

# PhD Candidates on Science 2.0.

*Report of PhD meeting at the KNAW, May 1st 2015*

*General Findings & Proposals to improve science*

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## Contributors

We thank all the PhD candidates present at the roundtable discussions and all participants of the plenary session. This document was put together on the basis of minutes of the discussions and notes of the discussion by the moderators mentioned at the top of the roundtable reports. Sicco de Knecht ([s.d.deknecht@uva.nl](mailto:s.d.deknecht@uva.nl)) did the final editing.

## Aim of this Report

On Friday May 1st more than a hundred PhDs from a wide range of disciplines gathered at the Trippenhuis (KNAW) to discuss the current state of science in general and the 'promotie' (PhD from here on) specifically. Since PhD candidates from such a broad range of disciplines rarely meet on this level, and in these numbers, there was a lot to discuss.

Goals of the day were to bring together PhDs from different fields (from humanities to medicine etc.) and to add to the the current debate that has sparked from 'Science in Transition' and 'Science 2.0'. We wanted to know how (inter)national policy is shaping the PhD-experience and what issues arise from the quickly changing landscape. Also, this created a unique opportunity to foster mutual understanding between disciplines and open up the stage for creative proposals to improve science and scientific conduct.

The programme consisted of two main parts.

1. A closed session of roundtable discussion with 65 PhDs distributed over all disciplines and institutes, with different degrees of experience as a PhD. In this session three main topics were discussed:
  - a. The value of a PhD
  - b. The academic climate
  - c. The academic output
2. A plenary session where these findings were presented to and discussed with a bigger audience.

This report aims to summarize this event and to deduce the most important findings of this meeting. We have done this in such a way that they can be used as a point of reference for further discussion and investigation. It has been put together on the basis of (anonymised) minutes from the roundtables and peer reviewed by their participants.

General points of interest:

- Value of a PhD to the individual and to society.
- Increase of the number of PhD's.
- Decrease of the intrinsic value of the PhD title.
- Concerns about the bursary experiment.
- Lack of competent human resource management.
- Diversity of PhD contracts and its effects.
- Dutch scientific brain drain.
- Funding and perverse incentives that influence quality of publications.
- The (overestimated) need for valorisation.

## General Findings

Overall, PhDs found their projects positively challenging and considered it a rewarding and formative part of their development, and wanted the PhD to be a positive contribution to society. However, a number of important concerns were raised during the roundtable discussions and the plenary debate. The statements below aim to summarise these in a logical order.

- Increase of the number of PhD's
  - The **number of PhDs has grown** tremendously over the last couple of years, while the number of (senior) staff members at universities and institutes has stagnated or even gone down ([VAWO](#), 2014). This has created a personnel **pyramid with a very wide base** ([Ratenau](#), 2013), but a thin middle section.
  - Two suspected reasons for this are the **'promotiebonus'** and the shift from direct funding to institutes/universities to indirect government funding through grants. The former creates an economic incentive to 'deliver' as many PhD diploma's as possible, while the latter creates budget gaps for long-term investments (staff, research analysts/technicians) which are then filled with any available PhD or post-doc position.
  
- Decrease of the intrinsic value of the PhD title
  - The reasons why PhDs start their training/project are **diverse** but there are a couple of common denominators such as becoming a more complete human being and an independent researcher. A lot of PhDs mention ideals such as contributing to society and discovering how the world around us works. Conversely, these ideals/goals are not necessarily shared between all members of the community.
  - Connected to this, there is a **strong antipathy for the plans to create a bursary PhD category**. There is a general feeling that this idealistic dimension is what will be lost and not easily restored when entering a bursary system. This is regarded as a weaker and stripped version of the current model and there are too many benefits (both scientific and social) that are lost in this model. For instance the employee status of PhD candidates in the Netherlands leads to Dutch PhD's being more independent and responsible as researchers. In this way PhD's are a valuable part of the workforce that produce papers and knowledge.
  - Despite the increase of PhDs, the **workload** of both senior staff and PhDs seems to have **increased and shifted**. For the senior staff grant applications and networking are more important than ever, while PhDs do most of the research - with ever less supervision.
  - Right now the **Dutch PhD (diploma) is still in high regard** in worldwide academia but it is feared that the quality and level of a PhD title are slowly decreasing. A lot of institutes have reacted to the output financing with rules and regulations forcing less capable PhDs to finish their training/project.

