Open mind, open attitude, open science

STRATEGIC PLAN 2030

Utrecht University

Open mind, open attitude, open science

STRATEGIC PLAN 2030
WE WORK TOWARDS A BETTER WORLD...

Utrecht University

...THROUGH FIVE GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND SOLID BUSINESS OPERATIONS

COLLABORATING ACROSS BORDERS

We collaborate in education and research, through knowledge sharing, innovation and entrepreneurship.

- Equal and reciprocal collaborations
- In the city, region, and in Europe
- Targeted choices for Global Engagement

FUTURE-PROOF EDUCATION

Focused on quality, innovation and student success.

- Utrecht educational model in all degree programmes
- Responsible AI

OPEN SCIENCE

We make an impact through knowledge sharing and meaningful collaborations. Everyone's contribution matters.

- Research data are findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable
- Recognition and Rewards
- Public engagement

ENGAGED COMMUNITY

We have an open culture, in which togetherness, equality and a common focus are central.

- Open and honest conversations in a safe and inclusive culture
- Investing in leadership development

FOCUS ON SUSTAINABLE TRANSITIONS

It is our social task to take responsibility in the climate crisis.

- In education and research
- Green campus
- Carbon-neutral and zero waste

ORGANISATION

Work in education, research and business operations all contribute to the success of the university, its employees and students.

- Simplifying business processes
- Making financial strategies more sustainable
- Digital sovereignty

...FROM SEVEN FACULTIES AND TWO EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTES

- Science
- Veterinary Medicine
- Humanities
- Geosciences
- Medical Science
- Law, Economics and Governance
- Social and Behavioural Sciences
- University College Utrecht
- University College Roosevelt

...BY CONNECTING OUR RESEARCH AND EDUCATION TO FOUR STRATEGIC THEMES

DYNAMICS OF YOUTH

INSTITUTIONS FOR OPEN SOCIETIES

LIFE SCIENCES

PATHWAYS TO SUSTAINABILITY

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Foreword

Utrecht University is a leading, internationally oriented university accommodating a broad range of humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and life sciences. We aim for our knowledge to benefit society, so that the public investments we receive contribute to the community in the form of relevant, up-to-date and useful knowledge and skills.

Our strategy provides direction for the period up to 2030. The plan is formulated in broad terms, with a limited number of strategic ambitions. There is much more going on than is described in this plan: we do wonderful and relevant research, provide inspiring and innovative education and achieve impact in connection with our many partners and with the involvement of the general public. That is the core of our social mission and this plan will not change that. We describe what we are going to do more of, the changes we plan to make, the emphases we will add, and where we are going to slightly adjust our direction with respect to some themes. In doing so, we will make conscious choices and set realistic priorities.

We are grateful for the all the great work our staff have done, and we are proud of all our students. We see a great deal of talent, curiosity, creativity an commitment among them, and that inspires our confidence for the future.

Deans, Scientific Directors for the Strategic Themes and Executive Board

CHAPTER 1

Utrecht University's mission and vision

We work towards a better world by taking a cross-disciplinary approach to researching complex issues. We form alliances because we believe that this will help us to make progress. We connect thinkers to doers to ensure that new insights are put into practice. We give students ample room to grow and develop. In this way, we make substantial contributions to society, both now and for the future.

In solving the world's problems, we aim high and are committed to steering necessary transformations. We see the university as a catalyst for change and that is how we want to collaborate with and so contribute to society.

We live in a rapidly changing world. Global issues are complex: they are not restricted to particular generations or regions, and cannot be resolved from a single perspective. Themes such as climate change, wealth sharing and healthy living demand an interdisciplinary approach. Scientific insights are required to solve these issues.

We are guided by our core values of ambition, engagement, inspiration and independence.

CHAPTER 2

Introduction

Utrecht University's Strategic Plan 2030 consists of five guiding principles, specifically Collaborating across borders, Future-proof education, Open Science, Engaged community, and Focus on sustainable transitions. Prior to these chapters, however, the Profile and Identity chapter describes who we are and what we stand for. The Organisation chapter is new, and covers developments in our business operations. It is not a guiding principle, but is essential for achieving our ambitions and carrying out our core missions of education, research, impact and patient care. Chapters 4 to 9, covering the five guiding principles and the Organisation chapter, conclude with guiding strategic ambitions.

