

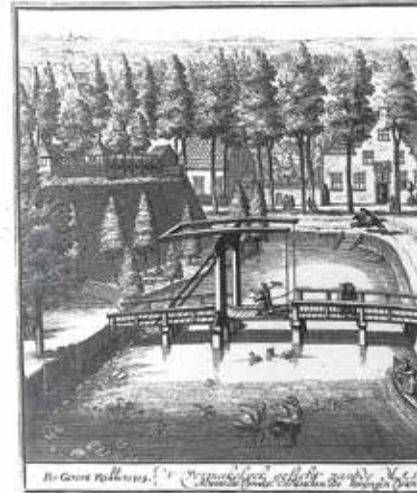


Universiteit Utrecht



380 years  
*Bright minds,  
better future*

A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW



## The Founding of the Academy

1636

The first steps towards the foundation of a university in the city of Utrecht were taken in 1634. The county council wanted the county to have a university, but thought the small city of Amersfoort would be a better location than Utrecht. Why? They thought Utrecht would offer the students too many distractions... While the county council pondered the matter, the city council of Utrecht city went ahead and started an Illustrious School, a type of

institution rather like an early modern university, but without the authority to award academic degrees.

In 1636, the status of this Illustrious School was promoted to that of an official Academy. With the degrees awarded here, students and scholars could now gain access to all the other universities in Europe. The new university would soon start attracting other European scholars itself.

Today, students from all over the world come to Utrecht to obtain their internationally acclaimed academic titles. Throughout their study programmes, Utrecht students are prepared for the international nature of the academic community. Upon graduation, students receive their degree certificates surrounded by the portraits of the founders of the university.

## Mens Sana in corpore sano

1637

In the 17<sup>th</sup> Century the lawn game Pall-mall, known as Malie in Dutch, was very popular among students. In fact, it was so popular that the university and the council created a dedicated alley for the game (the Maliebaan), specifically to attract students and scholars to the Academy. The Maliebaan was an instant hit, and became even more popular when a pub was opened alongside the field.







## The quest for Regularity

— 1725 • 1780 —

Today, just like in 1637, the university offers its students and staff sports and performing arts facilities at the sports centre *Olympos* and the cultural centre *Parnassos*.

These days, the *Maliebaan* is the one of Utrecht's main streets, and the site of the yearly parade of student societies and sports associations during the introduction week for new students.



In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, all students first obtained a general education in the *Artes Liberales* faculty. From there, they went on to study Theology, Law or Medicine. From the start of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, however, new ideas entered the university. Philosopher and mathematician Petrus van Musschenbroek was fascinated by Newton's ideas on the regularity of the cosmos. With this new approach to the natural sciences, new educational methods were also born. In 1727 the *Theatrum Physicum et anatomicum* was built. Here, students could not only listen to lectures and engage in debates, but they could also observe and test the scientific principles governing the universe.

These ideas regarding the regularity of the natural sciences also had an influence on the Botanical sciences. At Utrecht University, botanist Everhard Jacob von Wachendorff developed his own system to classify all the plants in the *Hortus Botanicus* and the Orangery. He corresponded with the famous botanist Linnaeus about this system.

These new developments were not confined to the university. In 1777, a private group of scholars founded the *Physics Society*, the aim being to raise money for scientific instruments to perform experiments. These instruments were used by the university professors for their research, but also for public demonstrations in the *salons*.

Today, the *Theatrum* and the Orangery are part of the University Museum, which continues to make scientific developments available to a wider public. Among the items on display are the 18<sup>th</sup>-century instruments bought by the *Physics Society*.





Health Committee. Mulder and his colleagues pressured the city council to provide clean drinking water and improve waste collection services. The conditions were so bad that Mulder remarked that “It would take centuries to make Utrecht healthy.”

A century and a half later, history has proven him wrong. These days, Utrecht is a relatively wealthy, safe, and healthy city.

## The ‘Utrecht School’ Science for Society

1850s

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the population of Utrecht expanded exponentially. As in many Western European cities, the poor lived in crowded, poor quality housing on narrow streets. Because of these conditions contagious diseases, most notably cholera, were widespread.

