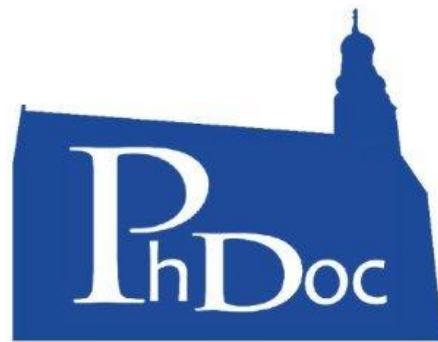


PhDoc Election Program

2024-2026

OUR TIME IS NOW



Defending the interests of PhDs and postdocs at Leiden University

A massive thank you to the colleagues who supported our candidate list and helped us write this election program:

Dita Auzina, Stephanie Cap, Maia Casna, Tessa Gote, Sara Hondmann, Adi Kiang, Merlijn Veltman, Denny van der Vlist, and Storm van der Voort.

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PhDoc Candidates

#1 TAHMINA FARIABY



Faculty of Science
LACDR

#2 MARIE KOLBENSTETTER



Faculty of Archaeology
World Archaeology

#3 MAX VAN HAASTRECHT




Faculty of Science
LIACS

#4 CARINA VAN OS



Faculty of Law
Institute of Public Law

#5 MATHILDE BOUVIER



Faculty of Science
Observatory

#6 CAROLINE SCHEP



Faculty of Humanities
Institute of History

#7 JELMER VAN LIESHOUT



Faculty of Science
IBL

#8 MARTIJN VAN ENGELENBURG



Faculty of Science
CML

#9 JORIS VAN DE RIET



Faculty of Law
Interdisciplinary Law

#10 ELISABETH KERR



Faculty of Humanities
LUCL

PhDoc in a nutshell

Principles

PhDoc defends the interests of PhDs and postdocs at Leiden University. We have had a consistent presence in the University Council since 2012. We are a group of energetic early-career academics who care about the future of our university. In a nutshell, PhDoc is guided by the following three principles:

- **Tradition is nice, equity is nicer.**

We respect the impressive history of Leiden University, but where our history has led to inequality we, respectfully, do not care about how impressive it is. Should we have more female professors? Yes. Should our buildings and events be accessible to all, regardless of disability? Yes! Should the cultural diversity of students, PhDs and postdocs be better represented higher up in our hierarchy? YES!

- **Actions should be driven by principles, not practical considerations.**

The climate crisis is the biggest challenge of our time. Yet, we struggle to formulate a [firm statement](#) on collaboration with the fossil fuel industry, in fear of hurting Shell's feelings. The privacy of our students and staff is of utmost importance. Yet, we need to be [actively convinced](#) by our community to not place camera scanners in all our buildings. Work pressure is a pressing issue. Yet, when PhDoc [unearthed issues](#) with annual agreements that meant people took up fewer holiday days, our board waited until the new collective labor agreement to take action. Principles should always come before practical considerations.

- **Transparency and trust should be our foundation.**

It is not normal to be fearful of open debate just because a topic is [controversial](#). It is not normal that it takes [investigative journalists](#) to find out we are using shady practices to finance our LUMC PhDs. It is not normal for a professor to [misbehave for decades](#) before we finally take action. At the heart of these problems lies a lack of trust in each other, leading to a lack of transparency. This is especially problematic when people high up in our hierarchy do not trust the people doing the real work. We need to actively engage in conversation with each other to build respect and trust, and to eliminate fear.

