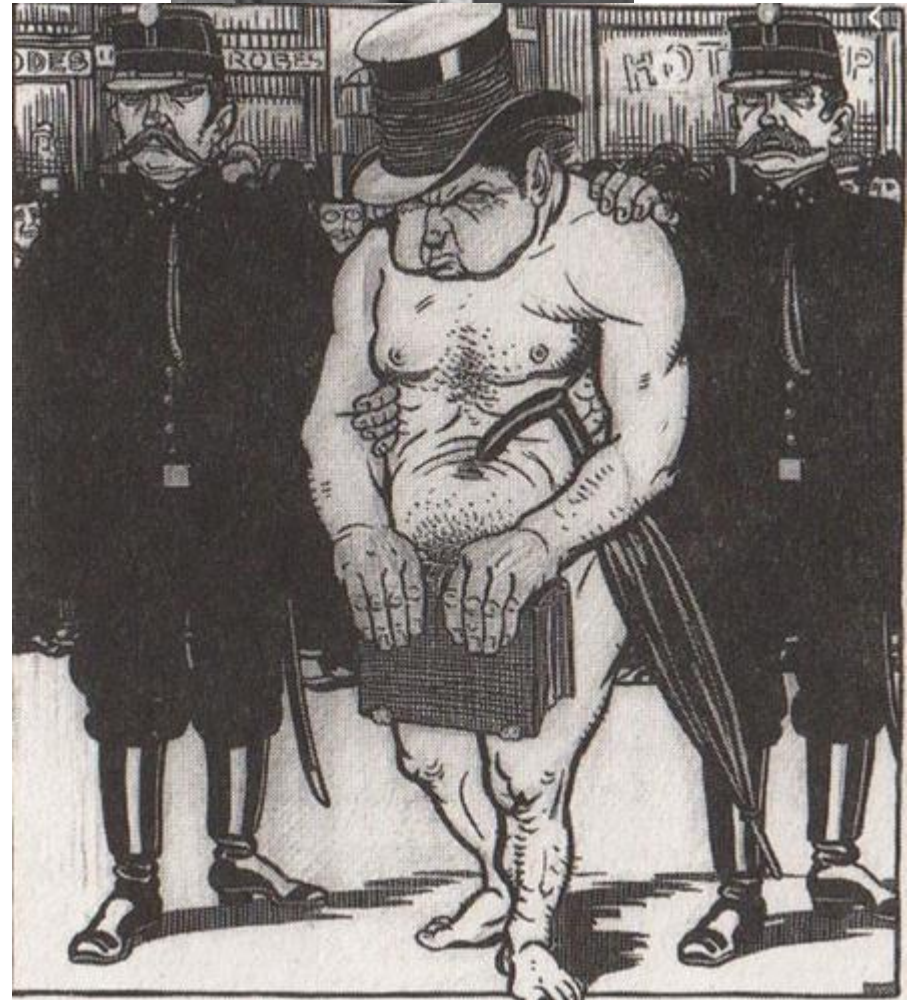
Philosopher

Churchman

Politician

Preacher

Lecturer/professor



Kuyper's philosophy about education

- Education should have its own autonomy
- No interference from the state or church
- Interaction with society



VU's main goal

- to prepare and equip young minds with skills so that they can play meaningful roles in our society (not only after but during their studies)



- We make sure our PhDs are **aware** of the impact they can have/make **in** and **with** society





Raise
awareness!

