

# Utrecht University

## Recognition and Rewards Vision

By embracing Open Science as one of its five core principles<sup>1</sup>, Utrecht University aims to accelerate and improve science and scholarship and its societal impact. Open science calls for a full commitment to openness, based on a comprehensive vision regarding the relationship with society. This ongoing transition to Open Science requires us to reconsider the way in which we recognize and reward members of the academic community. It should value teamwork over individualism and calls for an open academic culture that promotes accountability, reproducibility, integrity and transparency, and where sharing (open access, FAIR data and software) and public engagement are normal daily practice. In this transition we closely align ourselves with the national VSNU program as well as developments on the international level.

The transition to Open Science is comprehensive, and it is here to stay. It will affect every aspect of our work, including research and teaching, but also professional performance (e.g., patient care), leadership, and impact activities. It is a transition that includes the entire Utrecht University community: the scientific as well as the support staff<sup>1</sup>, from management to those in junior staff positions. At Utrecht University we aim to work together, crossing boundaries of disciplines (multidisciplinary), bridging theory and practice, connecting all people that work at our university to achieve our ambitions. Only then can we fully contribute to the body of knowledge and the needs of society<sup>2,3</sup>. This calls for the reduction of competition between individuals and incentivizing a collaborative and open academic culture. One that provides all university employees with optimal support in their work and careers<sup>4</sup>.

With the current Utrecht University statement on Recognition and Rewards we make a firm commitment towards rewarding teams and individuals in alignment with the Utrecht University's ambition regarding Open Science and take steps towards the implementation of such a system<sup>1,2</sup>. This system will acknowledge pluriformity in academic work and its outcomes, it recognizes and rewards teamwork by support staff and all others involved, and it will evaluate quality, real impact on academia and society, sharing, and openness to the world. This vision document is the first step towards a new system of Recognition and Rewards. It includes three important building blocks for developing such a new system. First, we articulate the *ambition* for an Utrecht University model for Recognition and Rewards. Second, we present the *TRIPLE model* – the MERIT 2.0 model – to capture the scope of our academic work and output. Third, we specify *guiding principles* to assist in the use of the novel system of Recognition and Rewards.

The subsequent step of our staged approach is planned for early 2021 and involves the development of a more detailed and comprehensive Utrecht University wide template for evaluation criteria across all TRIPLE domains based on the guiding principles specified in this document. The third step is the refinement and implementation of this template at the faculty level.

- <sup>1</sup> <https://www.uu.nl/en/organisation/strategic-plan>
- <sup>2</sup> <https://www.uu.nl/en/research/open-science>
- <sup>3</sup> <https://www.uu.nl/en/research/sustainable-development-goals>
- <sup>4</sup> <https://www.vsnu.nl/recognitionandrewards/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Position-paper-Room-for-everyone%E2%80%99s-talent.pdf>

## 1. The Utrecht University ambition for Recognition and Rewards

This proposal has been discussed with the Board and Deans and was agreed upon in January 2021. Subsequently, it will be discussed and implemented at the faculty level. By early 2022 all faculties will have implemented a new system of principles for Recognition and Rewards.

In this novel generic system, Utrecht University employees are valued for all of their contributions according to principles of Open Science and in line with the principles proposed by the National Program Recognition and Rewards<sup>4</sup>. This new system for Recognition and Rewards will provide guidance for procedures regarding recruitment & selection, socialization, training & development, staffing, performance appraisal, and promotion of employees. It will affect our way of working, so-called work design, in terms of teamwork & cooperation, rotation related to dynamic career paths, employee involvement in decision making, and employee autonomy. To achieve the Utrecht University Recognition and Rewards ambitions we strive for an open, transparent, inspiring and safe environment for our employees and students with room for involvement and development.