Themes

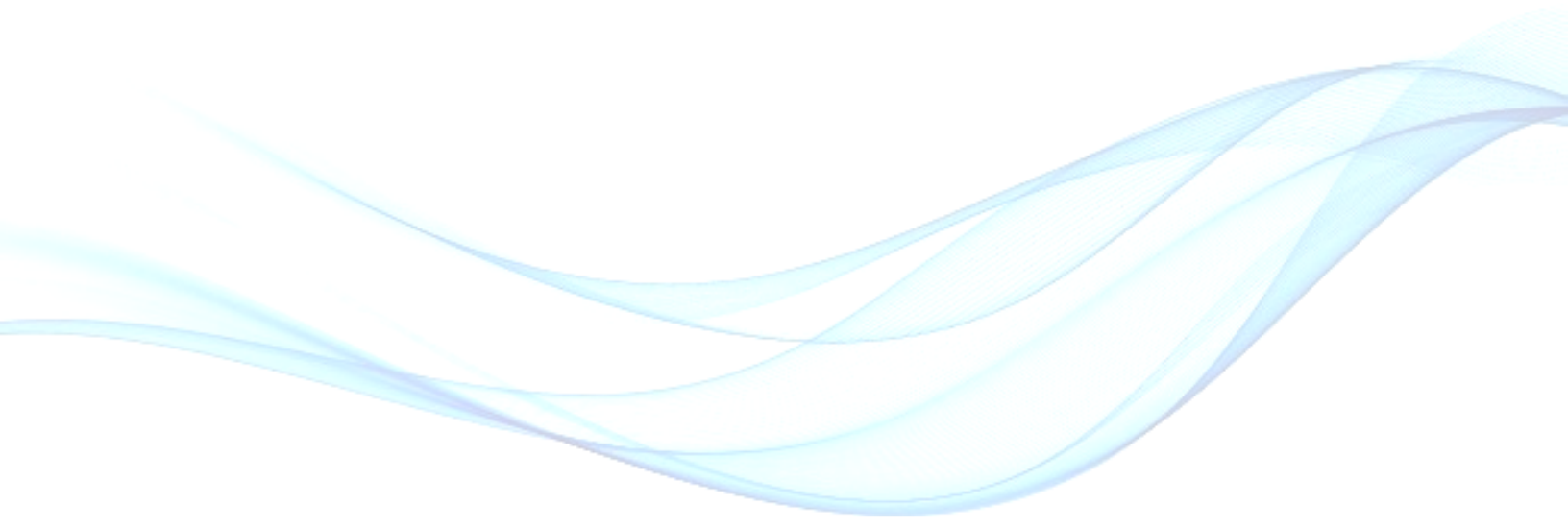
Our principles feed into the five main themes we will cover in this election program:

- **Sustainability:** In a time of climate crisis, we need to take responsibility.
- **Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI):** Everyone deserves a fair chance.
- **Representation:** No voice should go unheard in university decision-making.
- **Well-being:** Moving from work pressure to work enjoyment.
- **Personal growth:** Balancing guidance and freedom to foster growth.

Achievements 2022-2024

Below you can find a short overview of what we did with our single seat in the University Council in 2022-2024. We will leave it up to you to imagine what we could do with more seats.

- **Building trust with PhDs and postdocs.**
PhDoc values in-person interaction above all else. Since the previous election, we have had 143 meetings with and for PhDs and postdocs, not counting official University Council meetings. This is how we build trust with PhDs and postdocs throughout the university, and how we ensure the right topics are on the University Council agenda.
- **Improving the university commuting allowance.**
We have [consistently called for](#) better reimbursement of commuting costs, with [a focus on public transport](#). The university budget for 2024 now includes a €1.2mln mobility fund to improve the commuting allowance.
- **No more misuse of annual agreements.**
PhDoc wrote a [report](#) on the problematic misuse of annual agreements at Leiden University. Despite [initial inaction](#) by the university board, PhDoc collaborated with the labor unions in ensuring annual agreements are now no longer permitted for junior staff. We explained in a [recent interview](#) with AOb magazine why this was an important step.
- **Fighting for early-career academic inclusion in R&R.**
PhDoc has been very active in the Recognition & Rewards (R&R) movement. Our [workshop at the 2023 R&R festival](#) paved the way for the inclusion of PhDs and postdocs in national R&R decision-making. At Leiden University, we were one of the main drivers behind the introduction of the [lay talk](#) at PhD defenses, starting September 2024.
- **Equity for external PhDs.**
PhDoc actively supported the taskforce external PhDs, whose 2023 report contains many recommendations to [improve equity between internal and external PhDs](#). We have continuously raised awareness about the report recommendations, which include giving external PhDs voting rights in university elections.
- **And much, much, much more.**
Interested to learn more about what we do? Or want to join the PhDoc team? E-mail us at phdocleiden@gmail.com, and make sure to follow us on [LinkedIn](#) and [X](#).



