

Everyone Professor



To the Executive Board, Academic Board and colleagues at Wageningen University:

In recent months the discussion on 'Everyone Professor' (Dutch: Iedereen Professor) has gained momentum. The National Young Academy (DJA), supported by KNAW President Prof. Marileen Dogterom, has called for broader sharing of privileges now mostly restricted to 'Full Professors' (Dutch: Hoogleraar) to Assistant and Associate professors.^{1,2}

In the Dutch academic system, some privileges are exclusively awarded to Full Professors (with some recent exceptions to Associate Professors), specifically: 1. the right to promote PhDs as 'promotor' (*Ius promovendi*), 2. the use of the title "Professor", 3. wearing a gown or toga in academic ceremonies, 4. participation as opponent in PhD committees, and 5. the right to vote on a *cum laude* PhD degree. WUR's PhD regulations already allow anyone with a PhD degree to exercise the latter two rights. However, also at WUR the first three rights continue to be restricted to Full Professors (or in case of *ius promovendi*, Associate Professor level 1).

DJA proposes to extend these 'Professor rights' to a wider range of academics, as is possible under the Dutch law. DJA and others suggest that extending these rights can contribute to a wider recognition of academic work and supervision and may reduce undesired hierarchical dependencies for academics at several levels. Internationally, it is common practice (e.g., Belgium, Germany, and USA) to provide Professor rights and titles to a wider range of academics. Therefore, this change could improve international recognition, and opportunities for collaboration and funding of our academics. These changes would keep the current academic scale system (UD2, UD1, UDH2, UHD1 and HL) in place, which (in combination with related pay scales) can still reflect the various levels of experience and responsibility, for example in terms of group management.

As Wageningen Young Academy, we support the proposal to disconnect the *Ius promovendi* from a specific academic rank. To better recognize the efforts of PhD supervisors and avoid undesired dependencies, we propose to provide *Ius promovendi* to all PhD supervisors with sufficient proven experience relevant for supervising PhDs (specific criteria to be defined). This would for example mean that an Assistant Professor with sufficient and proven supervision qualities can be promotor for a PhD trajectory (possibly jointly with a colleague as fellow promotor). In addition, **we call for a university-wide discussion on DJA's proposal. We believe that for several of the issues raised by DJA, a thorough discussion is needed among all staff involved on the underlying problems, wishes, and pros and cons.**

We propose the Executive Board and the Academic Board install a committee representing academics from different ranks and career stages, including PhD candidates. This committee should get the task of making an inventory across university staff on issues and solutions on this topic. This inventory should consider current proposals related to 'Everyone Professor', but we suggest taking a broader look at issues related to recognition, supervision quality, international competitiveness, responsibilities, and workload, as experienced under the current system of Professor privileges. Based on its findings, this committee should formulate a proposal with a long-term vision and concrete short-term steps to change our current (PhD) regulations and practices at Wageningen University, if needed. We believe this effort is important to create a more pleasant and attractive system for all our academic staff.

— Wageningen Young Academy (June 19, 2023)

¹ DJA information page *Everyone professor*: <https://www.dejongeakademie.nl/projecten/2438054.aspx>

² Support letter by KNAW-President Prof. Marileen Dogterom: <https://www.knaw.nl/nieuws/column-knaw-president-marileen-dogterom-iedereen-professor>