



Utrecht  
University

# Vision on Recognition and Rewards





## Utrecht University Vision on Recognition and Rewards

**At UU, we recognise and reward everyone's contribution to the organisation and to our shared goals.**

All our employees work together to achieve the mission and objectives of Utrecht University (UU). This means we also work together across the boundaries of positions, sections and disciplines, as well as across the boundaries of the university. We are working to create a better world. The nature of our contributions varies widely, but they are all important, regardless of your position or the level at which you work, full-time or part-time, and regardless of whether you have just started at UU or have worked here for decades.

The concept of recognition and rewards is not just about the way we have designed our organisation (structure) but also about the way we work (culture), which is at least equally important. This is evident in the increased attention given to team spirit and collaboration, development and (personal) leadership. Recognition can be demonstrated in both large and small gestures and has both hard and soft aspects. Recognition can sometimes take the form of a next step in someone's career, but in most cases it is about how we work together. Having someone take note of your efforts. Having the room to develop yourself. It can even be something as small as an honest compliment or someone saying 'thank you'. At other times, it can be about something as basic as the trust we show in each other.

### Open Science

UU encourages [open science](#) as part of its mission to make science and education open and even more reliable, as well as more efficient and more relevant for society. Open science requires us to take action. Recognising and rewarding all aspects of open science is crucial for this cultural shift.

We want to create room for recognising and rewarding teams and individuals, with attention to the diversity of our work and its results. A strict division between academic staff (WP) and support and administrative staff (OBP) does not fit in with this approach. That is why UU will be applying a single perspective from the 2023-2024 academic year, whereby all personnel members will be considered staff members of our university, as **university staff** (UP).<sup>1</sup>

In practice, this will mean that we will collaborate more often as UP (such as in project groups and in the context of the training modules offered by UU); that we will more often consider your *role* or the expertise you contribute in a particular context rather than your formal job title. UU will work to better facilitate the option of positions that combine academic and other tasks (such as research IT, analytical laboratory work or educational innovation).<sup>2</sup> Where possible and necessary, schemes and (organisational) structures will be adjusted.

<sup>1</sup> We will retain the current job titles in the [University Job Classification](#) (UFO) system. But we will no longer use the umbrella terms of academic staff (WP) and support and administrative staff (OBP).

<sup>2</sup> This will be further elaborated by HR over the course of 2024.

## Basic principles for recognition and rewards

**1. We work together.** The roles and tasks of each employee are aligned with the needs and objectives of the team, the strategic theme, the faculty or the service department. **No one needs to be able to know or do everything;** we do this together. By focusing on different aspects, we create scope for individual development and for different talents and ambitions. Our organisation enables collaboration from different disciplines and organisational components.

**2. Leadership is key.** Leadership is a prerequisite for successfully introducing a new system for recognition and rewards. **Leadership development** starts early on in a career and is not just about what managers do. It is also about giving and taking responsibility. It is about self-reflection. These are all important aspects of **personal leadership**. Everyone with managerial tasks is also responsible for creating a pleasant working environment, stimulating development, tackling problems and (co-)determining the strategy.

**3. Room for development.** UU offers everyone the opportunity to work on their personal development. This is important to enable people to develop themselves and continue to be able to do their work well. Working on your development may mean working towards a more senior position, but it more often involves acquiring **broader or more in-depth** knowledge and skills at the level of your current position. In addition, everyone is free to stay where they are or to take a step back. Employees may shift their chosen focus over time. UU stimulates flexible career paths to create room for differences.

**4. Transparency. Open mind, open attitude:** as a university, we are open to and continuously engaged with society. We are open to each other, respect people's differences and are open to change. Employees and managers are open to reflection and feedback.

**Open science:** UU is committed to reliable and efficient science that is highly relevant to society. The transition to open science involves a shift to a fundamentally different way of working. This transition affects the entire UU community. Open science requires an open culture where integrity and transparency are the norm. A culture where social engagement in education and research is encouraged, and where it is standard practice to exchange values and perspectives and to share data, software, educational materials and publications.<sup>3</sup>

**5. Quality over quantity.** There are no one-size-fits-all criteria. The focus is on what makes our work valuable. What is the added value of a publication, course, project or process? How did everyone contribute to this? You can only judge whether you are on the right track as a team or as an individual if you know what your goals are.