1. Sustainability

In a time of climate crisis, we need to take responsibility

This is a time of climate crisis. PhDoc believes it is the duty of our university to take a proactive stance and do what it can to reduce its carbon footprint. Not only because of the university's role in society, but also because of our role as educators of the future generation of scientists, politicians, and innovators.

For 2024-2026, our goals are:

- **Implement a partner-based approach to limit ties to the fossil fuel industry.**
The university board [announced its intent](#) to limit ties to fossil fuel partners that do not commit to the Paris Agreement, unless projects contribute to the energy transition. We have serious doubts about a combined partner-based and project-based approach, as any project-based approach [opens the door to greenwashing](#). A partner-based approach, already implemented by [VU Amsterdam](#), is the only right way forward.
- **Full reimbursement of public transport commuting costs by 2026.**
The current commuting policy at Leiden University does not stimulate employees to travel by public transport. PhDoc has [consistently argued](#) for stimulating the use of public transport by compensating at least 75% (see e.g., [RU](#)), but preferably 100% (see e.g., [WUR](#), [UT](#)) of the costs.
- **CO2 neutral operational management in 2030.**
Utrecht University is aiming for its operational management to be [CO2 neutral in 2030](#). Leiden aims to reduce building-related CO2 emissions by 65% in 2030. We need to be more ambitious and match Utrecht University's goal. PhDoc calls for a 'Circular Strategic Plan' by 2026, where the university quantifies the circular potential of our buildings.
- **No travel by plane for journeys that take less than 9 hours.**
Plane travel is highly polluting. We propose a similar policy to that of [RUG](#) and [UU](#), where travel by plane is prohibited for journeys taking less than 9 hours. Long distance flights should also be kept to a minimum, where we believe early-career academics should receive priority over more experienced colleagues when deciding who gets to travel.
- **Only plant-based food in university cafeterias by 2026.**
Leiden University should strive to have only plant-based food in cafeterias by 2026. This should be combined with a more inclusive, high-quality offering of warm lunch options and better facilities (e.g., microwaves) for staff to bring their own cooked meals.
- **Carbon budgets for all Leiden conferences and events by 2026.**
All conferences and events organized by Leiden University should quantify their environmental impact through carbon budgets by 2026. This will stimulate the use of hybrid formats, which reduce unnecessary international travel and are more inclusive towards participants with limited financial resources.

2. Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI)

Everyone deserves a fair chance

Leiden University has a diverse community of students and staff, but not everyone has the same freedoms and opportunities. Examples are students with disabilities that cannot easily navigate certain buildings, colleagues that do not speak Dutch who cannot take part in co-participation, or colleagues who have a lower chance of rising in the ranks because of their gender or ethnicity. It will take a concerted effort to make Leiden a more equitable and inclusive place to work. But, if you ask us, the effort is worth it.

