



Illuster

March 2020

EDUCATION

Passing on knowledge

A silent revolution in education

**Addressing
segregation in the
education sector**

**A lateral career path
to the classroom**

**Also
available
online at
[uu.nl/en/
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FOREWORD

Just like in the movies?

Lecturers are real-life heroes. We all know that. They’re the people we entrust our children to. Teachers shape our personal development and teach us valuable knowledge, insights and skills.

This truth is confirmed by numerous Hollywood movies. Socially-engaged dramas about inspirational teachers even form a sub-genre in cinematic history: from classics like *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* (1939) and *To Sir, With Love* (1967) to *Dead Poets Society* (1989) and *Dangerous Minds* (1995). These films all tell the story of a charismatic teacher who manages to inspire a group of young people to discover their hidden talents, and always end in scenes that are both moving and inspiring.

Still, what are these Hollywood movies actually telling us about education? As it turns out, that one inspiring teacher is always the exception to the rule. The education system — all the way from kindergarten (*Kindergarten Cop*) to university (*Mona Lisa Smile*) — is bureaucratic, inefficient and downright mind-numbing. School administrators are rigid and conservative, fellow teachers are dull and unmotivated. In other words: the heroic teacher that does manage to reach his or her students doesn’t really belong in the system.

Ironically, films about inspirational teachers depict educational quality as a rare exception: a highly individual talent that inevitably clashes with the true nature of educational institutions. This perpetuates the illusion that good education is a 100-metre dash rather than a relay race: a one-man show rather than a team sport. While this illusion may seem appealing on the surface, it also reinforces the most dangerous prejudices about educational quality. This edition of *Illuster* is all about education. Enjoy the read!



Dr Dan Hassler-Forest

Assistant Professor of Media and Cultural Studies



28 Secondary school recommendations

The teacher or the centralised final test?

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YOUTH SURVEY

Idealists come out of the closet

“Ask young people whether they’re worried about issues like climate change, and they’ll enthusiastically agree. They’re protesting and developing new forms of activism inspired by leaders such as Greta Thunberg. Still, changing their own behaviour often proves a little more difficult. For example, just try getting an adolescent to get out of the shower.” Professor of Developmental Psychology Sander Thomaes refers to young people as *closet idealists*: idealists that haven’t quite come out yet. So how does that work, exactly? Thomaes: “Adolescents want to be taken seriously and earn the approval of their peers. Under those circumstances, you can see why ideals on building a better world wouldn’t exactly be their top priority. Nevertheless, that’s not to say they don’t hold those ideals. We’re trying to find out whether you could frame the issue of climate change as something that actually raises your status amongst friends. Our children’s ideals could then drive the behavioural shift we need so urgently in today’s rapidly changing world.”

Utrecht University is working to find answers to this and other key issues facing future generations as a part of its Dynamics of Youth strategic theme. Visit uu.nl/doy

text Floor Peeters
image Hollandse Hoogte

Short



FUNDING THE FUTURE 2020

“Eternally grateful for this opportunity”

Zeynep Naz Inansal had the opportunity to study in Utrecht on a Utrecht Excellence Scholarship, thanks to the support of Friends and donors of the Utrecht University Fund. The Utrecht University Fund raises money for four key goals as a part of its annual ‘Funding the Future’ campaign:

- Inclusion: offering newcomers the opportunity to study in Utrecht
- Making our oceans plastic-free
- Developing a vaccine to save the Asian elephant
- Scholarships for students that wouldn’t have the opportunity to study without them

Support students like Zeynep.
Visit uu.nl/fundingthefuture to find out more about the campaign or make a donation.

See page 18 to find out more about the UU scholarship programme and learn why scholarships are becoming increasingly important.



THE TEACHER SHORTAGE

Become a teacher!

You can become a teacher at any point in your life. In an effort to reduce the current teacher shortage, Utrecht University is currently easing restrictions on lateral entry into its postgraduate programmes. This will make it easier for students to combine their studies, work and private lives. Ever think you might enjoy contributing to society and working with young people? If you have studied a secondary school subject and have academic-level work experience, you may be qualified to become a secondary school teacher within as little as one year through our Education for Professionals programme.

Visit uu.nl/professionals/programmas/word-leraar-in-het-voortgezet-onderwijs (in Dutch) to find out more about the options.



MOOC'S

Online academic courses

MOOC stands for Massive Open Online Course. Utrecht University offers a growing number of these free online courses, which are open to all. There are MOOCs on subjects such as child development, human rights or the global food problem.

To take part, go to uu.nl/en/education/massive-open-online-courses

GEQUOTE

“It’s important for children to see that studying at a university is within everyone’s reach”



Roshi Flippo

is a student and buddy at Debut; a programme that connects students to pupils from families where no one has ever gone to university.

CARTOON

Argibald



AT THE START OF EVERY SEMESTER, THE PROFESSOR SHOWED US THE PRIMAL DRIVE THAT URGED HIM TO BECOME A BIOLOGY TEACHER.

ARGIBALD



INNOVATION

Launch of first virtual classroom

The lecturer can interact with up to 36 students from the studio. It’s as if they’re all sitting in the front row. That pretty much sums up the new *virtual classroom* launched at Utrecht University this November. The new teaching tool will make it easier to provide education beyond the confines of Utrecht University, for example through collaborations with international universities. The virtual classroom allows researchers to organise teleconferences and cut down on air travel. In addition to contributing to educational innovation, the virtual classroom is also helping us reduce our CO₂ footprint.

For more information on the virtual classroom, visit teachinglearninglab.nl/en/virtual-classroom



PRACTICING

Fluffy cat helps Veterinary Medicine students

A quick scratch or unexpected movement: cats are more unpredictable than dogs, and also visit the veterinary clinic more often. So how do you teach Veterinary Medicine students to cope with unpredictable feline behaviour? The answer: with a *fluffy cat*. The Faculty of Veterinary Medicine has been using three of the training manikins since February, allowing students to practise as much as they want without the need for any real training cats. They can move the manikin’s head, look inside its mouth, take its pulse and practise their fixation skills. Real cats find all these procedures to be stressful. The dummy cat also makes it easier for lecturers to check whether students are applying the right skills.



RESEARCH

Flipped classrooms?

As a UU alumnus, you probably used to go to lectures first, and work on the assignments at home afterwards. The *flipping the classroom* method basically turns this principle on its head. Students start by watching an online instruction video at home, and subsequently do assignments in a teaching area. Educational Scientist David van Alten assessed the method’s effectiveness. His conclusion? The method can improve students’ learning performance somewhat, providing it isn’t used to replace actual teaching hours: “The classroom, that’s where it all happens. That’s where you want students to apply what they’ve learnt under the watchful eye of the lecturer.”



