

## **VSNU GUIDELINES ON GRANTING *IUS PROMOVENDI* TO ASSOCIATE PROFESSORS AT DUTCH RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES**

### ***Guidelines for doctorate boards<sup>1</sup> on granting ius promovendi to Associate Professors (UHDs)***

*As laid down by the General Board of the VSNU on 19 February 2016*

*Addition on the consultation of the professor in the relevant field of study and the notion that PhD supervisors themselves must hold a doctorate (Dutch House of Representatives amendment), adopted by the Rectoren College on 17 May 2017*

#### **Future practice:**

Deans can nominate Associate Professors (UHDs: *Universitair Hoofddocenten*) holding a doctorate (who they believe can act as PhD supervisors) to the doctorate board on behalf of their faculty prior to or at the beginning of the first doctoral degree process for which they will act as PhD supervisors. At the beginning of the doctoral degree process, it must be clear who the PhD supervisor(s) is/are. Before the Dean submits this nomination, he/she must ensure that the professor in the relevant field of study has been consulted. The Dean reports to the doctorate board on the respective professor's response.

The expansion of the existing authority to appoint a PhD supervisor implies that the doctorate board will, in some cases, ascertain the academic status of the person being nominated to act as a PhD supervisor ('sufficiently competent'). Deans must therefore substantiate their nominations. In the case of a tenure tracker, this can be done by means of career agreements within the tenure track and/or an assessment of the Associate Professor with respect to supervising doctoral candidates. In other cases, the doctorate board can ask the respective PhD supervisor nominee to prepare a 'Memoir' in which the nominee presents details on his or her academic career, including publications (or other academic output), research programmes and doctoral candidates who have been (partly) supervised by the nominee.

In all cases, the doctorate board will decide whether or not to grant the nominee *ius promovendi* and (also) appoint him/her as a PhD supervisor. This will depend on the doctorate board's decision regarding whether the PhD supervisor nominee is sufficiently competent.

#### **What is stipulated in the law with respect to granting *ius promovendi*?**

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<sup>1</sup> In Dutch: College voor Promoties. Some research universities in the Netherlands use different terms for his body, such as 'board for the conferral of doctorates' or 'doctoral degree board'.



'For each doctorate to be conferred, the doctorate board shall appoint a PhD supervisor. This supervisor can be a professor or, provided that he/she has obtained the qualification of Doctor or Doctor of Philosophy, another staff member of a research university, a university set up on an ideological basis or the Open University who, in the opinion of the doctorate board, is sufficiently competent to act as a PhD supervisor.'<sup>2</sup>

This means that, apart from full professors, the doctorate board can only appoint PhD supervisors who themselves hold a doctorate.

### **How do the research universities define 'sufficiently competent'?**

- Dutch research universities believe that, apart from full professors, only Associate Professors can act as PhD supervisors.
  - Associate Professors who would like to qualify to act as a PhD supervisor must, according to the opinion of the doctorate board, sufficiently demonstrate that they are both 1) a good researcher and 2) a good supervisor.
1. Good researcher. The doctorate board may take the following criteria into account:
    - i. Principal investigator<sup>3</sup>/coordinator of an important grant/project (such as ERC Consolidator Grant or ERC Advanced Grant or Vici).<sup>4</sup>
    - ii. The intended PhD supervisor is on a promotion track towards full professorship or is on a tenure track, or fulfils the applicable (discipline-specific) criteria for this.
  2. Good supervisor. The doctorate board may take the following criteria into account:
    - i. The PhD supervisor has *successfully* acted as a co-supervisor or daily supervisor on a number of occasions. The number can vary per discipline, faculty and university. Possible criteria to define *successfully*:
      1. Doctoral theses are completed within a certain time frame (e.g. 4+2 years) or faster than the average at the respective faculty;
      2. Result and development interviews show that the supervision was good, with PhD supervisors rating the co-supervisor's supervision favourably.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, the doctorate board can decide to grant *ius promovendi* to an Associate Professor who has already acted as a PhD supervisor at a research university abroad, and (also) appoint him/her as a supervisor.

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<sup>2</sup> The official language of the Higher Education and Research Act is Dutch. No official translation has been provided to date. On matters of interpretation, the Dutch text will prevail.

<sup>3</sup> For ERC grants: The Principal Investigator (PI) is the lead scientist or engineer for a particularly well-defined science (or other research) project, such as a laboratory study or clinical trial. The Principal Investigator is an individual who assembles a team to carry out an ERC-funded project under his/her scientific guidance.

<sup>4</sup> Within the Innovational Research Incentives Scheme, the Vici is for senior researchers who have demonstrated their ability to develop their own line of research.

<sup>5</sup> Another option that could be considered is testing the ability to help the doctoral candidate develop into an independent researcher with an aptitude test.



**For which period of time will the doctorate board grant *ius promovendi*?**

In principle, the doctorate board grants *ius promovendi* to the Associate Professor for an indefinite period of time. Of course, it is still up to the doctorate board to appoint a PhD supervisor for each doctoral thesis. The expansion of the group of individuals who can act as PhD supervisors is based on the confidence that the doctorate board is exceptionally qualified to determine who is most suitable to supervise a thesis. In practice, it may therefore be the case that the doctorate board grants *ius promovendi* to an Associate Professor, but that the latter is only actually appointed as a PhD supervisor on a few occasions.