Our strategy leading up to 2030 is based upon continuing our current direction. We will build upon what we have started, provide further depth on themes and reinforce and/or secure the established lines and results in the existing organisation. We will indicate where we are intensifying our efforts, as well as where new emphasis will be placed. Naturally, we will also take into account the developments and changes in the world around us.

EXTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS

The university is at the heart of society. We are living in an era of rapid and major changes, in a world that sometimes appears to be simultaneously threatening and under threat. The university can contribute to solutions for some complex, international situations and threats. With respect to other developments, however, those opportunities are limited. These developments may impact our community and our education and research agenda. Accordingly, they also affect our people. The most prominent external developments for the university in 2025 are as follows:

- There are currently hotbeds of tension and wars on several continents, including in Europe. Nationalism, populism and right-wing extremism are increasingly taking hold in societies, putting pressure on academic freedom in and the security of Europe, and therefore also affecting the Netherlands. This has an impact on domestic and international cooperation and affects our community.

- Partly as a result of geopolitical developments, increased alertness and measures are required to maintain knowledge and information security. This affects the way we share knowledge and information (Open Science), the accessibility of certain research areas and also funding flows (Collaboration).

- Democracy, the rule of law and our knowledge institutions are under increasing pressure. People are questioning the independence of institutions and are increasingly less receptive to facts and truth-telling. This necessitates openness and transparency about research processes and results and the involvement of external partners and the general public (Open Science).

- Digitalisation and artificial intelligence (AI) are affecting our education, research and business operations. Due to geopolitical developments, we want to reduce our dependence on 'big tech'. This also requires us to be prepared for the opportunities and risks associated with AI and our view of them.

- Issues relating to sustainability, in particular the climate crisis and the loss of biodiversity and the societal disruptions that could be the result in the coming years, are becoming increasingly urgent. Due to differences of opinion, many 'green' investments and measures are being reversed, with global consequences. We are contributing to necessary transitions by means of our education and research. In our own organisation, we apply the 'practise what you teach' principle.

- The world is under pressure, and with it the well-being of people, including our students and staff. Equality, safety and inclusiveness are and will continue to be important pillars of our community. We research and monitor mental resilience; look after our people and provide relevant support and guidance chains (Community).

- Falling student intake, autonomous personnel and material cost increases and shrinking government resources call for the university to make financial adjustments (Organisation).

INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS

Differences in views on the developments outlined above and on how to relate to them sometimes lead to polarisation and feelings of unsafety, including within the university. This leads to the question of whether academic activism is accepted, or necessary. The question also arises as to whether the university as an institution should take a position, for example in relation to war situations. Recent experience reveals that finding a path through this is difficult in a large, diverse, free and open community like ours. In accordance with our academic identity, we continue to make nuanced considerations. We do this using assessment frameworks, which are partly based on academic insights, and we continue to discuss them. This can lead to the adoption of positions, but need not do so.

INDEPENDENT AND TRANSPARENT SCIENCE

The university possesses a great deal of knowledge on topics that touch on the aforementioned developments and other relevant themes. Utrecht University continues to contribute to a free, safe and democratic society and a healthy world precisely by applying our knowledge independently. Based on our social mission and engagement, we continue to participate in the public debate, standing up for our academics, who share their knowledge with society in a polarised, sometimes even hostile, environment. We actively offer them support and, where necessary, protection. Openness, transparency about who we are, how we arrive at insights and produce knowledge, and reciprocal collaborations with community partners and the wider public are more important in this than ever before.

DECISIVE AND AGILE

Solid finances and the organisation's decisiveness and power are essential preconditions for implementing our strategy. We therefore continue to work on strengthening leadership, transparent policy and decision-making processes, appropriate governance structures and improving managerial and internal communications. Perhaps even more important than these instrumental adjustments, is working together to create a culture based on respect for each other's roles and responsibilities. In this culture, we trust each other and are generous in granting each other concessions, we adhere to agreements, we have the courage to call each other to account, and we reduce the number of consultations and e-mails. The university is doing well, partly because we are permanently working on this and continuing to develop.

