



# PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE



**UAS Professional Doctorate: augmenting the Dutch doctorate landscape**  
Maartje Harmelink (Taskforce SIA) & Frank van der Zwan-Scholtz (VH)

**7th April 2025**

9<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Professional and Practice Doctorates, London

# From **education factory** to (regional) **knowledge institution**

## UAS's reshaping Dutch higher education system

- Binary system: 14 research universities and 36 universities of applied sciences (UAS's)
- UAS's past 25 years: gradual transformation
  - rise of practice-based research
  - enlarging education portfolio (e.g. short cycle, Master)
  - lifelong learning activities
  - developing answers to societal issues
  - indispensable for vital regions
- Research universities had monopoly on awarding doctorates:
  - PhD
  - Medical specialist
  - Engineering Doctorate
- 2019: Notion that ability for UAS to offering their own doctorate programmes is crucial for the continued functioning of the higher education system

# ‘Reshaping’ doctorate programmes

## Looking for a niche in the European Qualification Framework (EQF)

- Knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study and at the interface between fields;
- The most advanced and specialised skills and techniques, including synthesis and evaluation, required to solve critical problems in research and/ or innovation and to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice;
- Demonstrate substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly and professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes at the forefront of work or study contexts including research.

# 'Reshaping' doctorate programmes

Looking for a niche in the European Qualification Framework (EQF)

traditional doctorate  
programmes

- Knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or **study** and at the interface between fields;
- The most advanced and specialised skills and techniques, including synthesis and evaluation, required to solve critical problems in **research** and/ or innovation and to extend and redefine existing **knowledge** or professional practice;
- Demonstrate substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly and professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes at the forefront of work or **study** contexts including research.

# 'Reshaping' doctorate programmes

Looking for a niche in the European Qualification Framework (EQF)

traditional doctorate programmes

- Knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of **work** or **study** and at the interface between fields;
- The most advanced and specialised skills and techniques, including synthesis and evaluation, required to solve critical problems in **research** and/ or **innovation** and to extend and redefine existing **knowledge** or **professional practice**;
- Demonstrate substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly and professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes at the forefront of **work** or **study** contexts including research.

