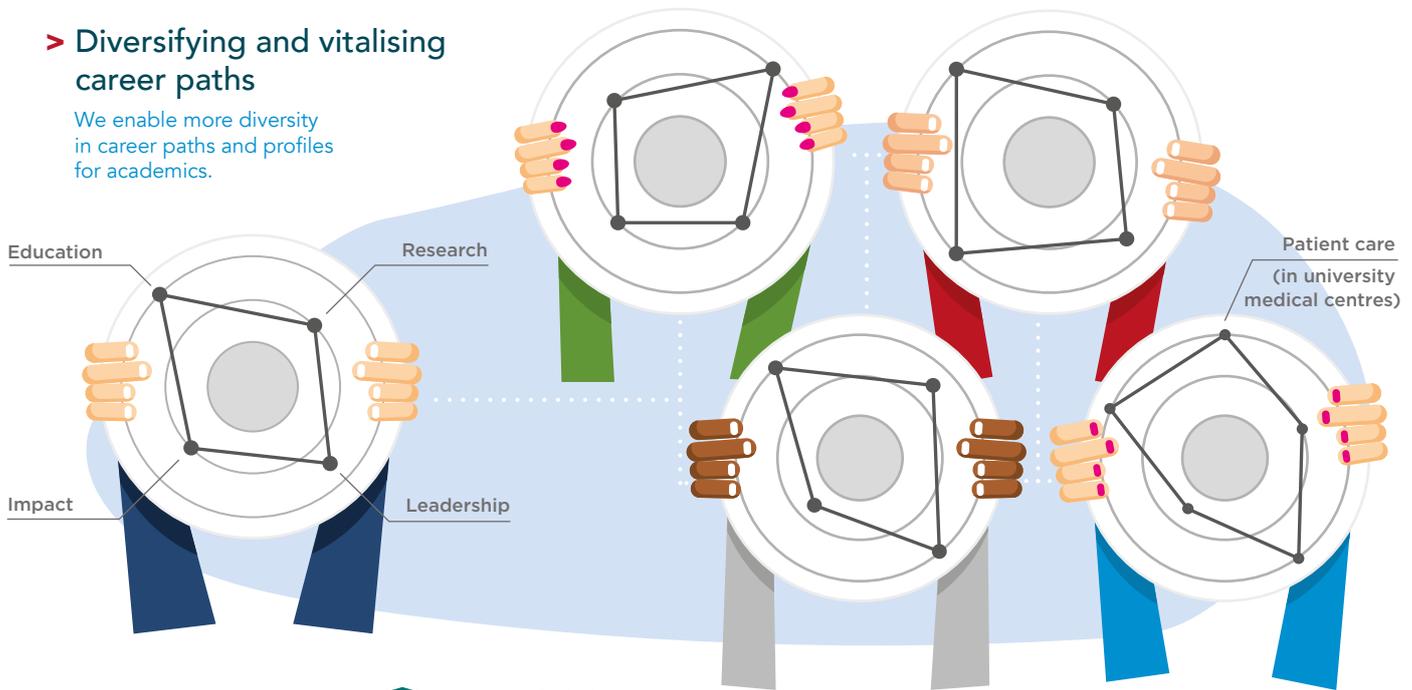


# Room for everyone's talent

towards a new balance in the recognition and rewards of academics

## > Diversifying and vitalising career paths

We enable more diversity in career paths and profiles for academics.



## > Achieving balance between individuals and the collective

We assess academics based on both their individual and their team performance.



## > Focusing on quality

In our assessments of academic performance, we increasingly focus on quality, content and creativity.

## > Stimulating open science

We encourage academics to share their research outcomes with society.



## > Stimulating academic leadership

We stimulate good academic leadership at all levels.

## Colophon

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This is a publication of VSNU, NFU, KNAW, NWO and ZonMw.

Translation: Metamorfose Vertalingen

Design: Things To Make And Do

The Hague, November 2019

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## > What we want to achieve

As Dutch public knowledge institutions and funders of research (VSNU, NFU, KNAW, NWO and ZonMw), we deal with the academic and social questions of our time on a daily basis. We do so by providing academic education at the highest possible level, by carrying out academic research, by using our knowledge to have an impact <sup>1</sup> on society and, in the case of university medical centres, by providing patient care. This calls for high-quality academic leadership. Moreover, we want to share our academic research and education with society and to make it accessible (open science). Dutch science and academia is grounded in the principle of spanning the wide breadth of the knowledge chain, ranging from fundamental, curiosity-driven questions to application and implementation and back. Moreover, the Dutch academic system is characterised by the strong interconnectedness of education and research, and we want to keep it that way.

Putting these shared ambitions into practice requires a modernisation of the system of recognition and rewards. This modernisation should be designed to improve, in a reciprocal way, the quality of each of these key areas: education, research, impact, leadership and (for university medical centres) patient care. Many academics currently feel that there is a lack

This calls for a system of recognition and rewards of academics and research that:

1. Enables the diversification and vitalisation of career paths, thereby promoting excellence in each of the key areas;
2. Acknowledges the independence and individual qualities and ambitions of academics as well as recognising team performances;
3. Emphasises quality of work over quantitative results (such as number of publications);
4. Encourages all aspects of open science; and
5. Encourages high-quality academic leadership.