CHAPTER 3

Utrecht University's profile and identity

Utrecht University's ambition is to contribute to a better world through high-quality education and research. The social challenges we face can only be solved by working together. Thanks to the wide range of disciplines that Utrecht University has at its disposal, it is ideally equipped to initiate necessary transformations. We have a solid, essential disciplinary foundations, based upon which people can connect across disciplinary boundaries. Our students and alumni are well-equipped to contribute to a rapidly changing society that is also under threat in a variety of ways.

Through our close ties and productive cooperation with other local, national and international knowledge institutions, community partners, governments and private parties, we merge knowledge from academia and practice in order to arrive together at even better, workable approaches or solutions. In doing so, we welcome international education and research talent, which is and will continue to be of great importance by bringing in different perspectives and expertise.

PROFILE

Our profile is defined by four major strategic themes. Our ambition is to be recognised and acknowledged in the field of these themes and, within this, to be responsive to external developments and societal issues that require solutions.

Dynamics of Youth focuses on how to support children, adolescents and young adults in their development into resilient and engaged adults in a rapidly changing world full of both uncertainties and opportunities. After all, investing in their well-being and future is an investment in the inclusive and just society of tomorrow.

Institutions for Open Societiesfocuses on examining the contribution of institutions and formal/informal rules to sustainable prosperity, equality and democracy and thus to an open and resilient society.

Life Sciences focuses on the search for innovations in sustainable, human, veterinary and plant health and resilience, aiming to create a healthy world for future generations.

Pathways to Sustainability focuses on research into how systems in our society can be transformed for greater sustainability, and thereby contribute to a better world.

Through these themes, we are working towards solutions for the major social issues of our time. The themes permeate our education and research and facilitate collaboration across disciplinary boundaries. Researchers from multiple faculties participate in each theme. Our cooperation across subject and sector boundaries is enhanced by our partnership in the EWUU alliance with UMC Utrecht, Wageningen University & Research and Eindhoven University of Technology. Closer to home, at Utrecht Science

Park and in the city and region, we have also developed a strong ecosystem for knowledge development and exchange.

IDENTITY

Utrecht University stands out not only for its content profile but also, and perhaps especially, for the way we work. The collaboration, connections and powerful communities within the university strengthen us in everything we do. We seek each other out, inspire each other and pay attention to each other. We collaborate across boundaries of organisational units and disciplines and with external partners and alumni. In doing so, we look for opportunities to co-create, strengthen each other and learn from each other. A culture of equality, diversity and inclusion is important to us, as are social safety and the well-being of staff and students. We offer an inclusive and stimulating work and study environment and continue to develop in this respect.

As Utrecht University, we believe that scientific knowledge should not remain within the university, but should translate to society. We therefore ensure meaningful interaction with the city and the region and actively seek connection with governments, community organisations, entrepreneurial networks and less organised entities such as citizens, neighbourhood residents or young people for this purpose. By linking the knowledge we develop to regional societal challenges, we increase our impact in the society we are part of. Our partnerships enable us to set up research and education projects with high social relevance.

EDUCATION

Our academic staff are active in both education and research. Our education is therefore fuelled by research and helps our students develop a solid academic foundation. The world is changing and so should our education, which is innovative, flexible and future-proof. We invest in innovative educational concepts, and in recent years we have worked to broaden our Continuing Education offerings. Alumni are explicitly involved in these developments. We embrace Open Education. This part of Open Science focuses on developing and delivering open, accessible education, in consultation with community stakeholders.

Utrecht University is internationally renowned for its high-quality education, among other things. Over the past period, we have recalibrated the Utrecht education model. This model is based on our educational vision and includes both the profile of our graduates and the structure and characteristics of our education. The model will guide innovations in and adjustments to education in the coming years.

Based on our educational vision, we have described graduate attributes that give value-driven direction to the knowledge and skills with which we want to equip our students during their studies. In addition to the important qualifying function of academic knowledge and skills, we also attach great importance to personal development and socialisation as goals of academic education. We offer students a lot of freedom of choice to develop themselves broadly, across disciplines, in contact with community stakeholders and with an international orientation. At the same time, we support our students in preparing well for the job market. Our education is geared towards an inclusive and stimulating study environment. For our students, the city and Science Park campuses, the cultural offerings and the wide range of student societies and student organisations make an important contribution to a rich study and learning environment and an unforgettable study career.