- Lack of competent human resource management
  - A lot of **departments lack competent human resource management** to deal with the shifting forces on science and the great number of PhDs in their ranks. Although departments and/or research schools have some regulation in place on how to 'officially' decide to continue a project after the first year there is little professional HR support for PhDs.
  - Conflict resolution between PhD and supervisor, starting a conversation on (lack of) supervision and dealing with sick leave/pregnancy leave are given as examples of where HR management is inadequate.
  
- Dutch scientific brain drain
  - There seems to be an **Dutch academic/scientific brain drain** after the PhD. Most PhDs interested in a career in science are forced out of the Dutch labour market and asked to try their luck abroad. There are little official numbers to be found on this topic but a rough estimate of participants is that the number of people who come back to the Netherlands to do more research can't be very high.
  
- Funding and perverse incentives that influence quality of publications
  - Competition is considered a healthy power in scientific research, it leads to excellence. However, it is felt that current model of financing models leads to **unhealthy forms of competition**. Uncreative, easy to valorise research is favoured at the expense of risky or more fundamental research.
  - Funding research based on academic output seems to stimulate data-manipulation to **ensure you always get a paper**/communication out of every experiment. Even if the experiment was done sloppy and the effects are insignificant, this reduces the credibility of science.
  
- The need of (less) valorisation
  - The idea of **valorisation** invoked strong emotional responses in the round table sessions and at the plenary debate. Even though not everybody is opposed to prioritising research based on societal needs, the way this is currently done does not seem to be fruitful in the long run. Besides valorisation being a concept rarely understood correctly, it seems that its formal definition is too narrow and short-term focused.
  - The fact that research is easily explainable in societal terms does not make it more valuable than more abstract and fundamental research. Furthermore, research that is unpredictable and risky may also bring surprising new and very useful knowledge and products.

## Proposals/Best practices

During the roundtable sessions and plenary discussion a number of proposals was put forward to address the issues mentioned. A number of potential solutions and best practices are discussed below:

- **Abolish the ‘promotion bonus’** or at least make it less bound to output than it is right now. It makes sense to compensate institutes for the effort and infrastructure needed for supervising and accommodating PhDs but this has become a perverse incentive.
- Striving for a **more balanced ratio between PhDs and senior staff**, combined with adding opportunities to continue research in the Netherlands after a PhD. This proposal was raised quite a number of times. Creating more post-doctoral positions offers the opportunity to solve the outbalanced PhD/supervisor problem and counteracts the ‘aging’ researcher population.
  - As a number of participants argued: we are trained for academia, but there is often no sight on a post-doc position and definitely **not a perspective on a sustainable career in academia**. In general the prospect of an academic career is not very good, the Postdocs seems to be in a worse position as PhD’s. First of all, it would be good if everybody was honest about this, then PhD candidates (with the graduate school) could prepare for an alternative career. However, this does not pertain to most medical PhDs, for whom a PhD is often a good strategic career step.
- **Personal grants** for PhDs were seen as a viable way in which to empower PhDs in their research, scientific freedom and creativity. This was thought to create the opportunity for the PhD candidate to ‘scan the field’ for good supervision and good research groups and make good supervision more central to a PhD project.
  - PhD’s should also be able to fire their supervisors. There is a call for the option to **evaluate supervisors** and power to act on bad supervision.
- In the long run the **current funding system is not a sustainable** form of knowledge creation. Institutes and Universities should distribute a larger part of the available research funds instead of grants being distributed by NWO.
  - At the heart of this appeal lies the aim to reduce the ‘single-serving’ nature of the researcher. Rather **invest in projects and goals that are sustainable** and attainable than short-lived and driven by ‘sexyness’.
- An urgent appeal is made to make a serious effort to do something about the **HR management policies** in universities and research institutes. This can help to strengthen the status of the PhD, empower him to be a better employee and improve the overall academic climate in departments/institutes.
  - This proposal explicitly does not appeal to a higher degree of bureaucracy, but rather a culture of mutual **responsibility** within departments.

- Research/graduate schools are officially endowed with the responsibility to ensure the quality and the level of PhD programmes/diplomas. However, they are not always really up to the task. There should be an **incentive for research schools to act more strongly on the level and quality** of supervision and the PhD as a whole.
- Expand the current definition and perception of the concept of valorisation. Include the enormous amount of fundamental research needed to get to an actual application, **include teaching** young students and other transferable skills and value the gain to society of highly educated citizens.
- By default, researchers have to be trusted and have a high degree of autonomy. Distrust is translated in often unreasonable requirements and infeasible projects, driven solely by a focus to increase the output of PhDs.
- We should seriously reflect on the **amount of PhD's a professor of supervisor can supervise** (at least for it to be of a certain quality). A number of people argue for a maximum number of PhD's per supervisor. Of course supervision of many students can be completed with help of other senior staff or post docs, but this presumes these staff-members are committed in an equal way to the progress of the PhD candidate.