Modernising the system of recognition and rewards requires a culture change as well as national and international coordination between all parties involved. Moreover, it requires the academics themselves, including academic leaders, to give shape to this modernisation and to embrace it. After all, it is these academics who assess the career paths of fellow academics. Together they form the system of appointment advisory committees, selection committees, assessment committees, etc. Modernisation asks for a uniform, integral approach involving all actors concerned in the Netherlands, while

*“Putting these shared ambitions into practice requires a modernisation of the system of recognition and rewards.”*

of balance in the appreciation of and between the key areas. In addition, the complex academic and social challenges of our day require an assessment system that appreciates both (multidisciplinary) cooperation and the unique talent of individual academics.

also taking account of the international context in which academics operate. To achieve this, board members from across the entire knowledge chain, both national and international, need to take a clear position.

<sup>1</sup>The contribution made by scientific research, in both the short and the long term, to changes in, or the development of, sectors of society and to challenges facing society. Such sectors of society include the economy, culture, public administration, and healthcare, while the challenges include such issues as climate change, immigration, quality of life, the environment, the rule of law, and security. (Source: KNAW (2018). Tracking Impact [Maatschappelijke impact in kaart], Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, Amsterdam).

## > Why a change in recognition and rewards is needed

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Many academics feel there is a one-sided emphasis on research performance, frequently leading to the undervaluation of the other key areas such as education, impact, leadership and (for university medical centres) patient care. This puts strain on the ambitions that exist in these areas. The assessment system must be adapted and improved in each of the areas and in the connections between them.

The implicit and overly one-sided emphasis on traditional, quantifiable output indicators (e.g., number of publications, h-index and journal impact factor) is one of the causes of a heavy workload. It can also upset the balance between academic fields and is inconsistent with the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) principles. After all, bibliometric indicators tell a story, but not the whole

However, it is unrealistic as well as unnecessary for each academic to excel in each of the key areas. There is a need to allow for diversity in career paths with a clear profile in one or more key areas, in combinations that may change in the course of a career (i.e., vitalisation). However, the university system does take the inter-relatedness of education and research into account as much as possible, which is why academics should always have enough competences in at least these two domains. However, the diversification and vitalisation of careers allows us to make better use of the talents and motivations of academics and to build a balanced, high-quality academic system.

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story. For example, they are not equivalent across academic disciplines, and so do not do justice to the diversity that exists within academic domains and academic practice. Relying too strongly on such indicators can disrupt diversity and the societal impact of research, as well as impede the practice of open science. It is important, therefore, to recalibrate and broaden the assessment system for research.

At the same time, we see that methods for assessing scientific education, impact and (for university medical centres) patient care are still underdeveloped and need additional attention. We can learn here from the peer-review assessment that is part of academic research.



## > What we want to change

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### *Diversification and vitalisation of career paths*

We enable greater diversity in possible career paths and profiles by recognising and rewarding more diversity in competences and talents. In line with this, we are switching to a system in which academics can make a mark in one or more key areas (diversification). In this system, the area profile of academics may change in the course of their career (vitalisation), and competences acquired outside of the academy are acknowledged as having added value. The interconnectedness of education and research, typical of the Dutch university system, does require that academics have enough competences in at least these two key areas. Within a team, department or faculty, the different profiles and backgrounds are integrated into a coherent whole.

### *Finding a balance between the individual and the collective*

We ensure that academics are assessed not just for their individual performance but also for their contribution, based on their own expertise and competences, to the team, department, consortium, institution or organisation of which they are a part. In order to foster cooperation within research groups as well, we are creating more opportunities to acknowledge teams or consortia of academics for their joint work. This is in recognition of the fact that it takes diversity and the interplay of talents and skills to make for a good team. It will also be conducive to a

*“This is in recognition of the fact that it takes diversity and the interplay of talents and skills to make for a good team.”*

safer, more inclusive work culture that accommodates the complexity and interdisciplinary nature of current academic and social problems. Ultimately, we are looking for a greater balance between encouraging cooperation within and across domains and disciplines on the one hand, and a stronger disciplinary basis

on the other hand. This does not mean that there is no room left for monodisciplinary studies and careers. On the contrary: a strong disciplinary basis is a condition for meaningful translation across the boundaries of disciplines. The key word is diversification: there is room and a need for a greater variety of talents within the academy.

### *Focus on quality*

The assessment of academics will see a reduced emphasis on quantitative results (such as number of publications) and a greater emphasis on quality, content, scientific integrity, creativity, contribution to science, academia and/or society, and acknowledgement of the academic's specific profile and domain(s) in which the academic is active. We expect that this will lead to the diversification and vitalisation of career paths as well as reducing the perceived workload.

### *Stimulating open science*

More room for open science is an issue that needs to be addressed specifically. This new approach to science and academia gives others, in addition to the academics themselves, the opportunity to cooperate on, contribute to and make use of the academic process. This means, for example, that academics share the results of their research more broadly with society, that they make research results more accessible and that they can involve society in the research (such as through citizen science). Open science is bound up inextricably with the modernisation of the system of recognition and rewards. It requires time and attention from academics that cannot be automatically translated as traditional academic output such as publications, but which can have a significant impact on society, science and academia (such as sharing research data).