In the hope of improving public health, university professor Gerrit Jan Mulder founded the Utrecht

The university and the University Medical Center Utrecht (UMCU) continue the mission taken up by their 19<sup>th</sup> century colleagues. In the strategic research themes *Life Sciences* and *Dynamics of Youth*, public and other health issues are addressed by researchers from various disciplines.

In 2014, the UMCU successfully completed the first skull transplantation, replacing the skull of a woman with a 3D-printed skull. In 2017, the Princess Maxima Centre for Children’s Oncology will open at the Utrecht Science Park. In this centre, the care for young cancer patients will be combined with state-of-the-art research on childhood cancers.



## Community Building

1886

In 1886, the city and the university celebrated the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Academy. In the decades before 1886, the number of students and staff had grown dramatically, and the presence of the academic community in the city was greater than ever. However, the university was scattered over many different buildings all around the city, and many students did not feel like they were part of a university-wide community.





To mark the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the city council gave the university money to build the “Academy Building”. It was to be used for lectures and ceremonial events, and it was to serve as a home to the academic community. That year, 1886, also saw the establishment of the University Foundation, which provided Utrecht University alumni with an opportunity to ‘give back’ to their Alma Mater and the community.

These days, the Academy Building is at the heart of the university. It is still used for ceremonial events, including most graduation ceremonies. During the events organised by the University Foundation, alumni return ‘home’ to the Academy Building.



## Women in the University

1917

In 1637, within a year after the foundation of the university, a woman attended the lectures. Anna Maria van Schurman, a good friend of Rector Magnificus Gisbert Voetius, was allowed in but had to sit behind a curtain to make sure her presence would not distract the male students. The emancipation of women at Utrecht University was a long and slow process, and only



really started when the first official female students were enrolled in the late 19th century.

In 1917, the university appointed its first female professor, Johanna Westerdijk. She was the first in the Netherlands. Despite her rapid career and international reputation in her field (Botany), she was not readily accepted or warmly welcomed by her male peers. Many professors saw her as a ‘masculine’ woman and considered her presence in the senate as disturbing.

Nowadays, more than 55% of the students in Utrecht are female, and 50% of the staff at the university is female. A growing percentage of the full professors are women, but this is still a work in progress...







## Cautiousness vs Resistance

— 1940 • 1945 —

The world was at war, and the Dutch universities could not escape the new regime of the Nazi occupiers. During these years, it was the students more than the university board who tried to take a stance against the anti-semitic regulations imposed on the academy.



In 1940, student Wim Eggink called for a university-wide strike, protesting the dismissal of the Jewish members of the academic staff. However, Rector Magnificus H. R. Kruyt feared repercussions imposed by the Nazis, as the universities of Delft and Leiden had been closed after student strikes. Kruyt pleaded with the students to keep calm, and the strike was cancelled.

The students' call for action and the complaisant attitude of the university senate would presage developments during the rest of the war: over the years, the students' protests grew stronger, but the university remained careful not to provoke the Nazi regime.

The increasingly heated battle reached its peak when, in December 1942, two students set the Academy Building on fire. The student administration went up in flames, preventing the Nazis from obtaining a complete list of the names of all university students. The Nazis had requested this list in order to round up the students for forced labour in Germany.

Many more students were involved in the resistance movement. The Utrecht Children's committee took care of Jewish children from Amsterdam, by arranging shelter for them in farms in surrounding rural areas. Other students published illegal newspapers.

These days, the university commemorates the members of the academic community who died during the war.



## Expansion to the Polder

— 1961 —

In the 1950s, the student numbers rose to an all-time high. Soon, many faculties were bursting out of their buildings in the city centre and surrounding neighbourhoods. Space for expansion was desperately needed, and it was found in the fields near the centuries-old farm *De Uithof*.



In their development of the area, the Executive Board and even the students followed the architects and engineers who advocated function over atmosphere or style. *De Uithof* was not designed as a “campus” but as a working environment.

The result? State-of-the-art laboratories, lecture halls and offices, all housed in grey high-rise buildings. Within a matter of years, the students and staff realised that this was not the inspiring, stimulating environment they had hoped for.