# Round Table Discussions

## The Value of a PhD

*Moderator(s): Shona Kalkman, Sicco de Knecht, Sanne Frequin*

### 1. What is the value of a PhD to you? What should get you a PhD and what should you get from a PhD?

The goals of a PhD were identified as (1) becoming an independent and “good” researcher, (2) developing oneself as an independent thinker and into “a more complete human being” (a notion predominantly supported among researchers in the Humanities). These goals were said to be achieved through appropriate supervision and training (focussing on the acquisition of skills), being allowed a certain degree of freedom (to make and learn from mistakes) and developing ideas about research ethics/research integrity.

Additional aspects considered valuable during a PhD were identified as establishing a network, focus on and help regarding future career prospects (know how to increase post doc employability *during* a PhD) and training to be a good teacher (though it was emphasized that teaching should not be forced upon PhDs). The above stated goals and enablers pertain to the value a PhD has to the individual PhD. Participants also described that the value of the PhD in itself depends on the extent to which the acquired knowledge is fed back into society (valorisation).

### 2. What is the value of a PhD to society? What does the hierarchical pyramid in academia signify? Is there a surplus of PhDs, and what are the benefits/cost?

Participants confirmed the existence of the **hierarchical pyramid** in academia, with the bulk of PhD candidates leaving after receiving their doctorate. However, some noted that there is still value to society when researchers leave academia after their PhD. The knowledge and skills obtained during a PhD were considered **valuable not only in academic research** but also in other aspects of professional/public life (companies, industry, education, etc.). Here, by some the outflux of PhDs from the hierarchical pyramid was not necessarily considered to be a negative effect. Increasing the layer constituting and supervising PhD candidates was thought to potentially outbalance the pyramid in the sense that such an increase would be detrimental to the quality of academic research.

The sheer increase in the number of PhDs was thought to create a system in which **PhDs are “cheaper” to hire by companies**, benefitting companies more than PhDs. Others believed increasing the number of PhD would inspire competition leading to high-quality research. Degree inflation was feared as a result of overproduction (predominantly in the Sciences). The primary driver of high-quality research was considered to be high-quality supervision. To ensure the quality of the work performed by PhDs a systemic approach was preferred (in the pyramid: vertically rather than horizontally): creating more post-doctoral positions to train and supervise PhDs was advocated as a potential ‘solution’. The quality of a PhD was thought to decrease as a result of pressure to publish and market incentives (“prone to economic bubble”).



One participant stated that **“We have made the system so competitive that the people who we actually want in science are leaving.”** (proposition) The reactions to this statement from other Roundtable participants were mixed. Some did indeed believe that the probability of successfully pursuing an academic career depended on one’s ability to write grant proposals (on which a significant amount of time is spent, taking away time from relevant research activities and supervising PhDs), on one’s willingness **“to lean on PhDs”** or on belonging to “the old boy’s network”, subsequently reducing the quality of academic research. Those who disagreed said that society does not “lose” talented researchers (those who value personal development) but in fact gains them in another form elsewhere, though it was acknowledged that selection is momentarily fairly ‘funding-based’.

The “sexyness” (along with the willingness or ability to resort to media appearances) rather than the sound scientific character of a research proposal was thought to determine “where the money goes”. VNO-NCW and other stakeholders of the like are very much heard nowadays, however, these parties have very different interests. The question was put forward of the added value of listening to these interests and whether these parties are really address societal needs in the way many people tend to think.

### **3. What is the role of PhDs in academic research? Who is currently responsible for what and how does that correlate with your idea of what a PhD programme should entail?**

The responsibility of successfully completing a PhD project was thought to lie primarily with the PhD candidate, whereas the supervisor was perceived to assume the role of “paving or pointing the way”. One participants stated: **“PhDs are doing all the work because the professors do not have the time.”** (proposition) During this Roundtable discussion participants were asked how often they see their professor (‘promotor’) and how many PhD candidates their professor supervises. The number of PhDs per supervisor varied (range 1-10 PhDs per promotor), but seems to have increased significantly. Some said they never saw their professor and even experienced difficulty to see their ‘daily’ supervisors every once in a while, whereas others had frequent meetings with their professors.