## 2. The Utrecht University domains of academic work: TRIPLE

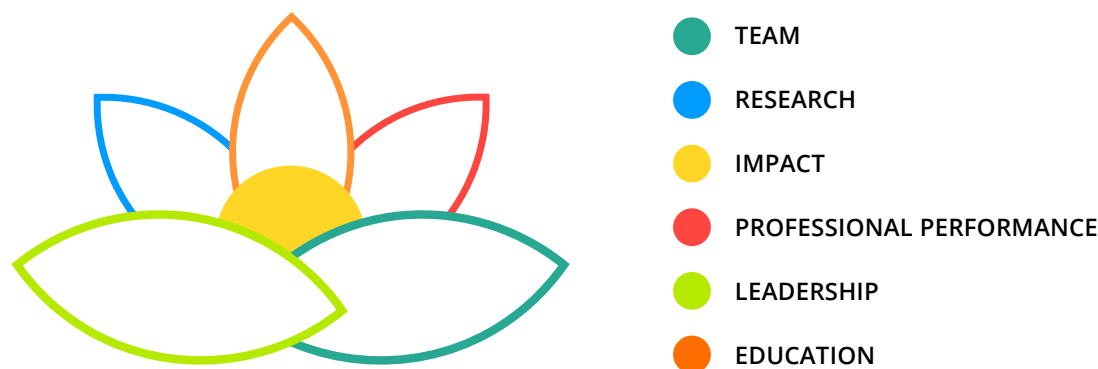
Developing guidelines for recognition and rewards that appreciates the full scope of academic work requires that we are explicit about which domains we distinguish and how these domains are related. To meet this aim, the Utrecht University Recognition and Rewards work group has developed a new model, building on the MERIT model<sup>5</sup>, for describing the domains of academic work: The TRIPLE model<sup>4</sup>.

The TRIPLE model consists of six components: team spirit; research; impact; professional performance; leadership; and education. They describe the three domains where we generate output (research, professional performance and education), the impact they have on science and society, and leadership in academia that actively nurtures an environment in which they can flourish. The 'T' is deliberately put first. It emphasizes that, at Utrecht University, team spirit, characterized by contributing, cooperating and exchanging, is the default approach to working in academia. The order of the other abbreviations is random and mainly based on the construction of a word – TRIPLE – that can easily be remembered and that refers to something threefold (e.g., the three domains where we generate outcomes).

The domains of the TRIPLE model and their interrelation are depicted in the image of the flower (a lotus) below, using the colors of the Recognition and Rewards infographic<sup>6</sup>. Team spirit and leadership form the base of the flower as they support the three core domains where we generate outcomes. Impact is represented by the heart of the flower, connected to education, research and – when applicable – professional performance.

<sup>5</sup> The MERIT model is applied within the Utrecht University faculties of Law, Economics and Governance (since 2016) and Geosciences (since 2020) and stands for Management, Education, Research, Impact and Team spirit. The model was developed at Tilburg University.  
<sup>6</sup> <https://www.uu.nl/en/research/open-science/tracks/recognition-and-rewards>

## TRIPLE: Team Spirit as the default approach to working in academia



TRIPLE MODEL

**Team Spirit**<sup>iii</sup> or Teamwork, is the default to all work in academia in the TRIPLE model. By putting the T of Team first, we emphasize a strategic way of working within, but also across, the different domains of academic work and supporting domains, where the goals and needs of the team are the point of departure in how we organize and evaluate our work<sup>iv</sup>. Team Spirit does not imply that every activity is a joint activity, but it does acknowledge that academic work benefits from an open and collaborative approach and that every individual operates in the context of a broader team where tasks are divided and where we work towards shared goals. It requires effective leadership that provides for a safe, open, constructive, diverse and inclusive academic climate<sup>v</sup> where sharing, contributing and collaborating is the norm.

TRIPLE: Three domains where we generate outcomes:  
Education, Research and Professional Performance.

The TRIPLE model identifies three domains where we generate outcomes for academia and society. These include the two core domains of academia: Education and Research. The domain of Professional Performance entails the other professional activities in academia that are not captured by education and research such as patient care<sup>v</sup>.