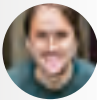
WINNER

Alumnus composes new university song

At the previous Anniversary Day on 26 March, Rector Magnificus Henk Kummeling challenged students, staff and alumni to write a new song for our academic ceremonies. While some immediately embraced the idea of a revamped song, others were a bit more sceptical. The jury received over thirty — extremely varied — entries. The song by Theatre, Film and Television Studies alumnus (2014) Rosa Falkenburg was unanimously selected. Rosa will be performing the song during our Anniversary Day on 26 March 2020.

After 26 March, the lyrics and music will also be made available through uu.nl/university-song

Utrecht University is proud of its graduates, and alumni are an important part of Utrecht University’s academic community. But where do they all end up? In this section, Illuster presents some major appointments from the last six months.



Willem Roskam
MA in Religious Studies (2011) and MA in Governance (2010) has been appointed pastor of the Dom Church in Utrecht.



Ingrid de Swart
MA in Dutch Language and Culture (1993) has been appointed member of the Executive Board at a.s.r.



Marcel Veenhuizen
MA in Interdisciplinary Social Sciences (1990) has been named Head of commerce at Zoover and Weeronline.



Leoniek Wijngaards-de Meij
MA in Psychology (1998) has been named professor of Data use for innovation in Higher Education at Utrecht University. Wijngaard-de Meij has also taken up a new position as vice-dean at the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences.



Victor Everhardt
MA in Dutch Law and History (1994) has been appointed alderman for Finance and Economic Affairs in Amsterdam. Everhardt previously served as alderman for Public Health in Utrecht.



Anja Mutsaers
MA in Dutch Law (1994) has been appointed Practice Head and member of the Board of Directors at De Brauw Blackstone Westbroek law firm.



Marjolein Boer-Siero
MA in International Relations (1993) has been appointed head of corporate communications at Heijmans.



Bertine Lahuis
Doctor of Medicine (1994) and PhD in Medicine (2008) has been appointed chair of the Board of Directors at Radboud UMC.



Carl Verheijen
Doctor of Medicine (2003) has been appointed chef de mission for the 2022 Winter Olympics.



Henk Korvinus
MA in Dutch Law (1980) has been appointed inspector general of Justice and Security at the Ministry of Justice and Security.



Nathanja van Dijk
MA in Language and Cultural Studies (2007) has been appointed director of the Kunsthall in Rotterdam.



Louise van Nispen
MA in Dutch Law (2004) has been appointed CEO of Gaming at Talpa Nederland.



Esther Peters
MA in Dutch Law (1996) has been appointed director of Stichting Space Campus Noordwijk.



Marjan Vermeulen
MA in Educational Science (1998) has been appointed Professor by special appointment of Professional Learning Networks (educational development through learning networks) at the Open University.



Mariëtte Swart
MA in Dutch Law (2005) has been appointed member of the Board of Directors at Adyen.

Want to be ‘famous’?

Email us your new position at alumni@uu.nl. Who knows? You could see yourself in the next edition of Illuster, or be named Alumnus of the Month. Our new Alumnus of the Month is announced on LinkedIn (Utrecht University), Facebook (Alumni Universiteit Utrecht) and Instagram and Twitter (@AlumniUU).

BURSTING THE BUBBLE

How do we address the issue of segregation in the education sector?

Elsemiek Schepers and **Steijn van der Craats** grew up in vastly different worlds. However, the two have developed a common passion since their studies in Utrecht: a fascination with diversity and the drive to make the Netherlands a more harmonious place. In 2019, the young alumni conducted a study on segregation in primary and secondary schools with support from the Micha de Winter Fellowship.

text **Hanneke Olivier**
image **Bas van Hattum**

Double interview



Steijn van der Craats (1993) completed primary education teacher-training college followed by a Master's in Youth, Education and Society at Utrecht University. He also worked as a teacher and coordinator at IMC Weekendschool, a project aimed at linking children from under-privileged neighbourhoods to professionals from various fields. He currently works as an independent primary school teacher and social educator.



Elsemiek Schepers (1994) attended the Academic Teacher Training Institute for Primary Education at Utrecht University and subsequently completed a Master's Educational Sciences at the Radboud University in Nijmegen and a Master's in Youth, Education and Society at Utrecht University. She taught pupils in the penultimate year of primary school and currently works as a social safety consultant at *Stichting School en Veiligheid*.

Elsemiek grew up in a village in Twente, where diversity wasn't exactly the norm. Almost all her classmates looked alike. Steijn grew up in very different circumstances. His school in Almere was a melting pot; in the fifth year, he was one of three children of native Dutch heritage.

"I suppose I was living in a bubble", Elsemiek looks back. "At the time, it all seemed very normal to me: 'this is what the world looks like, and everyone goes to a school like mine'." By the time I started studying at the Academic Teacher Training Institute for Primary Education and renting a student room in the Overvecht area, I realised the world wasn't as I'd imagined. I realised some people had a negative image of the neighbourhood I liked so much, and I started wondering why."

Steijn, on the other hand, went through almost the opposite experience. "I'd only experienced a mixed school, and never really gave it much thought. After my first week at the teacher training programme for primary education, I told my mum: Everyone has blonde hair and blue eyes here. How is that even possible? This is supposed to be a city!"

The two students conducted work placements at primary schools with very different populations, further sparking their interest in educational segregation.

Steijn: "I did my work placement in a building complex with three schools. One was mainly made up of children with a migrant background, one mainly consisted of native Dutch children, and the other had a mixed population. I thought to myself: if children literally enter this building through the same door only to sit in segregated classes and grow up in different

worlds, we're really doing something wrong here. I just couldn't accept that. The experience motivated me to take a pre-Master's in Youth, Education and Society after finishing primary education teacher-training college."

Elsemiek: "My work placements — and teaching experiences after graduation — also confirmed just how much children actually grow up inside their own bubble. If you don't know each other and form ideas about an entire group, it can easily lead to polarisation and conflict. Especially if you learn to see the other as inferior to your own group."

"There have been lots of studies on the causes and effects of educational segregation, but we haven't really done much research on how to solve the problem", explains emeritus professor of Youth, Education and Society **Micha de Winter**. "Elsemiek and Steijn tried to find ways of getting pupils from different schools and their parents to interact and work together despite the current segregation issues. While this won't solve the underlying segregation problem, it's incredibly important that pupils from different layers of society meet and start taking a real interest in each other."

Steijn: Two of the schools we studied are located in neighbouring districts. However, they couldn't be more different in terms ►

» of the pupils’ socio-economic, cultural and religious backgrounds. The schools have set up an exchange programme in which children are paired from kindergarten age and take lessons together.”

Elsemiek: “It started a few years ago with a penpal programme and the occasional invitation to visit each other’s schools. We’ve since expanded the exchange programme, and pupils in the final year of primary school now take PE classes and philosophy lessons together. We also attended those classes, and asked pupils how they felt about the exchange in general, the lessons, and whether they’d gotten to know each other yet. We asked the teachers to share their reasons for setting up the exchange, and explain whether they felt it was achieving the desired results.”