Our university is proud of its broad and active teaching community and has a long tradition of valuing education and providing space for both education and teacher development. This is also reflected in our staff policy, which is partly inspired by the principles of Recognition & Rewards, one of the themes in Open Science. It concerns our way of working, which focuses on team spirit, cooperation, development and personal leadership. Recognition and rewards can translate into a career step, for example on the basis of results in education, but often it is also about space for employees to develop themselves professionally and personally. The guiding principle in our view of the community is that everyone's contribution counts: after all, we are all working together to realise Utrecht University's mission and ambitions.

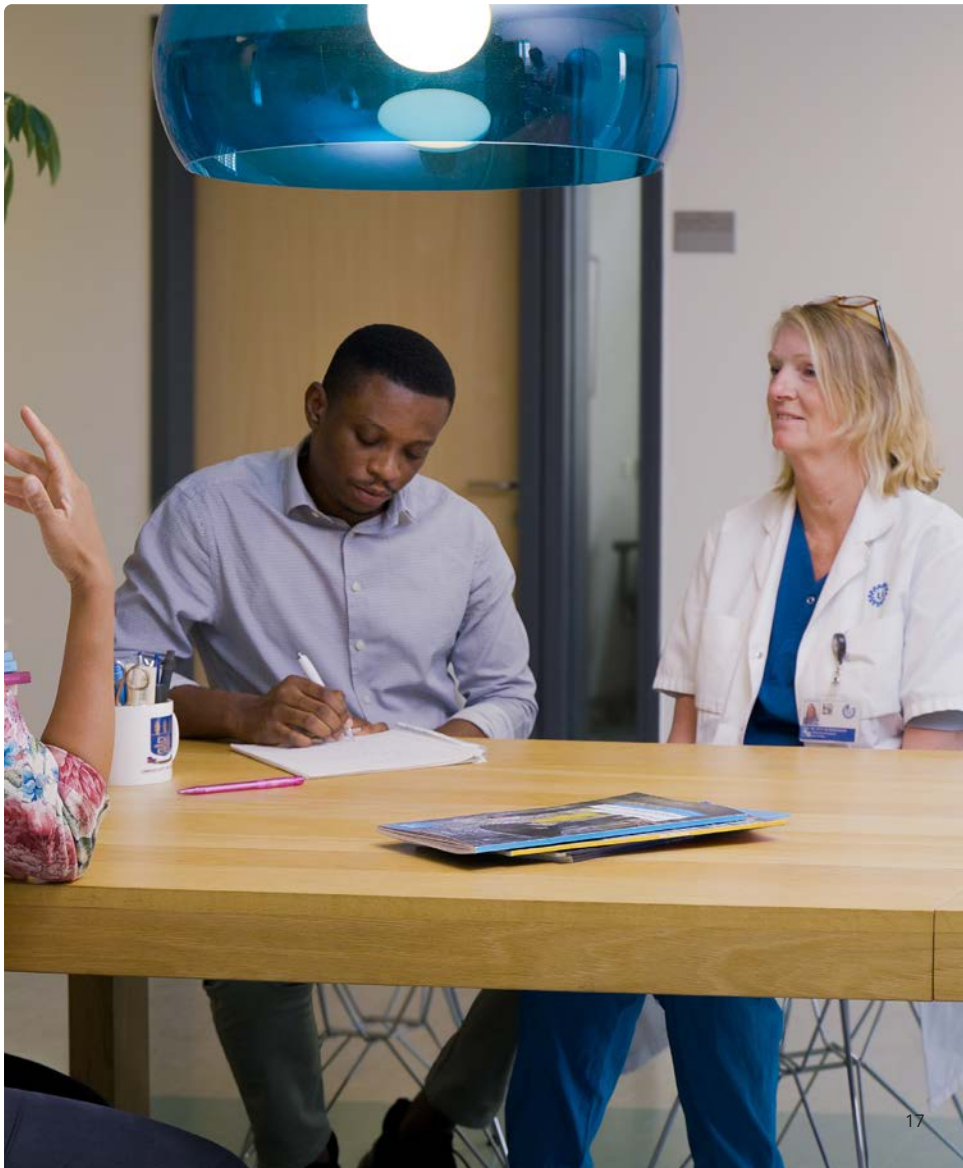
RESEARCH

Our education is informed by our research, which has a high-quality fundamental and disciplinary foundation. Our interdisciplinary work is based upon this. By aligning and uniting different disciplinary perspectives, we achieve a broader understanding of a topic or issue (multidisciplinarity). Ideally, we prefer to go a little further by integrating different perspectives to make even better sense of complex issues (interdisciplinarity). Moreover, through collaboration and co-creation with community partners, we enrich our research with knowledge and experiences gained from practice (transdisciplinarity). Research groups and individual researchers collaborate internationally, and Utrecht University is an active member of leading European knowledge networks such as the League of European Research Universities and the Coimbra Group.

The university is open, reliable and integrated into society. This is underpinned by the Open Science values, in which we are nationally and internationally recognised frontrunners. Research results become accessible to the general public through Open Science. Sharing scientific information through open access, FAIR data and software, and public engagement, are increasingly commonplace in this regard. We stand for an open academic culture that promotes accountability, reproducibility, integrity and transparency. Collaboration with community partners makes our research more relevant and helps to align our education with our students' future work environment.

IMPACT

Realising social impact is core to our mission as a university; we create value for society. We often do this in collaboration and co -creation with our community partners. The value can be financially-economically oriented, but is usually richer and broader than that. The results of our research contribute directly or indirectly to positive changes in society – locally, nationally and elsewhere in the world. We gain profound insights, impart knowledge, make discoveries and create inventions, and help shape transformative developments in society. We also contribute to economic development not only in the region, but also more broadly to the earning power of the Netherlands. We achieve the greatest impact by educating and training young people from the undergraduate to the PhD stage. They are the critical global citizens and future policymakers, innovators and administrators who will help shape the world of tomorrow.