**Education** involves the full spectrum of tasks related to academic teaching, from teaching a class, to individual supervision and to being a member of the board of examiners. The domain of education is inextricably linked to that of research, or as explained by the UU Centre for Academic Teaching: “Academics are stimulated to use a research-informed approach for their teaching: disciplinary knowledge, practical knowledge and scientific knowledge are combined to enhance student learning”<sup>8</sup>. Education at the UU has a multidisciplinary approach and connects to the public through community-engaged learning. These lines of action are supported by educational innovation and the professional development of lecturers, secured in an accommodating system of recognition and rewards.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.uu.nl/en/organisation/equality-diversity-inclusion/about>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.uu.nl/en/education/centre-for-academic-teaching>

**Research** encompasses the wide range of research activities and outcomes, from desk research to experimental research, fundamental and applied, across all academic disciplines<sup>9</sup>. The Utrecht University's research is centered around four strategic themes: Dynamics of Youth, Institutions for Open Societies, Life Sciences and Pathways to Sustainability that combine and integrate different disciplinary approaches to tackle major societal issues. These Strategic Themes are central to the Utrecht University's ambitions and carefully selected for their Societal Impact.

**Professional performance** describes the tasks and roles besides research and education, that nonetheless have a strong connection to the respective academic discipline. The scope of this domain may differ between faculties. Patient care in the UMC is one of those examples where professional performance is an integral part of the professional academic identity of many researchers, but professional performance is not restricted to the UMC only. Patient care plays a similarly important role for those working at the academic veterinary hospital and by extension many academics play comparable roles in professions closely related to their respective field. The choice to have academics fulfill these connecting roles is a strategic one and the interplay with education, research and impact can create great scientific and societal value.

#### TRIPLE: Impact as the way of working

**Impact** is our way of working. It forms an essential component of the open strategy of the Utrecht University and underscores our goal to improve the world, sustainably, together. Rather than regarding impact merely as the *output* of the three core domains, the impact narrative illustrates how the goals behind Research, Education and Professional Performance contribute to the exchange of experiences and ideas between science and society. This dynamic interplay between science and society, emphasized in the Utrecht University public engagement plan, aims to raise awareness and can result in targeted actions and activities. It includes (but is not limited to) impact on public policy, scholarly impact (for example peers), social impact (for example in the region and in communities), co-creation with citizens, impact in professional practice, economic impact (for example through entrepreneurship) and pedagogical impact.

#### TRIPLE: Leadership as the facilitator and enabler of our academic work

**Leadership in academia** facilitates and enables academic work and contributes to an open, transparent, inspiring, inclusive and safe environment, in line with the Utrecht University leadership model<sup>10</sup>. Leadership is intertwined with the domains of Research, Education, and Professional Performance and is crucial for stimulating and appreciating their Impact. In essence leadership refers to being a good leader: setting communal goals and addressing problems. These are qualities we seek in those in administrative positions (a head of a department or a vice-dean) managing change, or a PhD supervisor providing guidance and counsel to young academics.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.uu.nl/en/research/research-at-utrecht-university>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.uu.nl/en/organisation/working-at-utrecht-university/leadership-at-all-levels>

### 3. Utrecht University Guiding principles for Recognition and Rewards of our work in academia

We accompany the Utrecht University ambition with a set of guiding principles which should serve as the basis in developing a more detailed and comprehensive Utrecht University Recognition and Rewards framework of work in academia as described in the TRIPLE model. These principles are based on formal policies and declarations related to responsible rewards and recognition in research, teaching, leadership and impact within the Utrecht University<sup>2,11</sup>, on a sectoral<sup>4,12</sup>, and international level<sup>13</sup>.

In the first half of 2021, these guiding principles will be supported by a comprehensive Utrecht University wide template with generic categories of evaluation criteria for the diverse TRIPLE domains. This template will be developed by the Recognition and Rewards working group with input from experts from the relevant domains (e.g., the CAT for education). The template will be deliberately generic to allow for refinement at the faculty level in a subsequent stage. Academics and members of the Human Resources community at the Utrecht University will collaborate on the implementation of these policies, in alignment with current affairs.