Steijn: The pupils at one school told us the aim was to get to know children from other cultures. Pupils at the other school said the aim of the programme was to “get to know other children”. That might seem like a subtle difference, but ambiguity tends to result in different expectations.”



Elsemiek: “I studied the role of parents at those same schools as part of my Master’s thesis. I also found some subtle differences when it came to their priorities. Parents from one neighbourhood felt the exchange would help create a greater sense of equality. Parents from the other neighbourhood, on the other hand, felt it was important to help the other group. If you view the exchange programme as some sort of charity, there’s no room for the sense of equality you’ll need to succeed.”

Steijn: “It’s a really complex problem and we don’t have a ready-made solution. However, we do know you’ll have to manage the process actively and facilitate the exchange. If lecturers simply stand by and let it all happen, the groups won’t mix. As it turned out, the children hadn’t really learned much about one other except their names. We saw the same thing at the secondary schools we studied. We provided feedback at various points in the process, which allowed them to keep optimising the exchange.”

Elsemiek: “Some teachers were afraid they might actually be encouraging an ‘us/them’ mentality, or reinforcing or even cultivating prejudices amongst the children. ‘We just want to let sleeping dogs lie’, they told us. They wanted to keep things light, avoid any clashes and focus on the similarities. Obviously, it’s always good to underline the things you have in common. However, if you avoid children’s comments and questions for fear of actual debate, you’re running a serious risk. We recommended that they discuss differences between the groups, so they could then effectively counter any prejudiced assumptions.”

Steijn: “You need to figure out what works best as you go along. The schools have now started offering theatre classes as an alternative to philosophy in order to encourage positive interactions and eliminate prejudices. We strongly recommended that they chose themes reflecting the children’s own experiences and gave the children a say in that process.”

Elsemiek: “Make sure children are enthusiastic so that they actually want to take lessons with pupils from the other school. Let them ask critical questions. That’s always going to be challenging, but that doesn’t mean it should be avoided. Adults have a tendency to underestimate children. It’s always great to see that they’re a lot wiser than we give them credit for.”

Steijn: “We encourage exchanges, but there are lots of aspects to keep in mind. If you don’t think things through thoroughly and effectively supervise the process, you run the risk of making things worse rather than better. I’m currently working as a substitute teacher for a mixed group of 11-year olds, so I get to see how things work out on the ground. I’d love to build a bridge between theory and practice. It’s all very well doing research and developing policies from our ivory towers: you don’t know how things really work or what’s actually feasible if you haven’t worked in a classroom.”

Micha de Winter has seen educational and social segregation worsen over time. “It’s an enormous blind spot in terms of our politics and education policies, and we need to prioritise this problem immediately. If we don’t, we’re putting our social cohesion — which is already vulnerable these days — at risk.” Still, De Winter remains optimistic. “Thankfully, many people in the education field do acknowledge the problem and want to address it. It gives me hope to see young academics like Elsemiek and Steijn apply their talents to address this major social problem with such enthusiasm and commitment.” ◀

“If lecturers simply stand by and let it all happen, the groups won’t mix”



Educational issues

The Youth, Education and Society fellowship was established on the occasion of Micha de Winter’s departure as Distinguished Professor of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences, and focuses on strengthening the educational environment. The fellowship seeks to address these educational challenges from various disciplinary perspectives against the backdrop of broader social issues, such as the need for greater social inclusion, participation and cultural diversity, and the fight against segregation as championed by Steijn and Elsemiek. The fellowship is accessible to a broad group of UU graduates in related fields. Elsemiek and Steijn will be followed by three other fellows.

Utrecht University also offers various Master’s programmes on educational issues, such as the pre-Master’s and Master’s in Youth, Education and Society.

Want to learn more about our programmes on educational issues? Visit uu.nl/en/organisation/faculty-of-social-and-behavioural-sciences/education/masters-programmes



Different degree ...

Marjan Osinga (42)

Degree programme: Dutch Law

Job: Teacher in group 6 (9–10 age group), De Spreng Child Centre (Hoevelaken)

“I love how honest and pure children are. They’re so proud when they get that little lightbulb moment after you’ve explained something. As a teacher, I also enjoy being part of their early development and making a real difference. On the other hand, it’s also a difficult job with lots of responsibilities. Children are their parents’ most valued possession, and I’m responsible for taking care of them all week. Thankfully, I already have a university degree and a former career in recruitment, so I don’t get flustered easily. That’s the added value of people who start a career in education later in life: we have a wealth of life experience. Although I’d always had this vague dream of becoming a teacher, I didn’t take the leap until I travelled to Argentina to learn Spanish. As I watched our teacher at work in the classroom, I suddenly realised that’s what I wanted to do. I enrolled at primary education teacher-training college a few months later, and I’ve been teaching for five years now.”

Jenke van Middelkoop (45)

Degree programme: Psychology and media psychology

Job: Teacher in group 4 (7–8 age group) at St. Dominicus school (Utrecht)

“Explaining something to children for the very first time is a really special experience. You always hope that knowledge will be of use to them for the rest of their lives. In fact, I think that’s what people who enter the education sector from other professions are good at. I have a broad base of knowledge thanks to my Psychology degree and work experience in the media. It allows me to teach different subjects, share all sorts of anecdotes or even teach the odd psychology class. Interacting with children is really refreshing. They’re really curious and ask me all sorts of questions. That’s ideal in my case, because I’ve always loved to tell stories. I also got to communicate a lot at my previous job at a radio station, where I gave training sessions. I lost my job during a reorganisation, and the redundancy scheme meant I had enough time and money to do a teacher training programme for primary education. It all worked out in the end, in other words. These days, I teach the fourth year at a primary school, and I wouldn’t change it for the world. I hope lateral entrants like me can help make education more appealing, and encourage others to start a teaching career.”

... same career

text Sabine de Lucht
image Ivar Pel



1983

Studied Philosophy-Ethics in Utrecht, and took a Minor in Chinese in Leiden

1986

Appointed member of the University Council



1990

Contributed to establishment of the Netherlands School of Public and Occupational Health

1992

Manager at Utrecht University Centre for Bio-Ethics and Health Law



2001

Consultant to Advisory Council for Science, Technology and Innovation (AWTI)

2008

Director of science policy at the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and publication of book 'Fietsen met Nietzsche'.

2012

Head of Academic Affairs at the University of Amsterdam

2016

Deputy director and subsequently director of the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU), and publication of book 'Wat kan mij gebeuren?'

“University, make sure to safeguard your academic identity”

“I suppose I’ve been looking for an answer to the question ‘What are universities for?’ throughout my career. My work has always revolved around science and innovation policy.” Babs van den Bergh, currently serving as director of the VSNU academic umbrella organisation, certainly boasts an impressive career.