CHAPTER 4

Collaborating across borders

Major challenges such as climate change, protection of democratic values, growing up healthy, socioeconomic security, migration, and increasing the resilience of society cannot be solved through a single discipline or perspective or by one organisation alone. For this reason, Utrecht University works together with other knowledge institutions, educational partners, community organisations, governments and private partners, across disciplinary boundaries, in the city and the region, in the Netherlands and worldwide.

We are at the heart of society and want the results of our education and research to benefit society. It is partly for this reason that we adopt transdisciplinary approaches, bringing together knowledge from science and practice. As a result, we achieve richer results that contribute to solutions for real social issues. We collaborate in education and research on the basis of equality and reciprocity, through knowledge sharing, innovation and entrepreneurship. We are committed to sustainable partnerships and strengthening public engagement. We shape cooperation in different ways.

NATIONAL

Utrecht Science Park forms a strong and vibrant ecosystem in which knowledge institutions, companies and public organisations work together. We join forces here with our two direct partners, University Medical Center Utrecht and University of Applied Sciences Utrecht. We also collaborate with dozens of local innovative companies and renowned research institutions. This makes the Science Park a key driver in the Utrecht and regional knowledge-based economy. Further afield, throughout the city and region, we are part of a large network of education partners, ranging from primary and secondary schools, to ROCs (regional training centres) and the University of Applied Sciences Utrecht.

We have a wide range of teacher training programmes, including academic primary school teacher training, and develop and share knowledge on matters such as teacher shortages, equal opportunity and education and youth. We contribute to continuous learning tracks from ROCs to university, such as in the Delta Climate Center.

Nationally, we cooperate in research and education in the EWUU alliance with Eindhoven University of Technology, Wageningen University & Research and University Medical Center Utrecht. In this collaboration, we are highly complementary in terms of content, and we work together particularly on the broad research themes of Preventive Health and Circular Society. We develop new education together. This cooperation has been strengthened and expanded in the recent past and we will continue this development in the coming period.

IINTERNATIONAL

In our international orientation, we make targeted choices when entering into or maintaining collaborations. In doing so, we take into consideration factors such as our strategy, social relevance, knowledge security, academic independence, human rights and financial and organisational feasibility. Specifically, we are planning a greater focus on collaborations within Europe. We are active participants in several European networks such as the League of European Research Universities, the Coimbra Group and the CHARM-EU education alliance.