— **The collective is our point of departure.** Open Science requires a team not an individual approach to academic work. This implies that the creation, evaluation, continuation and development of different roles, tasks and career paths should be described, formed and evaluated in relation to the strategy, goals and needs of the team. This means that at the group level, the available talents and competences need to match the demands of the groups' research and education programs as well as the strategy and aims regarding professional performance activities. Assessment procedures should take team ambitions as the point of reference, involve input from team members, whilst maintaining room for individual performance and recognition for independence and individual qualities<sup>4</sup>. Establishing team spirit is the responsibility of all but should be actively promoted and inspired by good leadership. People can be part of multiple teams or collaborations linked to education, research or professional performance.

— **Invest in leadership at all levels, hands-on and value driven.**

Good academic leadership is a prerequisite if a new system of recognition and rewards is to succeed. It needs to be stimulated on all levels, hands-on (concrete managerial actions) and value-driven (in line with the organizational core values)<sup>14</sup>. Good academic leadership is essential to facilitate, coach and stimulate teams and individuals on their educational, research, and professional performance according to principles of Open Science. Leadership is necessary to stimulate collaboration and sharing, to focus on quality and real impact, and to actively promote task diversification according to individuals' talents and ambitions. Leadership should therefore be considered a core and essential domain that requires talent, ambition and training as well as realistic allocation of time for continuous training, development and execution of leadership skills. The crucial role of good leadership in academia also means that it should have a prominent role in hiring, development, evaluation and assessment procedures. Leadership development starts early in the academic career, for example through personal leadership programs for PhD candidates and guidance for assistant professors in taking up a coordinator role in education and PhD (co-)supervision. Leadership qualities and competencies are necessary conditions for senior academic staff, in particular at the level of associate and full professors.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.uu.nl/en/research/research-at-utrecht-university>

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.vsnu.nl/files/documenten/Domeinen/Onderzoek/SEP\\_2021-2027.pdf](https://www.vsnu.nl/files/documenten/Domeinen/Onderzoek/SEP_2021-2027.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> <https://sfdora.org/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.uu.nl/en/organisation/working-at-utrecht-university/leadership-at-all-levels>

— **Stimulate diversification in profiles and dynamic careers.** Rather than expecting individuals to excel at all levels, individual employees should be encouraged to differentiate and focus on selected domains. Recognition and reward of academic work and outcomes should mirror this profile of the employee. At all positions, this profile should include at least a substantial involvement in the two core domains of research and education (the so-called academic ‘tweebenigheid’). However, academic staff should be encouraged to combine these two domains with a strong focus on leadership or professional performance, or to place a bigger emphasis on either of these two domains to allow for diversification in academic profiles. The framework for recognition and rewards should recognize and reward talent and achievement across all domains and should allow for, and stimulate, diversity in possible career paths and profiles to the extent that these align with the collective goals. Employees should be motivated, facilitated and developed for dynamic career paths in which individuals are not fixed in their core domains, but can change over time to optimize sustainable employability in terms of employee vitality (employee well-being), career competencies and position on the labor market. Sustainable employability is important from an individual employee perspective and an organization perspective in terms of employee health (vitality), employability on the labor market (inside and outside the Utrecht University) and the competencies for further career development. We do not offer life time employment but we do offer life time development and career opportunities within or outside academia.

— **Recognize and reward openness in all domains.** To make an impact with our work on academia and society, openness is essential. By openness we refer to sharing of data and software according to the FAIR guidelines, sharing of publications by means of open access publications, and active involvement (public engagement) of societal partners and stakeholders and the general public in our academic work<sup>2</sup>. To promote real impact and use, and to avoid that open science practices are seen as an additional burden without rewards, evaluation of academic processes and outcomes in all domains should emphasize transparency, reproducibility and public engagement.