professional doctorate programme

# “Learning to intervene in complex practices”

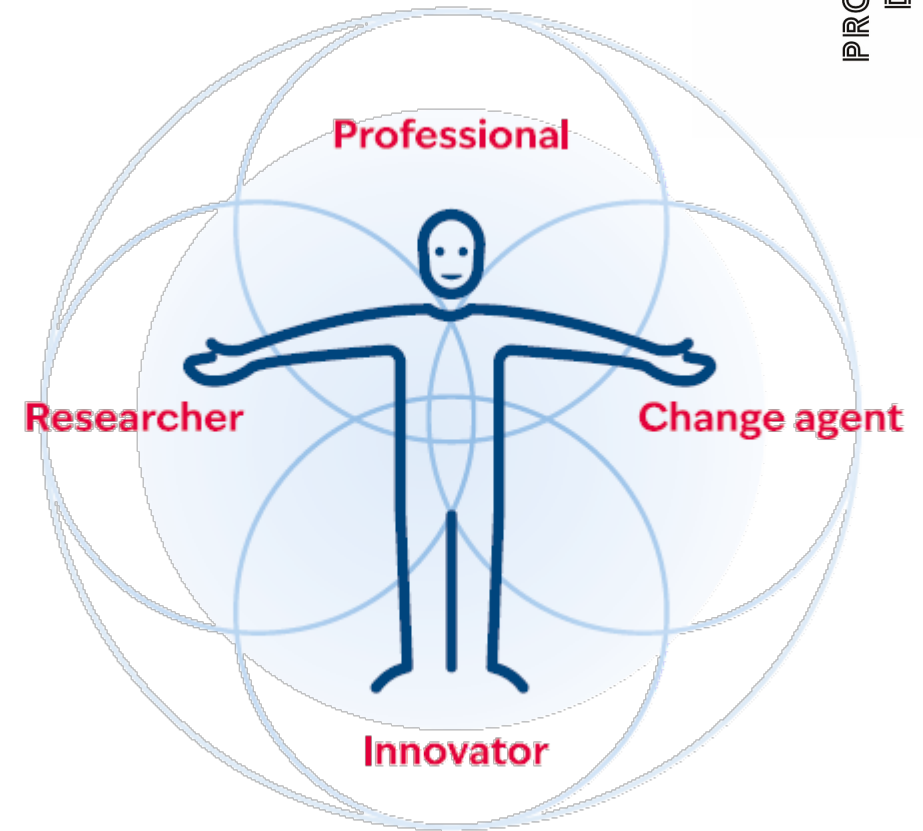
Developing four roles during PD pathway

**Professional** – candidate is able to professionally reflect and practice ethically

**Researcher** – candidate is able to design and execute a methodological transparent research project that is in line with and enriches professional practice

**Innovator** – candidate is able to design an intervention that innovates professional practice

**Change agent** – candidate brings about change within/ outside one’s own field of practice



# Characteristics of the programme

- Each project duration of **4 to 6 years** (fulltime – parttime)
- In each project one or more **industry/ societal partners** are involved to provide the ‘complex practice’.
- It will consist of **short-cycle iterative interventions**, where the candidate gains in-depth knowledge in the proposed interventions.
- Target group:
  - professionals from industry/ society
  - candidates who just completed UAS masters
  - UAS (research) personnel.