For 2024-2026, our goals are:

- **Take responsibility for the financial challenges faced by scholarship PhDs.**
International scholarship PhDs regularly earn less than minimum wage. They may not be employees of the university, but they are our colleagues. We have a responsibility to make them feel welcome and to help them find a place to stay. It is unacceptable that scholarship PhDs now sometimes need to share a living space meant for a single person. Leiden needs to do everything it can to prevent these situations from occurring.
- **Invest at minimum €100.000 before 2026 to improve onboarding of international staff.**
International staff currently have to pay to be on the SCIS waiting list for housing, without having a guarantee of finding a place to live. The costs for the waiting list should be paid for by the university. The newly created [work pressure relief fund](#) could provide the financial backing for this investment.
- **Remove inequalities between external and internal PhDs.**
The taskforce external PhDs presented their [report](#) in 2023, which included a series of recommendations for removing inequality between external and internal PhDs. External PhDs should never be excluded from activities organized by the university, should always have a place to work, should be allowed to follow free Dutch and English courses, and should be informed of their rights and obligations as early as possible.
- **At least 40% female professors by 2026.**
The [2023 Women Professors Monitor](#) shows Leiden currently has 31.2% female full professors, whereas 49.1% of PhDs and 48.7% of assistant professors are female. These numbers point to a disparity in opportunities related purely to gender. According to its own [target figures](#), Leiden should have at least 35% female full professors by 2025. PhDoc envisions an ideal stable proportion of 40-60% female full professors in the long run, where an important component will be an [evidence-based recruitment program](#).
- **Stop using poorly accessible buildings for education and public events.**
Every university building used for education or public events should be accessible by all. Where buildings (e.g. Gravensteen) lack accessibility, they should not be used for education and public events.

3. Representation

No voice should go unheard in university decision-making

'No taxation without representation,' as the old saying goes. Yet, external PhDs are quite heavily taxed, in terms of the work they do for our university, without having the right to vote during university elections. PhDoc strongly believes that no voice from our community should go unheard in university decision-making. To achieve this, we need to strengthen our institute councils and ensure postdocs have an active community through which they can voice their concerns.

For 2024-2026, our goals are:

- **Grant active and passive voting rights to external PhDs by 2026.**
The taskforce external PhDs concluded in their [report](#) that we should seriously investigate the possibility of giving external PhDs voting rights in university elections. Although the resulting investigation concluded there are no legal barriers, and several universities already allow scholarship PhDs to vote (see e.g., [UU](#), [TiU](#)), the university board has refused to grant voting rights. This means external PhDs will not be allowed to vote in the upcoming election. PhDoc believes this is absolutely indefensible, and that external PhDs should have active and passive voting rights by the time of the 2026 elections. Additionally, we need to investigate how we can ensure LUMC PhDs have a say in decision-making that affects them, such as changes made to the PhD regulations.
- **Appoint a central postdoc coordinator to support the postdoc community.**
There is currently not a single FTE at Leiden University responsible for developing a postdoc vision and policy, while there are around [400 postdocs](#). We cannot expect to properly represent this group when nobody at our university is responsible for the postdoc community. We need to appoint a central postdoc coordinator for 1 FTE to develop a postdoc vision and to reinvigorate the [Leiden University Postdoc Assembly \(LUPA\)](#). From 2024-2026, this postdoc coordinator should investigate what is needed at our different faculties to better support and represent postdocs.
- **Provide free training and support to institute councils.**
Whereas the role of the University Council and Faculty Councils is specified by law, the role of institute councils is often only informally agreed upon within an institute. This hinders the ability of institute councils to properly control and advise institute boards. All institute councils should receive the same free training on co-participation provided to the University Council and Faculty Councils. Additionally, institute councils should receive support in writing statutes that formalize which topics the board has to discuss with the council and the compensation that is received by council members.

4. Well-being

Moving from work pressure to work enjoyment

Multiple reports over the past years have brought to light a concerning level of work pressure in Dutch academia. With growing student numbers and increased bureaucratization, the problem has only gotten worse. Many of our new administrative responsibilities in academia (e.g., data management plans, cybersecurity, sustainability reporting) are here to stay, so the solution cannot come purely from efficiency gains. PhDoc believes that the priority should lie with improving employee agency and increasing work enjoyment, through a united movement to bring the personal touch back to our employee well-being strategy.