We nurture the many existing institutional collaborations and support academics in entering into new relevant collaborations. We also make the best possible use of European funding opportunities.

In addition to focusing on Europe, we are investing more broadly in Global Engagement. The university aims to be a leading international centre of knowledge, and part of a global community of critical thinkers in order to accelerate positive change. In doing so, we are looking explicitly at cooperation with partners in the Global South[1].

GEOPOLITICS AND SECURITY

Geopolitical developments create more urgency in the broad area of security. This not only touches on international cooperation, it also affects funding flows and the accessibility of certain research areas. We are therefore implementing measures in different security domains, including knowledge and information security. Embracing Open Science may seem to be at odds with this, and alertness is certainly called for. We make careful trade-offs between openness and confidentiality, and apply clear guidelines and ethical considerations with respect to knowledge-sharing and cooperation with domestic and foreign partners. At the same time, we plan to explore how we can contribute to enhancing national and European security and resilience.

INTERNAL COOPERATION

Internal cooperation is an important foundation for fruitful collaborations with others. The strategic themes are meaningful networks in which researchers and teachers from different faculties and disciplines collaborate. The themes contribute to, and help shape, interdisciplinary undergraduate and graduate education, Continuing Education and public

engagement. Degree programmes, faculties and departments actively and structurally coordinate their education so that students have ample freedom of choice to combine educational modules from different disciplines and degree programmes. This is facilitated by aspects such as the design of our teaching timetable and the set-up of our logistics.

STRATEGIC AMBITIONS

1. We are reinforcing the transdisciplinary approach in our research and education and working more with community partners on complex issues.
2. Specifically, we are strengthening our cooperation with partners in, and residents of, the city and region of Utrecht, focusing on an equitable, resilient and sustainable environment for all.
3. We are focusing more than ever on collaborations with European partners, and are making make targeted choices for Global Engagement.

[1] *The Global South includes Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia (excluding Israel, Japan nd South Korea) and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand).*

We are investing more broadly in Global Engagement. The university aims to be a leading international centre of knowledge, and part of a global community of critical thinkers in order to accelerate positive change.

CHAPTER 5

Future-proof education

Education is a core task in our social mission. By educating young people, from the undergraduate to the PhD stage, and offering a wide range of educational offerings for alumni and professionals, the university contributes to a better world. We train our students to become critical global citizens who recognise the importance of an open society and a healthy planet.

The world is changing and we are responding to this in our education. Not only in terms of content, through the strong interconnection with our state-of-the-art research and our interaction and co-creation with community partners, but also through the way we design our education and research. Educational development and innovation emerge from a balance between bottom-up initiatives and top-down direction, in a solid ecosystem that fosters teacher development, education innovation and research on education.

UTRECHT EDUCATIONAL MODEL

Over the past period, we have recalibrated the Utrecht education model in line with innovative developments in the field of education. The model ensures even better alignment with societal challenges and the university's substantive vision. Characteristic features of our education include

We train our students to become critical global citizens who recognise the importance of an open society and a healthy planet.

the way it intertwines with research, interdisciplinarity, freedom of choice, activating learning in context-rich environments, inclusive learning communities, professional and engaged teachers, assessment as a learning tool, and a culture of quality and reflection. The principles of Open Science and Open Education are part of the design principles and infuse our education (see also Chapter 6). In the coming years, we will further implement and secure the Utrecht educational model in all our degree programmes.

Our educational model consists of a vision that we have translated into graduate attributes, and design principles for designing education and the learning and teaching environment.

1. In our educational vision, we describe the goal of education, which is a strong academic foundation, with emphasis on inter- and transdisciplinary cooperation, involvement in society, and personal development towards independence and responsibility.

2. The graduate attributes outline the profile of our graduates. Our education focuses on qualification, socialisation and personal development. It aims to teach students to look beyond boundaries to solve complex problems together with others, taking responsibility for themselves, others and society.

3. The way we design our education to achieve these goals is laid down in design principles that guide the design of education and learning and teaching environments.

EDUCATION AND TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

Inter- and transdisciplinarity are an essential part of our education from the undergraduate to the PhD stage, but education across disciplinary boundaries and using different methods does not come naturally. We have therefore integrated this way of working into our wide range of teacher and organisational development programmes.