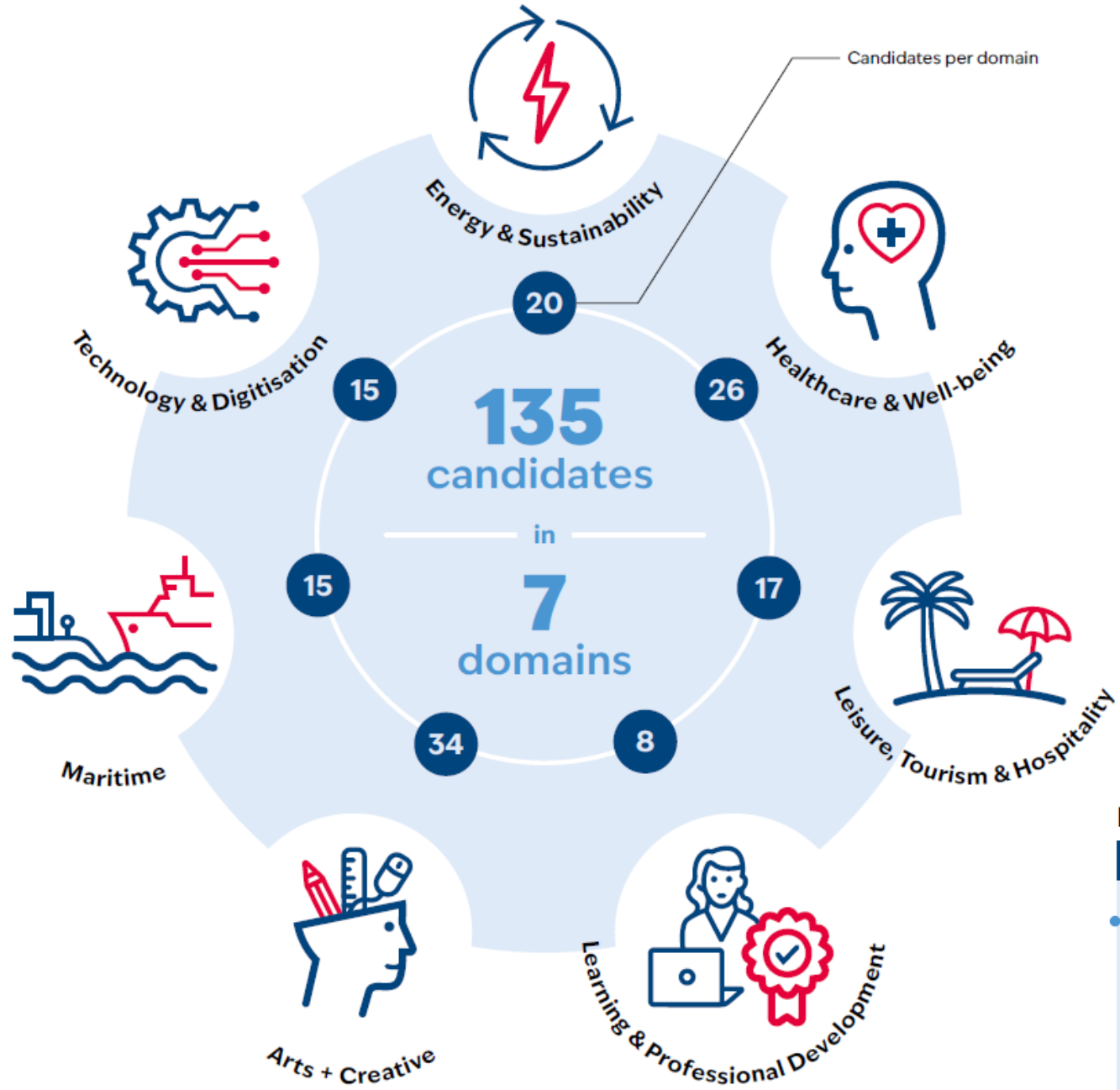
GB USA MEX

ONE SIZE  
DOES NOT  
FIT ALL

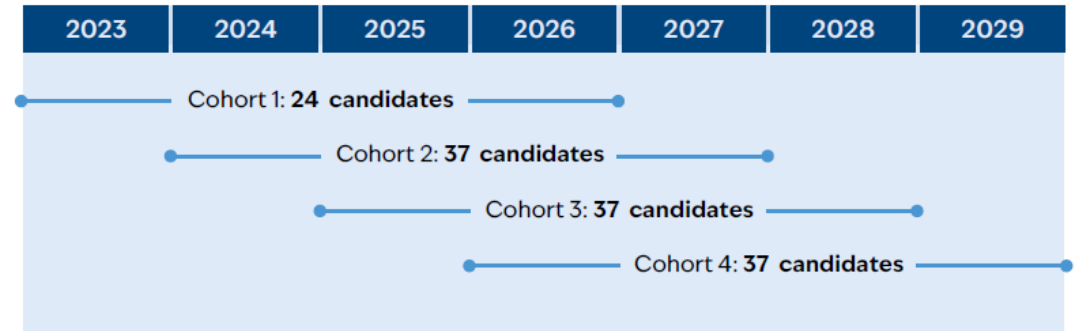


Von links bügelel Iron inside out  
repasat sur l'envers / FLEUREL

# Candidates and domains



## Duration pilot 2023 - 2029



# Benefits of professional doctorate programmes

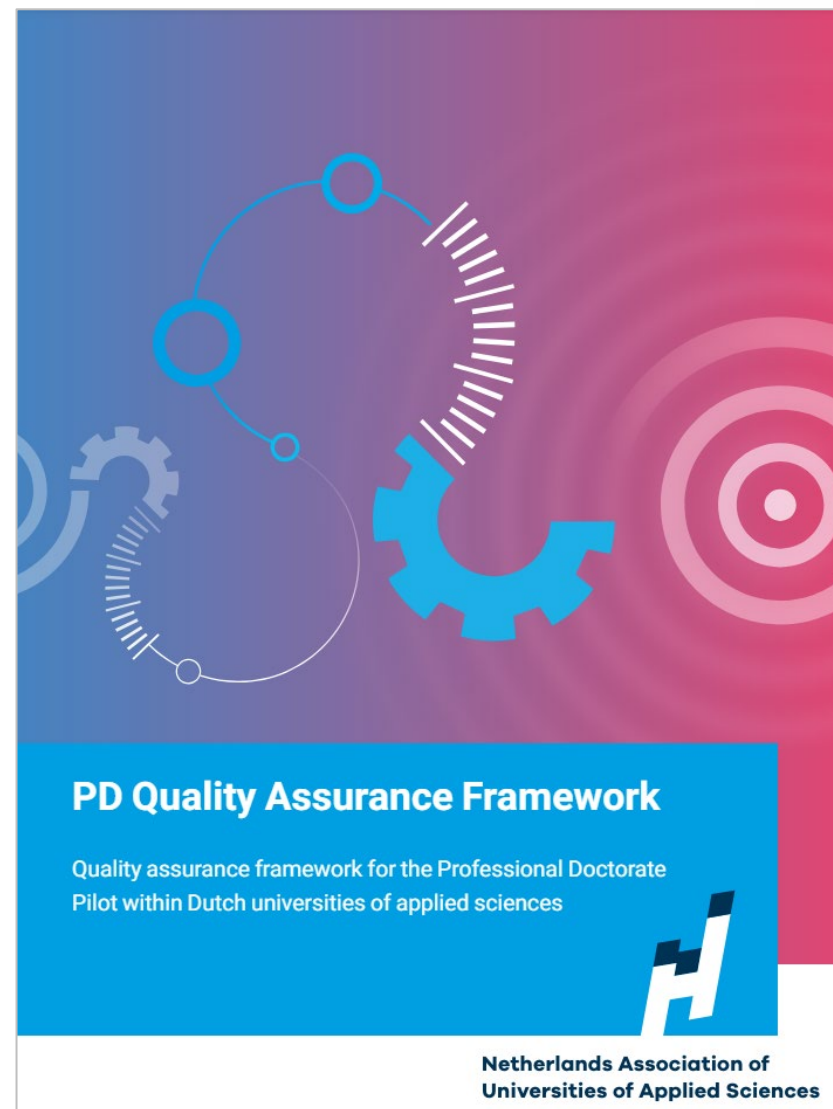
## For candidates, UAS's and society

- a. **Offering a new doctorate option** – augmenting the Dutch doctoral landscape with a new type of doctorate, appealing to a different audience
- b. **Additional 'research' capacity** – e.g. in the first four years 135 candidates are starting on a population of over 720 full professors and 5000+ research staff.
- c. **Training people in 'our' research paradigm** – practice-based research – with and for industry/ society
- d. **Contributing to complex societal issues** – 4 to 6 years research projects in societal relevant domains
- e. **Advancing the knowledge (gathering)** in the various domains
- f. **Use insights to innovate other educational programmes** – like associated Master, Bachelor and short cycle programmes.

# Preconditions pilot

A collection of agreements at national level, e.g.

- **Preconditions** - as agreed with research universities and Department of Education
- **Plan of Approach** – detailed plan of the pilot, incl. seven domains
- **Quality assurance framework** – based on ESG Guidelines and UAS research assessment protocol
- **Drawing rights** – number of PD candidates allocated to UAS's participating in each domain



# Taskforce Applied Research SIA and the PD

## Invaluable partner in the pilot PD

- SIA and VH have a common goal: to work toward legal anchoring of PD.
- SIA is tasked with “*stimulating the quality of PD pathways and the PD-pilot through two schemes and through monitoring*”.
- SIA receives € 5M annually for the PD in the period 2022-2031.
- SIA conducts two schemes:
  - Impulse Quality Assurance PD
  - PD grant scheme – financing candidates
- SIA monitors the Impulse scheme and the PD grant scheme and provides input for the monitoring & evaluation of the pilot.
- SIA contributes to various working groups and graduate committees.



# PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE

[www.professionaldoctorate.nl](http://www.professionaldoctorate.nl)