For 2024-2026, our goals are:

- **Ensure PhD psychologists have fixed positions, and availability for postdocs.**
PhDoc helped to pave the way for a first PhD psychologist, who is now constantly fully booked. A second PhD psychologist was recently appointed. We hope this will create room to offer the mental support PhDs need, but also wish to stress that psychologists should be available to postdocs, who are lacking many mental health resources.
- **Appoint an independent PhD coach at every research institute.**
Several research institutes at our university have very positive experiences with (semi-)independent PhD coaches in helping to create a welcoming and safe work environment. A PhD coach serves as a trusted advisor for PhDs, helps to prepare for yearly evaluation meetings, and can be the first point of contact in case of issues with a supervisor. PhDoc believes every institute/department should have a PhD coach.
- **No PhD should work for the university while formally unemployed.**
An average PhD trajectory takes [more than five years](#) to complete, whereas contracts are for four years. PhDs are regularly forced to complete their dissertation while unemployed. Financial responsibility for PhDs going over time needs to shift away from PhDs and to institutes. We need to provide more clarity about options for contract extensions and ensure nobody is working for our university while formally unemployed.
- **Normalize taking holiday leave.**
It needs to become more normal to take the holiday leave you have a right to. Creating transparency about holidays can be the first step. PhDoc believes we should stop using function-based contracts for all salary scales, not least because the labor unions have serious [doubts about their legal viability](#).
- **Create the incentive to supervise well by including supervision in yearly evaluations.**
Supervisors who allow PhDs and postdocs to flourish are not recognized and rewarded for this time investment. Similarly, supervisors who mistreat their PhDs and postdocs are often not disciplined or fired. Supervision is an important part of the work of senior academics, and it should be included as part of yearly evaluations.

5. Personal growth

Balancing guidance and freedom to foster growth

Early-career academics should get the right level of guidance to develop themselves, but should also get the freedom to choose their own path. Striking the right balance between structure and autonomy is difficult. We need to provide more clarity on how we will holistically evaluate education and research, while also ensuring to recognize and reward young academics who dare to take steps on less well-trodden paths (e.g., outreach, policy, volunteering).

For 2024-2026, our goals are:

- **Specify the percentage of time spent on teaching and supervision in all contracts.**
PhDs and postdocs are often asked to do more than they can handle. It is not easy to say no because there is no maximum percentage of teaching and supervision specified in their contracts. We need to move to a situation where all PhD and postdoc contracts include this information and where it is clear to PhDs and postdocs which staff member is in charge of monitoring their hours.
- **Automatically enroll all junior teaching staff in a 'Start to Teach' course.**
Many PhDs and postdocs start teaching and supervising students with no preparatory training. Other universities (e.g., [UU](#), [RU](#)) offer a 'Start to Teach' course to employees starting their career in education. Leiden should create its own Start to Teach course. Additionally, we need to provide much more clarity to PhDs at the start of their trajectory on the options to obtain a [\(partial\) university teaching qualification](#).
- **Improve postdoc career development opportunities.**
Postdocs are not getting the support they need to prepare for the next steps in their career. Postdocs should be given more opportunities to apply for internal funding, such as the [KIEM call](#) for interdisciplinary research. Postdocs who wish to obtain the university teaching qualification should get the chance to do so. Finally, all postdocs should be enrolled in a job coach trajectory upon reaching the final year of their contract.
- **Give postdocs priority over external candidates for internal positions.**
We need to give postdocs better prospects for permanent positions. Postdoc contracts should specify that they get priority over external candidates for academic and non-academic positions at their institute, provided their yearly evaluations are positive.
- **Increase diversity in transferable skills course offering.**
Transferable skills courses are now often focused on writing, presenting, or communicating, when many early-career academics are interested in having a broader impact on society. Examples of activities the university could advertise are: contributing to a more sustainable university by [volunteering for LUGO](#), strengthening the connection with the city of Leiden by participating in [canal clean-ups](#), or creating a better understanding of our democracy by helping to [count votes](#) during elections.