Over the past few years, educational innovations have mainly centred on greater impact. “The sorts of people who work at universities are ideally positioned to identify social problems and potential solutions”, Van den Bergh explains. “That ranges from issues such as climate, health, economics and integration, all of which require input from the various academic disciplines: arts and humanities and social and behavioural sciences as well as science and medicine.”

There tends to be a tension between scientific insights and economic gain. “Just take an issue like prevention”, Van den Bergh illustrates. “There’s obviously great potential for social and health benefits, and considerable

cost-savings over time. However, there generally isn’t much scope for immediate profits, so businesses are reluctant to take on the issue. There’s a lot of pressure to come up with quick and easy solutions, but that’s not what universities are about.” Van den Bergh certainly hopes things stay that way. “Universities need to safeguard their academic identity, and remain inquisitive, theoretical, independent and critical. Google could never emulate those qualities.”

The VSNU also faces obstacles of a more internal nature. “The fourteen members of our association all have their own specific interests and responsibilities. In fact: they are even encouraged to compete in certain areas. That makes it almost impossible to develop initiatives like a Universitas Neerlandica, despite the desirability of ‘a joint master plan’. However, we are seeing the emergence of specific clusters in spite of these differences between the universities. A good case in point would be Utrecht University’s alliance with Eindhoven and Wageningen. We are even seeing the rise of European consortia, offering students the opportunity to travel as a part of their studies.”

So, is students’ physical attendance still important? After all, *online learning facilities* are becoming an increasingly crucial part of *lifelong learning*. If we take this development to its logical conclusion, one might even wonder: is there still a future for universities? “The Bachelor’s phase in particular will continue to sustain universities”, Van den Bergh expects.

“Young people in the 18–25 age group still want to be part of an academic community. The situation is a bit more diffuse when it comes to Master’s. Students tend to shop around a bit more and check out different institutions, especially since ‘Bologna’. Online learning in the form of MOOCs (free online courses, ed.) or other formats offers an ideal solution for technical and IT-related degree programmes. VSNU will definitely be encouraging this diverse range of options.”

“I don’t envy the current wave of students”

Van den Bergh looks back on her student days with a sense of gratitude. “I did a great degree programme that’s really given me a lot. I spent a lot of time working on texts and being politically active — in the University Council, for example — and they gave me all the time I needed. I must say I don’t envy the current wave of students. To be honest, though, I never felt any sort of unique bond with Utrecht. I did feel connected to the academic world as a whole: even then, I felt I was part of a large, international and somewhat amorphous academic community of inquisitive brainy people.” ◀

For a longer version of this interview, see uu.nl/en/organisation/illustrer



Babs van den Bergh (1964)

studied Philosophy in Utrecht, specialising in Ethics, and subsequently obtained a Master’s in Knowledge Management at TIAS. Having filled various positions at Utrecht University, the Advisory Council for Science, Technology and Innovation, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and University of Amsterdam, she was appointed director of the VSNU Association of Universities in the Netherlands in 2017. Van den Bergh published *Fietsen met Nietzsche*, a collection of philosophical essays on travel, in 2007. 2016 saw the publication of *Wat kan mij gebeuren?*, a book on the illness and death of her husband, philosopher and ‘Philosopher of the Netherlands’ René Gude.

text
Armand Heijnen
image
Robin Alysha Clemens

Made possible

Equal opportunities?

text Floor Peeters
image Maarten Nauw

The Utrecht University Fund substantially contributes to student scholarships each year thanks to generous donations from our alumni, staff and students. Illuster decided to explore the world of scholarships. Why are scholarships so important? Which types of scholarships are there? And what does it actually cost to study at a university?



"With everything I've learned during my studies, I hope to be able to make a big contribution to society's interests. I'm incredibly grateful to the university for this opportunity."

Susan Verstegen was awarded a Bright Minds Fellowship.

The days of endless studying, which some of our older readers may still recall, are long gone. Concerns over the accessibility of higher education have only worsened since the basic student grant was abolished in 2015. What's more, we are receiving worrying signals about unequal opportunities and social divides in the education sector. Utrecht University aims to offer equal opportunities to everyone with the required level of talent and motivation. Amongst other initiatives, we do so by providing scholarships.

How much does it cost to study?

As a rule of thumb, students from the EU/EEA, including the Netherlands, pay the legally required tuition fee of 2083 euros per academic year. Students from

non-EU/EEA countries pay what is known as the institutional fee, an amount set by the universities. This fee will vary depending on both the university and degree programme. This academic year, the institutional fee for degree programmes at Utrecht University is set at between 8,732 and 22,100 euros. Obviously, students also have other expenses such as learning resources and living expenses. By way of indication: Nibud, the National Institute for Family Finance Information calculated the total cost of a child living away from home and studying at a higher education institution at 1,261 euros per month in 2017.

Scholarships

Our university offers various scholarship programmes for students seeking to take a Bachelor's or Master's, of which the Utrecht Excellence Scholarship, Bright Minds Fellowship and Holland Scholarship are the largest. Each year, Utrecht University provides scholarships to between 40 and 50 new students. This is far less than the actual number of applications. Utrecht University received a total of 1,270 scholarship applications in 2019.

The size of these scholarships varies, depending on both the programme and specific variables within each programme.

A Holland Scholarship is set at 5,000, 10,000 or 15,000 euros per academic year. A Utrecht Excellence Scholarship can amount to the full tuition fee plus 11,000 euros for living expenses. Students enrolled in a multi-year programme are generally awarded scholarships for the full duration of their programme. Each programme applies a set of fixed scholarship allocation procedures.

However, students can also apply for financial support from other sources. For example, some foreign governments offer scholarships for students seeking to study abroad. Various funds — both affiliated with the Utrecht University Fund and independently-operated — also offer financial support for specific projects or target groups. One of many examples in this area would be the Minderhoud Fonds operated by UVSV student society, which provides scholarships to UVSV members seeking to undertake a prestigious study or work placement project.

Diversity

Amongst other reasons, the UU is committed to scholarships because they help ensure diverse student groups. Assistant Professor of Psychology Haza Rahim offers counselling to Master's students from a wide range of countries. She views diversity as the key to successful lessons, and offers the following example: "A working group was looking for effective ways to identify depression. One of the students came from Greece and had spent years living in Bolivia. As he went through the

questionnaire, he realised Bolivian women would never score high on the relevant depression indicators: the symptoms we associate with depression here in the Netherlands, such as social isolation, simply aren't relevant in Bolivian society. He explained this to the working group, and got everyone's attention. In fact, students were still discussing his comments hours later that afternoon. In other words: the insight really stuck in their minds!"

Dutch students are also aware that studying abroad offers great potential benefits. They can apply for a supplementary grant for international studies from the Erasmus Programme or one of the many available equity funds. For example, UU students can apply to the Yvoor Fonds. The Utrecht University Fund also offers student grants for extracurricular activities such as summer courses, visits to international conferences and work placements abroad.