Professors and PI’s were said to come up with circumscribed PhD projects for which they have received funding by external bodies (predominantly in the Gamma and Life Sciences). In the Humanities, projects were said to be generally less defined. To increase scientific freedom and creativity, personal grants were considered a good option to “empower” PhDs rather than appointing PhDs for pre-defined projects that have received a grant. The majority of Roundtable participants think personal research grants could have the ability to stimulate PhD candidates to find their own lab and to negotiate on their own terms (“transition from helpless to helpful”). Experiments with a bursary PhD student system were perceived as a strategy to avoid taxes on work performed by PhDs rather than as an actual attempt to create better working conditions. Little enthusiasm was observed for such experiments, participants all preferred a full contract and would be reluctant to enter in such a position.

**4. From your experience, what are the main bottlenecks during a PhD project?  
How is dealt with these challenges and what happens when PhDs quit?**

Reasons for quitting a PhD project preterm were identified as predominantly personal issues, the loss of faith in academia and feeling lonely (due to the solitary character of the work or due to loss of colleagues) or feeling out of place or a 'misfit' were mentioned as reasons. The relationships between supervisors and PhD candidates were sometimes perceived as troublesome, and little formal approaches seem to exist towards solving such issues - or even mapping them.

It was noted that **professional HR is not always in place within academia**. Pregnancies are not always dealt with in the right way, one participant said, as there rarely contract extensions are granted. "Good fits" were said to usually result from prior internships, which are less common in certain academic disciplines. However, participants stated that drop-out among PhDs might not necessarily be something to worry about (filtering out the ill-equipped/unmotivated/untalented). Moreover, a problem was identified in the lack of ways to "force people out" who are malfunctioning. Generally speaking, after one year the PhD candidate's functioning is assessed, however after this term **there are seldomly additional assessment performed**, such as a yearly evaluation which is common in most professions. For professors, it appears too "attractive" to *not* have a PhD complete his or her dissertation (the department's bonus at completion of a PhD acts as a perverse incentive). This has resulted in professors "ghostwriting" (parts of) dissertations and 10% to even 50% of dissertations **not being considered of sufficient quality to merit a PhD-title**. Defense committees were said to rarely be "impartial" which puts considerable pressure on graduating a PhD candidate ("silent conspiracy").

## The Academic Climate

*Moderator(s): Shannon, Janna*

During two different discussion rounds we discussed the academic climate broadly construed: embedding of PhD candidates within the department. For instance with respect to the quality of supervision, but also the role PhD's play the academic department. This of course also strongly related to both in terms of contracts as well as socially and intellectually were discussed. This summary combines findings from both groups.

### 1. What makes for a good supervisor?

There is a large variation in contact (on topic) with supervisors. The great majority of people fall within a larger project, with a fixed goal. Promoters generally do not have much time and PhD candidates see them from one hour per month to one hour per year. However, daily supervisors (co-promoters), which the great majority of participants had, are met with several times per week to one hour per month. One of the core issues that arose in the discussion on supervisions is that **the quality of supervision is unregulated and often non-discussable**. Most PhD candidates report cases of bad or insufficient supervision, either their own or within their department. This is due to a number of reasons: lack of time for supervision, high work pressure, communication problems - good scientists are not necessarily good communicators – or a lack of skills on the side of the supervisor. Additionally, people felt a micromanaging supervisor is not the way to go.

Their dependency on supervisors makes it difficult for PhD candidates to discuss problems relating to supervision. In addition, cultural differences, for instance people coming from countries in which relations are more hierarchical, strengthen this effect. supervisor. In case of bad supervision, it seems that **departments and colleagues often do not correct dysfunctional promoters**. Graduate schools are there to support as well, but hardly have power to do something about bad supervisors. Though, there are also examples of graduate schools that install committees that evaluate the quality of supervision on a yearly basis. For instance, ill-performing supervisors rarely follow courses on supervision.

### 2. What is the staff policy like at different institutes and what should it be like?

Many research departments have a skewed staff policy. There are many PhDs, as well as a some senior permanent staff, but very few Postdocs and other people 'in between'. These people may have a "bridging potential", in the sense of providing additional intellectual support (new ideas) and mentoring (postdocs are closer to the experiences of the PhD). Hiring new PhD' seems to be very attractive, as they can educate each other to a certain extent, but this also poses problems. Besides a supervisor, the academic environment of a research department should be the place where PhD's are able to develop personally.