Gradually, *De Uithof* developed into a livelier place. In the 1980s, more faculties of Utrecht University and the Utrecht University of Applied Sciences moved there. In 1998, the first student accommodation facility was opened.

Nowadays, the Utrecht Science Park is a science hub where the university, the hospital and over 60 companies meet and build on each other's strengths. More than 2500 students live on this campus, and over 70,000 students and employees come here daily to study, conduct research, find business opportunities, or to enjoy the green surroundings and the Botanical gardens.



## Start of the University College

1998

In the early 1990s, the scholars and scientists of Utrecht University started to look beyond the boundaries of their own academic disciplines. Interdisciplinary courses and degrees were offered, as well as extra-curricular tracks for excellent students.

The real break-through in interdisciplinary education for excellent students was the opening of the University College, in 1998. Years before the Bachelor/Master system was introduced at Dutch universities, Utrecht University started a Liberal Arts and Sciences college based on the Anglo-Saxon model.

The first 200 students started with their feet in the still slightly muddy fields of the former military base. Today, this base is a beautiful campus and home to a truly diverse and international academic community. Since 1998, other Dutch universities have followed Utrecht's example, and founded their own colleges. Utrecht University continues to invest on small-scale education and programmes designed for excellent students. Examples include the Utrecht Law College, the College of Pharmaceutical Sciences and the extra-curricular Young Innovators programme for Master's students from all academic disciplines.





## Gerard 't Hooft wins the Nobel Prize

1999

Since the first Nobel prizes were awarded in 1901, twelve scientist who were at some point in their career affiliated with Utrecht University have been awarded the medal.

Among them is Prof Gerard 't Hooft, who was a student at Utrecht, received his PhD here in 1972, and has been a full professor



at the Institute for Theoretical Physics since 1977.

In 1999, he and his former PhD supervisor Prof Martin Veltman received the Nobel Prize in Physics for their work on the weak force, one of the four fundamental forces of nature.

These days, 't Hooft continues his search for the key to the all-inclusive theory that would combine the four forces. He also devotes a substantial part of his time to school visits, interviews and tv-performances, aiming to 'translate' new developments in Physics for a wider public, and specifically high school students. The exposition Master the Universe at the Utrecht University Museum was the result of a cooperation between 't Hooft and the museum's science communication experts.



## Focus on collaboration in Research

2011

In 2008, Utrecht University was the first in the Netherlands to focus the research activities in 15 'focus areas'. Under the umbrella of the focus areas, interdisciplinary research teams take an integrated approach that contributes to solving societal problems such as climate change, health, safety, social cohesion and sustainability.

From 2011 onwards, the university made a choice to increase its focus, and connect fundamental research and academic excellence to a societal mission. Through the four Strategic Themes – Sustainability, Life Sciences, Institutions and Dynamics of Youth – issues in society are pinpointed and researched by interdisciplinary and international teams. The aim is to







## 380 years Bright Minds, Better Future

2016

create value for a sustainable society. How can we improve the quality of the relationship between humans and nature, between humans and animals, and between humans themselves?

In the transition to a sustainable society, a comprehensive strategy involving ecological, economic, social, institutional and cultural changes is needed. The faculties of Utrecht University offer expertise in each of these fields. The Strategic Themes enable the teams to bring their knowledge and skills together.

In 2016, the university will celebrate its 380<sup>th</sup> anniversary: an occasion to reflect on the rich history of the institution, and to look ahead to what the future will bring.

Utrecht University in the 21<sup>st</sup> century shows some striking similarities with the institution of

the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Individually, the university's researchers excel in their specialised fields, but together this community of *Bright Minds* is as universal as the ideal of the *Homo Universalis* of the Renaissance.

With subsidies and awards for both academic and extra-curricular excellence, the university and faculties encourage the many Bright Minds among the students to strive for a better future, both for themselves and for society.

The 380<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations will show the diversity of the university and its people, and its continuing value for society. Utrecht University professors will visit schools in the city of Utrecht, bringing science and research to children as young as 7. In the city's new music palace, TivoliVredenburg, over 400 students will perform in the student music festival. The members of the oldest student societies will parade the city in a masquerade, a tradition which dates back to the first centennial of 1736.



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