Donations are vital

Philanthropic donations play a crucial role in enabling scholarship programmes. This is due to the fact that universities are legally prohibited from funding scholarships with government grant money. Despite this restriction, Utrecht University is able to offer scholarships thanks to a specific exception (profiling scheme) and substantial contributions from alumni and the Friends of the Utrecht University Fund. This allows us to help more young people achieve their dreams on an annual basis. «

**Target:
10 scholar-
ships**

Help us fund scholarship programmes

The Utrecht University Fund needs your help in funding the academic scholarship programme. We kindly ask that you contribute as part of our four annual Funding the Future donation targets. Donations from our alumni

allow hundreds of students from every layer of society to apply for a scholarship. Support us!

See uu.nl/fundingthefuture for details, or donate now:



"New experiences in other cultures really contribute to your personal growth. I'm very grateful for my time in Utrecht, and want to make sure others also have the opportunity to study abroad."

Anton Nguyen received a Utrecht Excellence Scholarship and currently donates to the Utrecht University Fund.



"The Utrecht Excellence Scholarship opened doors that definitely would have stayed closed otherwise. The life I live today would have been impossible without UES. In addition to an even greater passion for science, the scholarship has brought me knowledge, friends, a community and a career."

My Anh Truong was awarded a Utrecht Excellence Scholarship

Passing on knowledge

A silent revolution in education

Striking teachers and teacher shortages raise the question: does our society really appreciate education as much as it should? This question is also extremely relevant at the university. The pathway to a professorship used to be paved with research publications and successful grant applications. Teaching was something you did on the side, that has all changed. Slowly but surely, the academic world is shifting its focus to education, and Utrecht University has been at the vanguard of this process. After all, our students are our most important contribution to a better world. Right? As it turns out, the struggle is still far from over. "When I was appointed *senior fellow*, I remember my colleagues telling me: 'Make sure you don't get boxed in by that teaching profile'. Well actually, I want to be known for teaching."

text Maarten Post image Ed van Rijswijk en Maartje Kuperus

Cover story

Human Geography and Planning lecturer Gery Nijenhuis was nominated for the title of Lecturer of the Year by students such as Koen van Houten. Nijenhuis is one of four nominees. Will she become the successor to Niels Bovenschen, whom we interviewed for this article? The results were yet to be announced at the time of publication. Check uu.nl/en/education/top-lecturers-and-top-students/teacher-awards to find out whether she earned the prestigious title.





“Teaching is both challenging and extremely rewarding”

You can hear a pin drop in the lecture room. Third-year Biomedical Sciences students are hanging on Wouter’s every word. Ten years ago, Wouter was a student himself. One day, he had a heart attack during hockey practice. Thankfully, medics managed to reanimate him. He was diagnosed with PLN, a hereditary heart muscle disease. He currently has a ventricular assist device, a mechanical pump that supports the function of his left ventricle, and is on the waiting list for a donor heart.

Wouter’s story makes a deep impression on the students. That’s exactly the point, explains lecturer Niels Bovenschen, who invited Wouter to speak today. “I get my students to work on actual problems facing real people. The students get all the available information on the patient, and split up into groups to develop research proposals. The best proposal is then carried out by fellow students in the lab as part of a subsequent course. The results are remarkable. Students become highly motivated, and the participating doctors and researchers are extremely impressed by the ideas they come up with.”

Cross pollination

As Bovenschen explains, this type of *challenge-based education* yields a perfect cross-pollination of socially-relevant education and research. “We’re doing

innovative research and our students are adding a fresh perspective. It’s good for patients, and it’s improving our education.” Bovenschen can back up the latter statement with facts: he assesses the didactic effects of his teaching methods. “I’m a *senior fellow*”, he explains. It’s a specific type of *career-track* that prepares you for a professorship with a focus on teaching.

Utrecht University is the first institution to introduce senior fellowships. In concrete terms, this means Bovenschen has two days a week to focus on educational innovations and didactics. “It’s a wonderful opportunity. You get to focus your curiosity on education itself. I must say I was sceptical at first. I wasn’t quite sure this actually qualified as research. I’m a true believer now, though.” It certainly shows. Bovenschen published an article on his educational concept in *Nature Biotechnology*, and was named Utrecht University’s Lecturer of the Year in March 2019.

Balance

Utrecht University is a pioneer in the field of educational innovation. It was one of the first universities to significantly invest in its lecturers in the early nineteen nineties. And with good reason: the balance between education and research had become disrupted. Academic research had been



Lecturer Niels Bovenschen during a talk by former student Wouter on his hereditary heart muscle disease.

increasingly prioritised since the nineteen seventies, partly as a result of government policies. This development coincided with the massification of education. The ultimate result was poor student assessments, critical external education reviews and a group of dissatisfied lecturers. Time for change, in other words.

As a part of the effort to reverse these developments, UU became the first Dutch university to introduce a ‘Basic Teaching

Qualification’ and ‘Senior Teaching Qualification’ with quantifiable quality requirements in 1995. Up until that time, permanent appointments had only required a basic research qualification (PhD).

The university also introduced awards for outstanding lecturers, and 1999 saw the launch of the Centre of Excellence in University Teaching, a breeding ground for talented educators. In 2001,

the university seized upon the introduction of the Bachelor’s–Master’s model to develop its characteristic teaching model based around small-scale, personalised, empowering teaching methods. As of 2004, the university started offering professorships with a focus on teaching

“Lecturers retain ownership of their own education at all times”

rather than research. UU subsequently developed a platform enabling lecturers to exchange knowledge and experiences (TAUU) and an annual two-million euro grant programme for research on educational innovation. As of 2017, all knowledge and expertise developed for and by our lecturers has been incorporated in the Centre for Academic Teaching (CAT). Manon Kluijtmans, director of the CAT and vice-rector for education states: “We’re working to achieve a shift in our organisational culture so that teaching gets the recognition and appreciation it deserves. Under this new model, education will be supported and developed by our academics in close collaboration with students, colleagues from various disciplines, the professional field, support staff and educational experts. After all, teaching is a team sport.”

Willingness to change

“We shouldn’t be imposing educational reforms from the top down. That would only be counterproductive”, Mabelle Hernández explains. Hernández works as a programme manager at Educate-it, a programme that has been helping lecturers use IT tools and develop or adapt their existing education to *blended learning* formats since 2014. “We applied the knowledge developed by our colleagues at Organisational Studies. They recently conducted a study on lecturers’ willingness to change on behalf of Educate-it, which identified perceived autonomy as a key factor. Lecturers retain ownership of their own education at all times. And that works!”