### 3. What is the academic freedom of PhDs?

The level of freedom to shape the project was very diverse, often dependent on the personality of the supervisor – some of which are micro-managers – and size and nature of the project. The discussion affirmed that the level of supervision/freedom heavily depends on field and type of research. Some fields are limited due to information availability (e.g. medical) or costs of experiments and experimental techniques. It could also differ per phase within the project: in the beginning generally strict, but later some PhD's get more freedom. Moreover, an extreme focus on a certain technique/method ("paradepaardjes") makes it hard for PhD's to pursue their own research interests. The group agreed that ideally you have to make the project your own, but that there is an optimum between freedom, and pre-defined goals and supervisor intervention: having no boundaries at all is not regarded as something positive.

Nonetheless, it was alarming that for some pre-defined projects it can be hard to develop in a direction of choice or perform innovative research. In some fields it is required, in order to secure funding, to apply with projects proposals based on data that is already (partly) available or with a to a great extent determined research set-up. These projects are successful in getting funding because they pose little financial risk and high change of deliverance, but they **render the PhD's to a mere executive function**. If deliverables are non-negotiable they may stand in the way of trying out other research angles.

Of course in practice, senior applicants apply in such a way that there will be time for PhD's involved to do (off the record!) true and innovative research, for which the outcome is not already determined. This shows the paradoxes of current funding schemes; de facto professors try to get funding for ready-made research projects in order to free new money to do research in another direction. A number of PhD's (non-betas) found this practice to be completely normal.

### 4. Is the bursary experiment a good idea?

A particular concern for the embedding PhD candidates, namely as bursary students, was discussed in more detail. **By far most people in the room strongly reject this experiment, or the idea that a PhD should become a student again.** As one PhD sharply stated: 'If we do the work of an employee, we should be treated as an employee'. PhD's do most of the work at universities. It is also noticed that there is a huge difference between Anglo-Saxon PhD's (UK, USA) and Dutch PhD's. Dutch PhD's are further (also psychologically!) in their academic career and at the end are better trained than their Anglo-Saxon counterparts.

On the other hand, some people could see the bursary system working, or as a possible solution for the lack of freedom within larger projects. Thus, in that case there should be compensation in the sense of freedom: You should be able to choose a project completely of your own with a supervisor of your own.

## **5. How strong of a force in money in academia?**

All PhD's notice a lack of funds, especially in humanities, and that the still available funds go to studies that are related to sciences. This is a general problem, but also has immediate implications for PhD candidates. After funding runs out, some PhD's finish their research without any money. Also, in some fields (especially humanities) it is quite common to do a PhD along a job as a 'buitenpromovendus' and take a long time to finish this PhD.

There is a strong feeling that current division of money is unfair. Some people think that it would be fairer if universities would distribute the money. However, others think that universities are not necessarily to be trusted with money (expensive buildings, bureaucratic layers between the actual scientists and the people receiving the money). Also, money begets money. If you have a rich (which nowadays equals 'successful') group, you are more likely to get more money. This indicates that the structure is wrong in the current grant and funding system. It will be interesting if an NWO or university open call is re-instated, because it may bring more balance in the system.

## The Academic Output

*Moderator(s): Anne Schuth*

We had a round table discussion on academic output. “Output” is a loaded term. Especially in the light of recent events and the discussions on “rendementsdenken”. We used it for lack of a better term: what we produce as PhD candidates is extremely diverse. It ranges from “just a book”, to many smaller publications, to exhibitions and blog blog posts. Not all these forms of output are valued equally or value at all.

The twenty PhD candidates at this round table represented most (if not all) universities in The Netherlands and covered a very wide range of disciplines, ranging from humanities to technical studies to medicine. Some PhD candidates were close to defending their thesis while others had just started. Furthermore, we had a mix of candidates from across the globe.

The PhD candidates (ca 20) present at this round table produced the following types of output (more than one answer possible):

- Journal paper (peer reviewed): 17
- Conference paper (peer reviewed): 5
- Thesis as collection of articles: 8
- Book dissertation (monograph): 8
- Database: 2
- Policy paper: 2
- Blog: 1
- Exhibition: 1

After shortly discussing the proposed agenda, we decided that we should talk about these three issues: 1) questioning the output PhD candidates produce; 2) the “Rat Race”; and 3) valorisation. We decided to defer a discussion about plagiarism and questions around academic integrity, as well as a discussion on open access publishing.