LABOUR MARKET ORIENTATION

Our education enables students to qualify themselves for the labour market. We give the labour market, the professional field and, more broadly, society, a recognisable place in our education and develop and provide that education in co-creation with external partners. For example, we provide an activating and context-rich learning experience, stimulating community engagement, entrepreneurial spirit, innovativeness and creativity in students and staff. This transdisciplinary approach will be further embedded in regular curricula in the coming years.
The Continuing Education we offer is also designed in alignment with our vision of education.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN EDUCATION

We prepare our students for a world in which artificial intelligence (AI) plays an ever-increasing role in virtually all facets of their personal, professional and social lives. Education focuses on digital literacy, ethical awareness, self-regulation and personal leadership among students.
The role of teachers is changing because of AI. While it can be used to facilitate student learning, it should not become a substitute for human interaction and personal guidance. That would be contrary to our ambition for an engaged community, with personal encounters and interaction as key values. The developments and changes in this field are happening at an incredibly rapid pace, so there is a great need to be adaptive and continue to develop our education. We are developing an integrated approach for this.

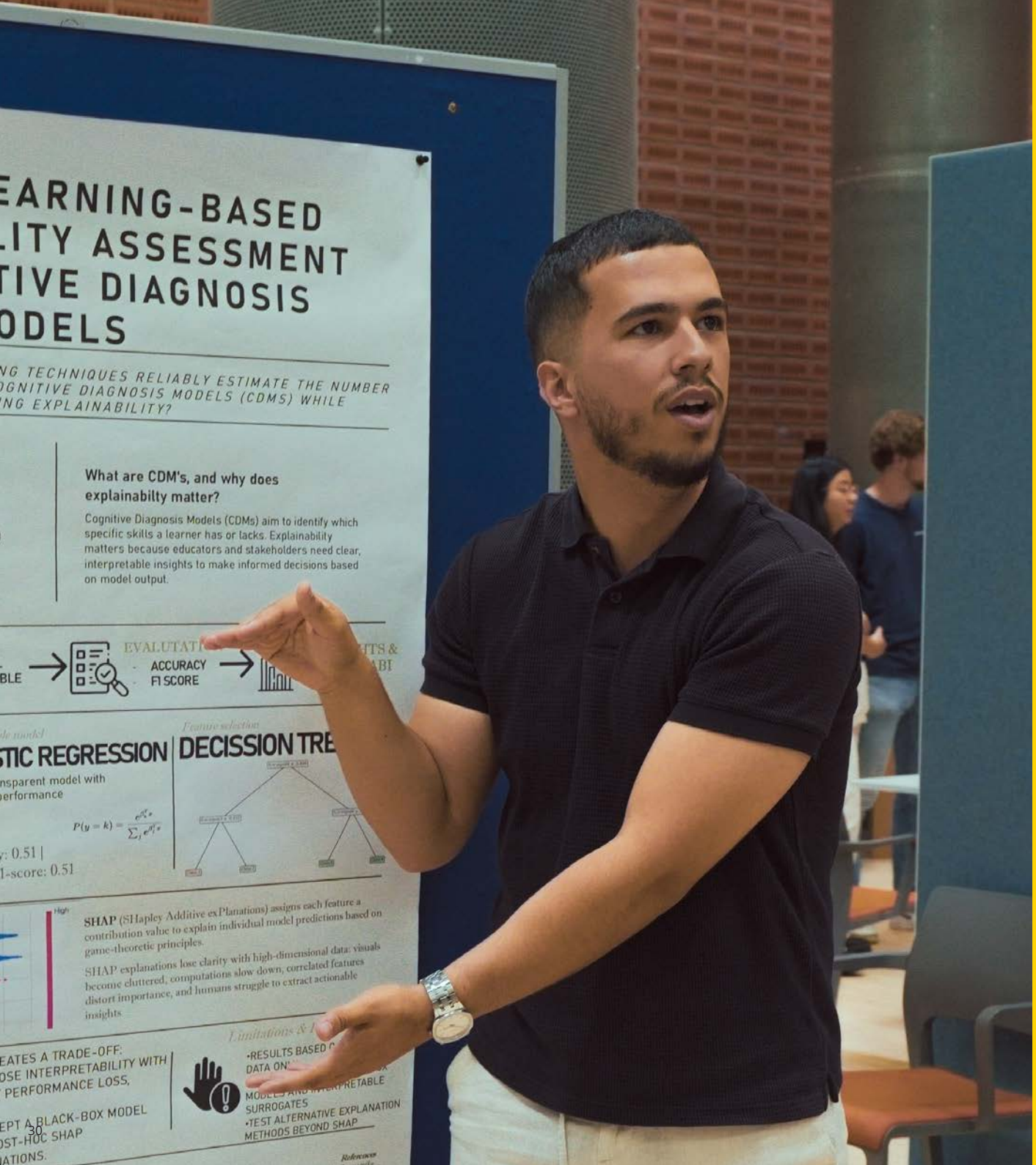
STUDENT SUCCESS AND WELL-BEING

Student success has a basis in good education and feasible programmes, but is about more than just the student pass rate, since student well-being is also an important factor. Students' discovery and development of their personal and professional identity as ensured by our educational model is enhanced by an adequate support and guidance chain, a rich social life and low-threshold cultural and sports facilities for students.
Despite increasingly restricted financial and other frameworks and laws and regulations, we continue to support and enable these facilities.

STRATEGIC AMBITIONS

4 By 2030, the principles of the Utrecht educational model will be embedded in all our degree programmes.

5 AI developments will have been appropriately incorporated into our education. Students and teachers will know when and how AI can and cannot be applied.



CHAPTER 6

Open Science

We regard scientific knowledge as a public good and a universal right. Open Science is based on the public values of equality, justice, diversity and transparency. These values are reflected in the sharing of knowledge and research results and in a transparent and participatory research process. Sharing knowledge with colleagues and with society is central to what we do and think. We actively seek connection and meaningful collaboration inside and outside the university. We actively contribute to the transition to an open academic world. We do this by participating in national and international networks and by focusing on a sustainable, open knowledge infrastructure.