“Educate-it applies the innovation model developed by Rogers. We initially focused on lecturers that simply love to innovate and need room to experiment. They were followed by the *early* and *late majority*. In their case, we focused on demonstrating that the model works, and — more »



“It’s a bit absurd that people feel the need to warn you a teaching profile might harm your career”

Just take the example of digital testing: five years ago, most lecturers hadn’t heard of the method and we were getting a lot of resistance. In the past year, over 60% of all tests were administered in digital format.” (also see page 25)

Proud
“I’m incredibly proud of the fact that our university is so dedicated to education”, Leoniek Wijngaards-de Meij enthuses, “that’s certainly not always the case.” Wijngaards-de Meij is a *senior fellow*, professor with a focus on teaching and Vice Dean of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences. Despite Utrecht University’s best efforts, she has noticed that education and research still aren’t always valued equally: “Although many of my colleagues were enthusiastic when I became a *senior fellow*, professors from various faculties also expressed their

importantly — is easy to use. Lecturers are mainly inspired by the experiences of their colleagues. Things are moving quickly now. doubts to me. They asked whether I was sure I was making the right choice. After all, they said, I was good enough to secure a professorship by sticking to the beaten path. I remember someone saying: ‘Congratulations, but make sure you don’t get boxed in by that teaching profile.’ Well actually, I want to be known for teaching.”
“We need to make sure research and education are genuinely equal and fully integrated. If we can do that, we’ll be truly advancing science and optimally preparing future generations for their role in society. Along with research, education forms the core of our academic identity. What’s more, effective teaching is both challenging and extremely rewarding. To be honest, it’s a bit absurd that people feel the need to warn you a teaching profile might harm your career. We need to work together to change those perceptions. That also ties in neatly with the national and international debate on acknowledgement and valuation within universities. I look forward to leading the vanguard with Utrecht University.”

EDUCATION FOR PROFESSIONALS

Back to university

 Els Vegter (1976) studied Law in Nijmegen and currently works as a Board Affairs manager at Rabobank. Over the course of her career, she came to discover that the law is just one side of the story. “I noticed there were gaps in my knowledge, and I wanted to address them while mastering the more ‘human’ side of the law.” She opted for the Master’s in Organisation, Culture and Management for Professionals at Utrecht University, and completed the programme in two years.

Els’ decision to study at Utrecht University was a conscious choice: “I wanted to stay sharp, and I was looking for a challenge.” She is glad she chose a genuinely challenging programme at university level: “people really want to raise their game.”

Utrecht University offers a broad range of education programmes for professionals. From one-day master classes to the two-year Master’s programmes Els enrolled in. “It was obviously challenging. The thesis was a lot of work and your work and home life need to make some room. Thankfully, the programme is really well-structured so you can schedule everything in advance.”

Visit uu.nl/en/professionals for more information on our full — and growing — range of programmes for professionals.

INNOVATION IN EDUCATION

European alliance

Utrecht University has formed an alliance with the University of Barcelona, Trinity College Dublin, the University of Montpellier and Eötvös Loránd University: CHARM-EU. The alliance will be focusing on *challenge-based* education, a teaching method that allows students to get to grips with concrete, challenging social issues.

Rector Magnificus Henk Kummeling: “The further innovation of our teaching model is one of our main ambitions. We want to offer our students broad, internationally-oriented education and prepare them for the labour market. The CHARM-EU alliance enables students to develop innovative and sustainable solutions to current issues. I look forward to making our education more flexible, accessible and inclusive in collaboration with our partners. After all, that’s what society needs.”

CHARM-EU will launch in September 2021, offering a Master’s degree programme centred around the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

EDUCATE-IT

Applying educational innovations

Redesigning your education in a *blended* format can be challenging. Utrecht University’s Educate-it educational innovation programme supports lecturers in this process. While educational change is generally a slow process, UU lecturers are independently innovating their education at a surprisingly rapid pace. Some 40% of lecturers now use knowledge clips. Their students study the theory at home and online in preparation for contact teaching hours, freeing up time for more in-depth discussions. This gives students a greater sense of involvement and allows for deeper learning. Another case in point would be



digital testing, which was still in its infancy five years ago. Students appreciate the new testing format. They are used to structuring their thoughts as they type, and can now do so during tests. Educate-it also offers benefits for lecturers, who can now use video and 3D animations and analyse the results with artificial intelligence before implementing their improvements in the test.

Want to know more? See educate-it.uu.nl/en

I really love education



Evi Salimans combined a Bachelor's in Language and Cultural Studies and French Language and Culture at Utrecht University with an educational minor, and obtained her Master's in Intercultural Communication last year. She now works at Edufax.

text Inge Oosterhoff
image Robin Alysha Clemens

Evi Salimans (25) used to want to be a teacher. Although she didn't end up in the classroom, she does work in the education sector. Salimans chose a degree programme that reflected her interest in language, culture and education. Her current job as Educational Mobility Consultant at Edfax offers a perfect mix of those three fields. She advises and supports expat families in the process of finding suitable education for their children.

So how did you come to choose your degree programme?
"Language and Cultural Studies reflected my broad interests, and offered a great opportunity to take French. Unfortunately, I couldn't do an educational minor, so I took a separate Bachelor's in French. The Master's in Intercultural Communication allowed me to explore my favourite Bachelor's subjects in greater depth."

Did you do anything else to prepare for this career?
"I taught Dutch at a primary school in French Guiana as a part of my Bachelor's work placement. It was my first ever teaching experience, and I discovered I loved education and wanted to make it a career."

How did you manage to build your current network?
"I don't consciously network, but I am active on LinkedIn. In fact, that's where I first came across Edfax. I always add any interesting people I meet so we can stay in touch."

So, how do you look back on your time at UU now that you've started your working life?
"It's only now I'm finding out how many valuable things I learned during my studies. My job involves preparing educational recommendations for families relocating to countries with a different language and culture. My knowledge of intercultural communication really comes in handy. My ability to think from different perspectives and research skills are obviously helpful as well."

So what's next?

"I'll be staying with Edfax as long as I enjoy the work and can keep growing. I'm not sure what my next career move will be, but it will probably be related to education in some way." ◀

A longer version of this interview will also be published on DUB, Utrecht University's independent news site. Visit dub.uu.nl/en for all the latest news and background information on our academic community.

"It's only now I'm finding out how many valuable things I learned during my studies"





Numbers do not lie!

Preparatory secondary vocational education, senior secondary general education or pre-university education? Pupils in the final year of primary school are issued a recommendation on the most suitable type of secondary school. The question is: who is better at predicting the appropriate level? The teacher or the centralised final test? Rens van de Schoot, alumnus and professor of Statistics for Small Data Sets, is currently investigating this question with fellow statistician and alumnus Kimberley Lek.

text **Sabine de Lucht**
illustration **Flow design**

The type of secondary school you attend will shape the rest of your life. In addition to your future studies, it will affect the people you meet and the type of job you end up doing. Unsurprisingly, the way in which secondary school recommendations are formulated has been a cause for concern. This has prompted years of debate: should more weight be given to the final test, or is the teacher's opinion more important? Proponents of teacher recommendations argue that the centralised final test is merely a snapshot, and takes no account of the child's home situation or learning style. Opponents argue teachers are not 'measuring instruments' and cannot be objective. They also suggest teachers are less capable of weighing information in order to arrive at the right decision.