### 1. Is our output really the (type of) output we want to be producing?

Many think that sharing knowledge is one of the most important duties of a researcher. One stated: “**Why should one keep results to oneself? It is our duty to publish!**”. However, what then this publishing or sharing consists of, was up for debate. For instance, some thought that publishing on a blog or personal website (especially of negative results, as these are usually harder to publish elsewhere) could and should be seen as credible academic output. While others thought that also less tangible output such as exhibitions or a database should be seen in this light. Teaching was brought up as well as a form of sharing knowledge. However, out of this wide variety of ways for sharing knowledge that PhDs engage in, typically only some actually count towards obtaining a PhD.

This brought us to the question whether academic output necessarily needs to be peer reviewed. Depending on the scientific discipline, people (a medicine scholar) seemed to think that this is indeed an important criteria. Others (a humanities scholar) brought in that that

peer reviewing is not necessarily needed for monographs for instance, as reviewing also happens through a PhD committee.

While there are many differences in opinions, there was remarkable agreement on the following. We should aim to make things translatable to society: we are sending researchers back in society (80% does not end up with a scientific career), the output these researchers produce should match these expectations. Why do we educate people in a skill (writing peer reviewed articles) while we actually need them with very different skills (translating knowledge to society). If we really want that this large a portion of our population is obtaining a PhD, and if we then know that many of them will not pursue an academic career, then why do we only educate them as if all PhD candidates will be pursuing an academic career? Someone stated that **output that is interesting for society should count towards obtaining a PhD**. Or alternatively, **why don't we have unaccounted time to work on things not necessarily part of our academic output?** To which there was a response that some things just count towards your own development or your career perspectives after your PhD, not so much to your obtaining a PhD degree itself.

But why do we even focus so much on output. One stated **I don't even do a PhD for output at all, output is really just a byproduct**. Why are we not just curious. What is wrong with (seemingly) useless knowledge? Should research really be all that relevant to society? It is simply not always visible or possible to see beforehand what is relevant and what is not. There should be room for such (fundamental) research.

Concluding, there are huge variations between disciplines. PhD output requirements (if any at all) should really be per discipline, it makes no sense to try and enforce a single view on wide variety of output that exists. The proposition that came out of this discussion was that **we are capable researchers that should be trusted and have a higher degree of autonomy**.

## 2. Does your work feel like a rat race?

The questions central here were: does the H-index (or any other metric) matter? To you? For your supervisor? For your career? Do you experience a tendency to produce the *smallest publishable unit*? Again we encountered an enormous difference among disciplines. Some of us had to look up what this H-Index was. Others look up their current H-index almost every day. There was some wondering whether we should trust technology to measure metrics like the H-index? Is it accurate? Metrics should be very accurate if they are so important, often they are not accurate.

There was consensus that **these metrics, if they are important, alter our behaviour**. Do we need to be measured? Some thought that we should not be measured. However, if you don't have such objective measures, then how then to divide money? A proposed solution to that problem is that decisions on funding should be made using qualitative means instead of quantitative means. If we agree there can be different outputs per discipline, only then we can agree on how to measure it.

One of the reasons for people participate in the *rat race* of obtaining high H-indexes and publication counts, is that they need to for their career. If your only career changes are within areas where these metrics matter, then your need to score well on these metrics. So, **fix job security to fix the rat race**. If we don't have to aim for an academic career then we don't necessarily need to participate. **We publish because our job is on the line**. The proposition that came out of this discussion was that **we publish for the wrong reasons**.

### 3. Valorisation

The valorisation of research is often the *desired* outcome of this research, not necessary the *actual* outcome. Think for instance of medical research to cure a disease. The research would be valorised only if the disease would be cured. But, as it is research, this is far from guaranteed. Thus, it often does not make sense to ask people in their project proposals to say how their research is going to be valorised: it may (if the disease is cured) or may not (if it was not cured). **That is research: we work with unknown outcomes**. As a measure, why not ask a researcher whether they, in hindsight, actually succeeded with what they aimed for in the beginning. So instead of requiring researchers to speculate in funding proposal about how they would valorise their work, why not ask researcher to state whether they reached their goals?

Doing important research is, and should be, separate from communicating about this. valorisation should only matter if you don't aim for an academic career. There was a proposal to completely get rid of valorisation and social relevance and instead add teaching as a requirement. Teaching is one of the most valuable ways of valorising research. The proposition that came out of this discussion was that we should **skip valorisation and split it into scientific relevance and communication about relevance**.