

# FALLING WALLS CIRCLE

## ROUND TABLE “TRAINING SCIENTISTS FOR THE FUTURE – IS THE PHD STILL UP TO DATE?”

The PhD is the foundation of the academic enterprise, the first piece of original work done by a researcher. With the significant changes seen within science, and the expectations broader society has of science, early career researchers must be prepared to address grand societal challenges such as climate crisis and biodiversity loss and deal with the new economic demands and technologies by industry. This Falling Walls Circle discusses if the way we conceive PhD training is still up-to-date, and how the reform of assessment and evaluation could affect academic culture.

Panelists: [Alice Aiken](#) (Dalhousie University, CA), [Karsten Danielmeier](#) (German Chemical Society, DE), [Nick Fowler](#) (Elsevier, UK), [Zainab Kidwai](#) (University of York, UK), and moderator [Jan-Martin Wiarda](#) (Independent Journalist, DE).

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1. PhD training must foster entrepreneurial thinking.** Many PhDs do not end up in academia but in business – a fact that is often not reflected in training. "We need to make sure that PhD students have the knowledge, the skills, the mindset, and the resilience to thrive in an innovation economy", states Alice Aiken. Rather than merely deeming as a rite of passage to professorship, a modern PhD program needs to expose its students to opportunities beyond academia and open new avenues towards entrepreneurship: "A little bit of business administration and an understanding of innovation management methods would go a long way for", says Karsten Danielmeier.
- 2. Redefine the metrics.** The current concept of academic excellence is all about the number of publications. Questioning the status quo, the experts call for a broader set of metrics, including the number of patents and start-ups founded by PhDs, as well as their impact. In which areas do PhDs make a difference, how is their work benefitting society, who is ending up in the public sector, and who is adhering to academic standards? We need to establish more diverse and inclusive metrics. If academia is changing, then PhD programs need to reflect the changes accordingly.

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