In an effort to scientifically determine who knows best, Van de Schoot and Lek explored the Statistics Netherlands archives. As it turned out, the results were surprising. Van de Schoot: "We assessed the teacher recommendations



Rens van de Schoot (1979) is Professor of Statistics for Small Data Sets. Van de Schoot is a member of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences Young Academy, and Association for Multivariate Experimental Psychology (SMEP). Having completed a higher professional education-level programme in Medical Imaging and Radiotherapeutic Techniques, he studied Psychology and Development and Socialisation in Childhood and Adolescence at Utrecht University, obtaining both his Research Master's and PhD with a cum laude distinction.



Kimberley Lek (1990) obtained both a Research Master's in Educational Science and a Research Master's in Methodology and Statistics at Utrecht University, both with a cum laude distinction. She will obtain her doctorate on the basis of this study on 22 April 2020, and has since found employment at Cito.

and centralised final tests for 119,751 pupils that were in the final year of primary school during the 2014/2015 school year.

We compared them to the level at which these pupils had actually ended up three years later." As it turned out: "The centralised final test proved an accurate predictor for pupils at pre-university level, whereas the teacher recommendations were more accurate in the case of preparatory secondary vocational education pupils. Neither predictor is necessarily more accurate, in other words. We recommend combining the two recommendations."

Apples and oranges

This presented another challenge for the two researchers. "You can't simply combine the recommendations: it's apples and oranges. Practical experiences with test scores. Gut feelings about statistics. So how do you align the two predictors?" The primary education system ultimately provided a solution. "Primary school teachers teach at different levels. For example, one child might be better at languages, while the other can easily calculate 9×125 . Whether consciously or unconsciously, this leads to the formation of groups in each class. That gave us the idea for an app which prompts teachers to classify their pupils in levels as they would in the classroom (from low to high). Kimberly's app translates the teacher's insights into a statistical distribution. Test results can also be expressed in the same format, which allows you to consolidate the two distributions in a single recommendation."

Still, an app can never solve every problem, as Van de Schoot explains. "What if there's a huge gap between the teacher's recommendation and the test result? We're currently doing a follow-up study to address that problem." "For now, we've settled on a practical solution and are only offering recommendations for transitional classes", explains Van de Schoot. "If you allow the first — and even second years —

of secondary school to accommodate preparatory secondary vocational education/senior secondary general education and senior secondary general education/pre-university education pupils, late bloomers have a chance of ending up at the right level. Primary school pupils that did relatively well in their safe former environment and start falling behind once they transition to secondary school will also be able to cope more effectively." This recommendation reflects the joint plan presented by educational organisations including the Secondary Education Council, Netherlands Association of Senior Secondary Vocational Schools and Christian Teachers' Union on 21 January 2020. The plan stressed that children should be issued a definitive recommendation in the third year of secondary school rather than the final year of primary education. Van de Schoot: "The Netherlands classifies children at specific educational levels at an extremely early age. It's better to spread out the selection process over several years and make sure transferring is easy and doesn't involve any financial consequences imposed by the Education Inspectorate."

In addition to studying human intelligence — e.g. in the context of the centralised final test — Professor Van de Schoot is also examining the role of artificial intelligence (AI). For example, he is currently investigating how AI can be applied in support of the research process. "Researchers have to go through stacks of articles before starting on a new study. In some cases, thousands of articles are relevant to their particular project. Going through them all takes a great deal of time and energy. AI can do the bulk of that job, and select the 50 most relevant articles. Obviously, that will save us a lot of time. I think this type of AI application can also be relevant to teaching. In future, lecturers may even be able to leave tasks like checking assignments to AI while they do the actual teaching work." «

NEW TRAM

Saying goodbye to bus 12

1970 This bus 12 from the nineteen seventies definitely looks a lot less crowded than the current bus service. The service has connected Utrecht Central Station with Utrecht Science Park (previously known as the Uithof) since 1969. In the decades after this photo was taken, the bus route became one of the busiest in the Netherlands and even ranked amongst Europe’s most crowded services. Did you take the 12 to get to lectures, the library or your student room when you were still a student? If so, you know only too well what it’s like to sit in a packed bus like sardines in a tin. 13 December 2019 marked the official end of the 12 bus service, which was finally replaced by a tram after 50 years.

2020 Volkskrant newspaper referred to it as ‘Utrecht’s very own version of the delay and overexpenditure-prone Amsterdam North-South line project’. The tram line to Utrecht Science Park is no stranger to controversy due to its high costs — currently one of the world’s most expensive tram lines — and major completion delays. The new line finally became operational on 14 December 2019. The frequency of tram services will be gradually increased. This year, the new line is set to transport 45,000 passengers between Utrecht Central Station and Utrecht Science Park on a daily basis. However, new plans are already being prepared in order to meet growing future demand. Lunetten Station will be expanded to accommodate intercity services. Commuters travelling from the south can then borrow public transport bicycles at Lunetten and cycle to Utrecht Science Park.

text Jurgen Sijbrandij
image Utrecht University
Museum collection and
Jurgen Sijbrandij



A message from ... London

Video helps lecturers

text Jurgen Sijbrandij
and Maaïke Pols

My fascination with science started in my childhood home. I had a view of the RIVM (National Institute for Public Health and the Environment) from my bedroom window. I got my very first glimpse of a real laboratory during their open days.



Maaïke Pols completed her Master's in Biomedical Sciences in 2007. She obtained her doctorate in cell biology at Utrecht University in 2017, and subsequently conducted postdoc research in Australia. She currently works in London as Associate Director of Customer Success at the Journal of Visualized Experiments (JoVE).

When I started my first job at a scientific journal after completing my PhD and postdoc, I mainly enjoyed my interactions with researchers. My current position is ideal in that respect: I'm the intermediary between the Journal of Visualized Experiments (JoVE) and the universities that use it.

JoVE is a scientific journal that publishes protocols and produces videos in which the authors demonstrate exactly how to replicate their experiment in the labs. It can be hard to figure out exactly how to do an experiment if you're only reading a description. For example, things may look different under a microscope than you would expect on the basis of a description.

We also produce educational videos on experiments for lecturers. As a result, they no longer have to help a hundred students get started during practicals: the video has done that for them. That frees up more time to answer questions

“Brexit is a source of uncertainty”

that genuinely relate to the substance of the experiment. I wish I'd had access to those videos during my studies and PhD.

London is an exciting place to live, but it's also very expensive. Here in the Netherlands, you can generally afford to get your own place once you start on your PhD. In London, you suddenly find yourself living with flatmates again. That takes some getting used to. You can also tell Brexit is a real source of uncertainty, especially amongst newcomers. I've been working in London for almost seven years now, so I'm eligible for *settled status* and don't expect Brexit will be too much of a problem.