### *Encouraging academic leadership*

Attention will be paid to good academic leadership on all levels, from young academics to established ones. This applies not only to academic leaders, such as study programme coordinators, heads of department and deans, but also to starting academics who supervise teams of students and doctoral candidates.

## > Specific proposals

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With this position paper, we as Dutch public knowledge institutions and research funders (VSNU, FNU, KNAW, NWO and ZonMw) declare that there is broad support for the continued introduction of the above-mentioned changes. We will go forward together and ensure that there is a uniform approach.

We will take action along the following two lines:

### *Redesigning academic career paths*

We will create greater diversity in career paths for academic staff, thus doing justice to individual academics' strengths and ambitions in one or more key areas (education, research, impact, leadership and – in university medical centres – patient care). Our guiding principle here is always the interrelatedness of education and research; these two key areas deserve to be accommodated within each profile. It will also become possible to adapt one's profile in the course of one's career. The (selected and agreed) profile is central to the assessment of academics.

a. In 2020, the VSNU will develop a national framework for assessment, development and promotion. The association will implement the principles of the new recognition and rewards framework in a recalibrated University Job Classification System (UFO), which is to enter into force in 2021.

*“The (selected and agreed) profile is central to the assessment of academics.”*

b. Every university, as well as the KNAW and NWO in their capacity as research organisations, will appoint an institution-wide committee chaired by an academic at the professorial level with the aim of fomenting the discussion about the new recognition and rewards system within the institution. The chair will create support for the system and develop initiatives in a manner suited to the institution in question and that involves the various target groups in the process.

c. Each university, university medical centre and research institute will translate this national framework into institution-specific assessment criteria and narratives for all key areas and team achievements.

d. Universities, university medical centres and research institutes will set up programmes aimed at stimulating and supervising academics in their career.

e. Universities and university medical centres will develop courses on academic leadership aimed at the university's key areas: education, research, impact and (in university medical centres) patient care. As part of this, we will be supporting and training academics to bring about the envisaged culture change.

f. Universities and university medical centres will ensure that the criteria that (within disciplines or universities) apply to doctoral programmes fit the assessment of research quality, thus meeting the DORA principles. Conditions for being allowed to defend one's thesis must not just consist of purely quantitative indicators, such as number of publications or the journal impact factor of the journal in which one has published.

g. In the coming time, we as the VSNU, NFW, KNAW, NWO and ZonMw will take further steps towards international coordination and harmonisation and fomenting the international debate around the recognition and rewards of academics. We will do this, for instance, within the European University Association and Science Europe and together with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science aimed at the European Commission (Horizon Europe).

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### Quality assessment of research and research proposals

The intended modernisation with regard to recognising and rewarding academics is now underway. For instance, the VSNU, KNAW, NWO and ZonMw <sup>2</sup> have signed DORA, joining many research-implementing and research-funding organisations around the world in a commitment to assessing research and research proposals differently. An important principle in this drive is that research should be assessed for content and quality, not just for quantity or for the journal it was published in.

h. NWO and ZonMw will create an array of funding instruments, with clearly differentiating criteria to take account of a more diverse group of researchers. As different answers are possible to the question of what talent is, as well as to the question of what constitutes 'good' research, we will be discussing these questions with academics.

i. In order to speed up the desired culture change in acknowledgement and appreciation, we at NWO and ZonMw will make a concerted effort at providing training and instruction to our assessment committees. We will also structure our committees in such a way as to recognise and embrace diversity in research that has an impact.

j. The various funding instruments of NWO and ZonMw will place a greater emphasis on team science and on cross-disciplinary collaboration. This will be set down in specific criteria for the assessment of consortia. In addition, NWO will enquire into the desirability of a broader implementation of the pilot in the open competition of the Exact and Natural Science domain (ENW), which does not assess the individual academic's quality, but instead looks at whether the expertise of the researcher(s) involved is appropriate for the formulated research question. Academics will not be asked for their curriculum vitae.

k. NWO and ZonMw are working on the further implementation of DORA in their procedures and criteria. Among other things, this means that bibliometric publication indicators (h-index, journal impact factor) will no longer be requested and that the inclusion of research output on curricula vitae and application forms will take on a more narrative character. Additionally, academics may be asked for a 'top 10' of impactful outputs rather than a complete list of publications. This will create equal opportunities for people who, as described above, have had a dynamic career path. More pilots have since been started up that have taken these changes on board.

l. The Standard Evaluation Protocol (SEP), used to evaluate research units, will be revised. The new SEP (2021-2027), which we as the VSNU, NWO and the KNAW will publish in 2020, will incorporate the principles of the new recognition and rewards framework. With this, we will be implementing the DORA principles for the assessment of research quality at the level of a research group. There will also be a greater emphasis on societal impact, open science, diversity and talent policy.

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<sup>2</sup> The NFW will sign the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) in 2019.