— **Recognize and reward quality over quantity in all domains.** Recognition and rewarding of quality on the process as well as on outcomes in all domains should be based on quality not quantity. Teams and individuals are evaluated according to narratives, assessment criteria and quality indicators which are self-determined and based on the teams’ aims and strategy<sup>6</sup>. As Utrecht University has signed DORA<sup>12</sup>, there is no place for journal impact factors in recognition and rewarding of Utrecht University employees. While quantitative indicators are allowed, they should be supported by narratives and need to be meaningfully related and signal quality of the process and output in relation to the mission, vision and strategy of the team that is the point of reference.



## NOTES

i Reducing the distinction between academic and support staff is an important goal of the Utrecht University Open Science Program and has the attention of the working group on Recognition and Rewards. The inclusion of the point of view of the support staff is currently realized by means of active involvement and central roles of support staff in the Recognition and Rewards working group and in the debates and activities organized by this working group. We acknowledge that the TRIPLE model and the guiding principles specified in this vision document are directed primarily at academic staff. In the near future, we intend to present a more inclusive and comprehensive model of Recognition and Rewards that integrates both academic and support staff. To achieve this, further discussions and exchange are essential which is why we have indicated this topic as one of the key priorities of the Recognition and Rewards working group for 2021.

ii The Utrecht University TRIPLE model is based on and inspired by the MERIT model which was initially developed at Tilburg University. The MERIT model has been used for several years in, for example, the faculty of Law, Economics and Governance (since 2016), and more recently the faculty of Geosciences (since 2020). The TRIPLE model is an Utrecht University-tailored and updated version of the MERIT model (i.e., a MERIT 2.0 model) that expands on this model to incorporate recent insights and developments from the national Recognition and Rewards program as well as developments and characteristics within the Utrecht University.

The extension and update of the MERIT model towards the TRIPLE model is mainly based on the following considerations. First, by putting the T of Team spirit first we emphasize that at the Utrecht University team spirit or team work is the default approach to working. Second, the Utrecht University is a broad university including the academic hospital UMCU. Some of our academics are involved in roles and tasks that go beyond the MERIT domains (e.g., patient care). This requires the additional of a domain what will be called Professional Performance (which is broader than the domain Patient Care specified in the VSNU paper to capture similar professional roles in our broad university, for example, in the faculty of veterinary science). Third, the Management component in the MERIT model does not fully capture the spirit of contemporary leadership insights, in particular Leadership in academia. We therefore prefer the concept of Leadership (see also Utrecht University leadership profile) instead of Management although much of its contents will be the same. Finally, recent insights and development on Impact, for example public engagement, have enriched the domain of Impact as a desired outcome and an alternative way of academic working.

iii We decided to drop the term Team Science and replace this with Team Spirit as Team Science is frequently associated specifically with the domain of research. Additionally, Team Science as a term did not resonate with all members of the academic community. For example in the faculty of Humanities the term Scholarship is deemed more appropriate than Science and scholarly work, like writing a monograph, can sometimes be an individualistic endeavor in its very nature.

iv What constitutes a team is a question that should be answered within a relevant context and with respect to the corresponding domain(s). The concept of a team captures different elements. The formalized part is one way of looking at teams. This is the unit of which an individual employee is part from an employer-employee perspective (f.e. 'leerstoelgroep' and 'afdeling'). In most cases this is also linked to the direct supervisor of an employee and to the disciplinary background of an employee. Due to the multifaceted nature of work in academia employees can also be part of different teams across different domains such as education and research. In their cooperation with fellow teachers from other units or multidisciplinary research linked to the Utrecht University strategic themes, one can be part of multiple teams. Finally, teamwork can be seen as employee attitudes and behaviors towards cooperation, for example reflected in willingness to share knowledge and support others.

v The domain of professional performance was added as an extension to 'patient care' as described in the national Recognition and Reward position paper. It acknowledges the fact that, also outside of the fields of medical and veterinary sciences, it is not uncommon that academics serve in positions with a close link to their respective fields such as consultancy, those that work as veterinarians or academics who are members of advisory boards. In practice the Research and Education domains are much larger within the Utrecht University than the Professional Performance domain, although there are significant differences between faculties (for example the significant number of academic medical specialists within the UMCU).