I used to get nervous doing presentations, but I had to hold lots of them as a part of my PhD. I got good at it in the end, and that's really helpful to me now. I always keep learning though. I recently hired several team members, who I now supervise. I hope to keep getting better at that too. ◀

For a more extensive version of this article, check Illuster online at uu.nl/en/organisation/illuster

Tips

MEET THE PROFESSOR

Professors on bikes

So what does a real professor look like? And what do they do, exactly? Our professors will be cycling to primary schools in and around Utrecht on 25 March. For the fifth year running, children in the final two classes of primary school will have an opportunity to ask 'their' professor anything under the sun. The pupils will receive lots of exciting hints about their professor in advance. Utrecht University also offers children other opportunities to explore science and technology throughout the year. For example, primary school pupils explored the issue of 'animal trafficking' during the Big Science Day.

Visit bit.ly/uu-basisscholen (in Dutch) to find out more about UU's other collaborations with primary schools.





LECTURES FOR KIDS

Attend this year’s University Day!

Join us for University Day this Saturday 28 March: the annual reunion event for all Utrecht University alumni. This year’s theme will be ‘nature’. The University Day event has been revamped and will take place at Utrecht Science Park. The varied programme includes lectures, guided tours and workshops, and visitors are free to choose how much of the day they wish to attend. If you have children, feel free to bring them: there will be a special afternoon programme with lectures for kids! Confirmed speakers include Beatrice de Graaf, Erik van Sebille, Liesbeth van de Grift, Niko Wanders and Anne Schulp.

Join us on University Day and register at uu.nl/udag (in Dutch)

WIN A BOOK

Female teachers are better than male ones

There are lots of myths when it comes to learning and education. For example: we’d be better off abolishing homework, screens make children depressed and you have to practise 10,000 hours to become an expert at something. What should we really believe? In their book ‘Juffen zijn toffer dan meesters’ (Female teachers are better than male ones), UU lecturer Casper Hulshof and co-authors Pedro de Bruyckere and Paul Kirschner scientifically examine this and other education ‘facts’. The new book is a follow up to ‘Jongens zijn slimmer dan meisjes’ (Boys are smarter than girls), which also explored popular misconceptions.

Want to win a copy? Go to bit.ly/illustrer-winactie! (in Dutch)

Win this book!



USBO FILM SERIES

Openness in academia

This year’s Science & Fiction film series is themed around



the idea of openness. Louis Hartlooper Complex cinema and Utrecht University will be screening four films to get you thinking about issues such as openness in the academic world, Europe and diversity. Researchers will provide introductions to the films and discuss their subject matter with audience members after the screening.

Come watch, listen and join the conversation on 12 May, 26 May, 9 June and 23 June 2020. Want to know more? Visit on uu.nl/usbo/sciencefiction (in Dutch)



JUNIOR SUMMER SCHOOL

Getting to know the university

Junior Summer School offers children a wonderful opportunity to discover the fun and fascinating world of science. Over the course of four days, Utrecht University will open its doors to the young scientists of the future. Junior Summer School participants will have the opportunity to research subjects such as biodiversity, the universe, chemical reactions and sustainability. Junior Summer School is intended for inquisitive children in the final three years of primary school and first two years of secondary school. This year’s edition will take place from 20 through 23 July and 27 through 30 July. Registration starts in April.

Visit uu.nl/summerschool-junior (in Dutch) to register your child for participation. You can also apply for a Junior Scholarship or make a donation at bit.ly/summerschool-beurzen (in Dutch) from April onwards.

THE UNIVERSITY ON YOUTUBE

Medieval vlogs

What was freedom of speech like in the old days? Why was the invention of the printing press such a revolutionary development? Why does the Hollywood film Hustlers resemble the medieval tale ‘The seven wise men of Rome’? Martine Veldhuizen, cultural and literary historian at the University, discusses these and other questions in a series of vlogs created especially for secondary schools.

Watch them on the UU YouTube channel: youtube.com/universiteitutrecht (vlogs in Dutch)



Anniversary Day
26 March 2020 On this date, Utrecht University will celebrate its 384rd birthday in the Dom Church.

Scanning a cello
16 April 2020 Alumnus and radiologist Frank Pameijer (UMC Utrecht) put Joachim Eijlander’s centuries-old cello through the scanner. This interactive performance tells the unique story in a suitably musical form.

Utrecht Marathon
19 April 2020 Utrecht Science Park will provide a scenic centrepiece for the annual running event. The route passes through parks, along canals and through the city centre.

Specially-themed dinner on the female heart
28 May in The Hague Hester den Ruijter (experimental cardiology, UMC Utrecht) is studying the female heart and will be discussing her research during a specially-themed dinner.

Midsummer Night’s Party in the Faculty Club
18 June 2020 See uu.nl/en/faculty-club/events to find out more about the party and a wealth of other exciting events.

For an overview of all alumni events, see uu.nl/alumni/agenda (in Dutch). For the international calendar, visit uu.nl/en/organisation/alumni/events

Pile

In the second year of pre-university education, we had an art teacher named Ms Kerkhof. Lucie, the best artist in my class, made a collage; she had drawn a yellow background with flowers, and ten different brown shoes. She had cut out the shoes, and asked the teacher how she should distribute them over the background: spread out over the entire A3 sheet, or all together in a pile at the bottom of the page. Lucie preferred the latter option, but Ms Kerkhof told her: 'I'd spread them out over the page. I think it looks nicer that way.' Lucie eventually opted for the pile, and got the collage back with a mark on the reverse side the next week. The teacher had given her a 10 of out 10! I remember being stunned. I would have heeded the teacher's authority without thinking twice. I even asked Ms Kerkhof how that was possible. She preferred the shoes all over the page, so how could she have marked it a 10? I'll never forget her answer: 'It doesn't matter whether I like it. What matters is whether it's good.'

My point is: good education requires good teachers. Although art wasn't one of the most important subjects — students that failed it couldn't be held behind a year — I learned one of the most important lessons in that classroom with the big wooden

desks ravaged by paint and pencil marks: art isn't an exact science. By the time you start at university, you'll have experienced about fifty teachers over the course of primary and secondary school. Although they didn't all leave a lasting impression, I think they probably taught me more about life than any of the wonderful Assistant Professors, Associate Professors and professors I had here in Utrecht. What's more: primary and secondary education teachers see a full cross section of society in their classroom. They impart life lessons to everyone. History, mental arithmetic, games, topography: knowledge and skills that I rely on more often than differential equations, linear algebra or elliptical curves.

I must say it's sad that the importance of their work is inversely proportional to their salaries. Maybe we should throw all the salaries on a big pile — just like those shoes — and evenly distribute them among every educator in the country. The best of two worlds.

Jan Beuving

Jan studied at Utrecht University for nine years, completing a Bachelor's programme in Mathematics (2008) and a Master's programme in the History and Philosophy of Science (2009). After that, he became a comedian and cabaret artist. See janbeuving.nl for his performance schedule.