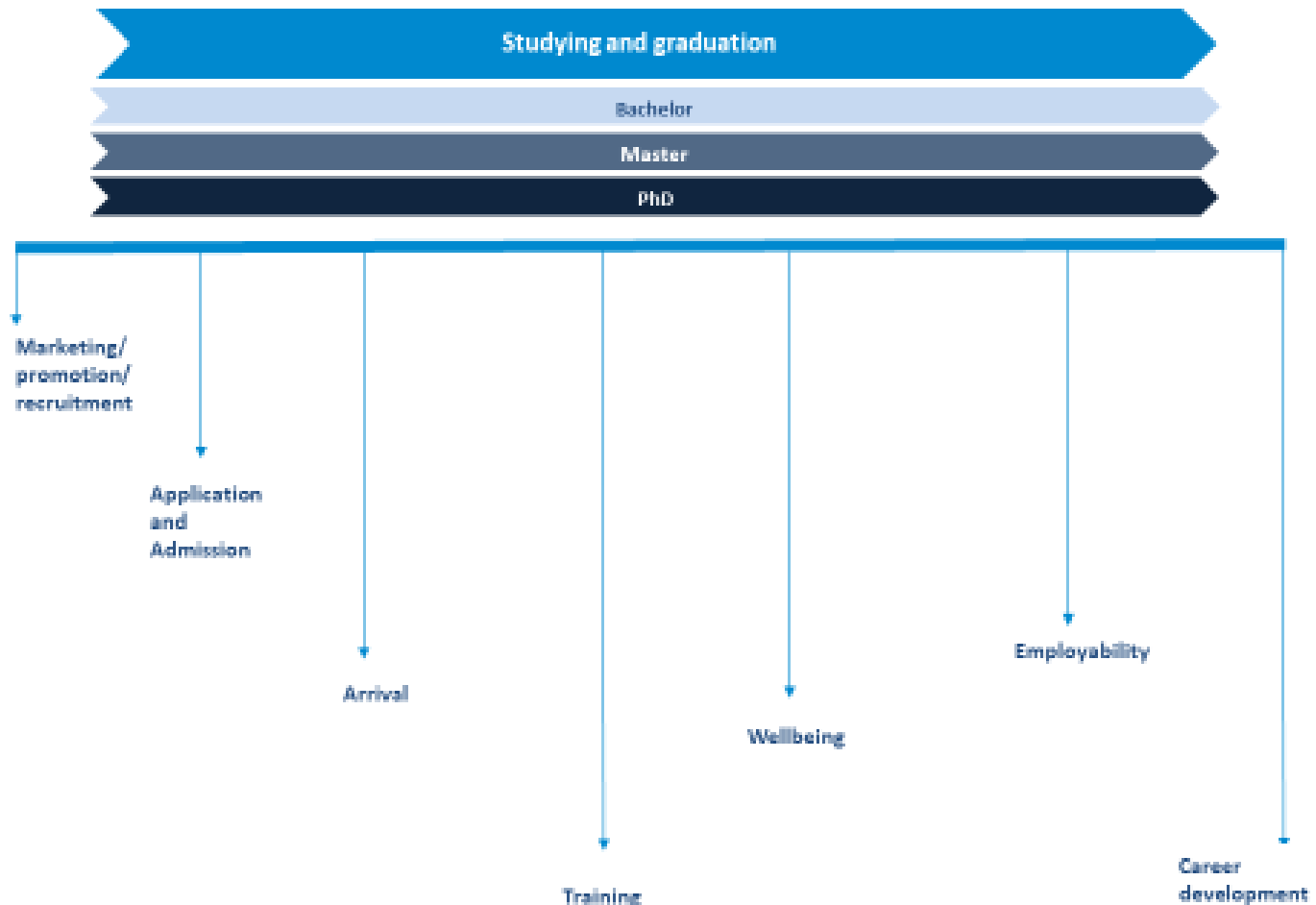


- Conduct research
- Write, revise, publish papers-CHASING citations (rather than trying to change the world)
- Go to conferences
- Give presentations

LEADS TO: individualistic approach vs. teamwork, competitive attitude vs. collaboration, junior position vs. leader in research team-hierarchy vs. reciprocity



- Structuring the PhD process and trajectory allows to *raise awareness* of the relevance of societal engagement beyond common PhD **tasks**



Marketing, promotion and recruitment

- Improved recruitment process for PhDs- explicit information on expectations, beyond traditional academic skills

What are we offering?

A challenging position in a socially involved organization. The salary will be in accordance with the Dutch Collective Labour Agreement for Universities.

About Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

The ambition of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam is clear: to contribute to a better world through outstanding education and ground-breaking research. And to be a university where personal education and societal involvement play a leading role. Where people from different disciplines and backgrounds work together on innovations and on generating new knowledge. Our teaching

Requirements:

- strong collaboration and communication skills to work in a larger team of researchers from other disciplines involved in international research projects

Arrival

- Engaging with the VU PhD community (with other 1st year PhD candidates)



- Engaging with the VU during the PhD trajectory



- Engaging with the VU community-getting to know other departments

Engagement in *capacity building projects* in developing countries via Erasmus + mobility programmes (via our Center for International Cooperation)

Aurora university networks activities (PhD mobility)



- Engaging with the VU- on campus





- Engaging with Amsterdam



Engagement with the world of work and careers

- *Career Thursdays*
- *Online Career Coaching*
- *Meet Your Employer*
- *Internships in companies, public organizations, non profits via PPN and NWO*
- *City Hall Amsterdam Discuss Event*
- Workshops on valorization, incubator, venture studios



Challenges

- Strong *support-acknowledgment-drive* by the university leadership
- Early adapters among Deans, PhD coordinators, Graduate School/Doctoral School Heads
- Skepticism among traditional research directors

Key messages

1. Societal engagement is also a state of mind – teamwork with society, reciprocity with society.
2. Raising awareness and creating socially engaged mindsets by integrating varied activities that challenge the traditional academic path throughout the PhD trajectory-structuring.
3. Changing traditional academic minds needs support from the university leadership (*initiators* or *supporters*).

- Questions?

Thank you

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