This means recognition and rewards is not just about replacing one set of assessment criteria with a new checklist; it is about a new way of looking at things. Instead of only looking at *what* someone did, we will also look at *how* they did it (team spirit, leadership), and based on *what objective* (impact). Qualitative indicators, such as substantiated narratives, are very suited to this. Quantitative indicators can support the narrative. However, these indicators can never be used in isolation and they are means to an end, not ends in themselves.

---

<sup>3</sup> We share data, software, educational materials and publications according to the [FAIR principles](#).

## A broad view: TRIPLE

The Utrecht TRIPLE model is a tool for applying the basic principles of recognition and rewards in practice. It helps to consider the various aspects of our work from a broad perspective and relate them to each other.

The TRIPLE model applies to all UU staff, at both individual and team level. Teams can use it to discuss everyone's contributions to their objectives. It can also be useful in conversations about individual development or when drawing up texts of job adverts. Above all, TRIPLE is an invitation to every employee and every team to look at the different activities from a broad perspective and discuss them.



The TRIPLE lotus is made up of three types of elements: the base (Team and Leadership), the core (Impact) and the flower petals (the domains in which we carry out our activities). Team spirit and (personal) leadership are the foundation supporting every employee and team: they are prerequisites for effective performance, collaboration and personal development.

**Team spirit** refers to the connection between the individual and common goals. It is about collegiality, collaboration, trust, sharing ideas, mutual engagement and contributing to the organisation. [See basic principle 1.](#)

**Leadership** refers to the personal leadership we expect from all our employees (such as giving and taking responsibility). For everyone with managerial tasks, this is also about being a good leader. [See basic principle 2.](#) Find out more about [leadership at UU.](#)

The focus is on **impact**: *Why do we do the things we do? What sort of values, drives and expectations does that involve? How do our efforts affect our colleagues, the discipline, the organisation or society?* Impact cannot always be determined in advance, and it is not always possible to make target agreements. That is why we prefer to refer to the outcomes of our work rather than specific quantifiable outputs. [See basic principles 4 and 5.](#)

**The domains in which we work** are the 'flower petals' of the lotus. If you zoom out all the way and look at UU as a whole, this is where you will see the domains of **education, research and professional performance/organisation**. When you apply the TRIPLE model as a team or as an individual employee, the three domains can also be made more specific. The goal is always to map the full spectrum of the work, to enable a dialogue about this.

The extent to which employees are active in the various domains depends on their position, the context and any agreements made about this. Employees can focus on different aspects and may shift their focus over time. [See basic principle 3.](#)

## Getting to work with TRIPLE



1. Determine whether you will use TRIPLE as a team or as an individual.
2. Select the 'flower petals' of your TRIPLE lotus, i.e. the domains in which you work.
3. Start a dialogue! Click [here](#) for more instructions and some helpful questions.

For the positions of assistant professor, associate professor and full professor, the domains of **education and research** apply in any case, although the scope of both may be subject to variation within teams and can shift over time. These domains may likewise be relevant for other positions and teams, such as for an education coordinator who provides an essential contribution to teaching or a technician who ensures that research can be conducted robustly and safely.

If the work cannot directly be linked to education or research, it falls under the domain of **professional performance/organisation**. As this is a very broad domain, it can be useful to **apply a further breakdown** of this domain. For example, **advising** can be a domain for a policy adviser or study adviser, and **project support** can be a domain for a management and office assistant. You can choose the domains that are relevant to your team or your position.

Colleagues who are engaged in teaching and research are often also involved in the domain of professional performance/organisation. In the medical domain, **patient care** naturally plays an important role. In veterinary medicine, the third domain has been translated to **animal health care**. In other contexts, this may involve, *for example*, (science) **communication** or another service for the benefit of academia, society or the local UU community.

## Recognition and rewards as a movement

The recognition and rewards movement is a process featuring many changes taking place in parallel. These changes can be both small and large, both bottom up and top down. They involve 'hard' and 'soft' factors, such as structures and interpersonal contact. All these changes are necessary steps to realise our ambitions regarding recognition and rewards. Here as well, everyone's contribution matters.

This vision builds on the national position paper '[Room for everyone's talent](#)' (2019), the UU strategy '[Open mind, open attitude, open science](#)' (2020-2025) and the previous UU vision on recognition and rewards (2021).

### In practice

Would you like to learn more about what this means for you and how to apply recognition and rewards in practice?

**For staff:** You can have a look at the handout '[Vision in practice](#)', register for the [recognition and rewards workshop](#) (from 2024) or read more on the [intranet](#).

**For managers:** You can have a look at the handout '[Vision in practice](#)', register for the [recognition and rewards workshop](#) or read more on the [intranet](#).