We have worked successfully in recent years through an integrated, programme-based approach to implement the principles of Open Science and build support for the thinking through the themes of Open Access[2], FAIR[3] data & software, Open Education, Recognition & Rewards and Public Engagement.

OPEN ACCESS

Much has been achieved in the field of Open Access in the recent period. Policies have been developed and consolidated and the percentage of Open Access articles is now over 95 per cent. To take the final step, it is important for managers (and peers)

Open Science is based on the public values of equality, justice, diversity and transparency. Sharing knowledge with colleagues and with society is central to what we do and think.

to further embrace Open Access publishing through the philosophy of Recognition & Rewards.

FAIR DATA & SOFTWARE

It is essential for research data to be transparent and reproducible in order to ensure and maintain the integrity of research, especially with digitalisation and AI playing an increasing role. Substantial steps have already been taken with respect to FAIR data & software, but we are not there yet. There is still work to do in monitoring the open data and software landscape and in developing recognition and rewards for tasks on FAIR data and software. There are also still steps to be taken in embedding the databoard and developing data and software policies. We ensure that academics are well equipped to bring Open Science principles into research and education practice, and we facilitate the secure sharing and use of research data and results.

OPEN EDUCATION

We are proud of our education and what it enables us to achieve, and we want others to benefit too. Embedding the principles of Open Education in the Utrecht education model will make our education more accessible and enable it to reach a larger and more diverse target group. For example, we can make more and more educational materials publicly available and enable teachers to reuse and co-develop open educational materials and open textbooks. We will involve external partners in the development, innovation and provision of education. Transdisciplinary forms of education such as community engaged learning and challenge-based education allow students to learn directly from and contribute to real issues in society.

RECOGNITION & REWARDS

The transition to Open Science is a fundamental change in academic culture and practice. Acceptance, support and engagement in our community is necessary for creating a working environment where the principles of Open Science are the norm. Those principles are included in the concept of Recognition & Rewards and we embed them in our thinking

(values), actions (behaviour) and organising (policies). Everyone's contribution counts; an open discussion culture and caring for each other are part of the Recognition & Rewards philosophy. We aim to internalise this thinking so that it becomes part of our learning and working environment. The Utrecht TRIPLE model is a tool for putting the principles into practice. Leadership and Team Spirit are central to Utrecht's TRIPLE policy for developing and valuing employees (see also Chapter 7).

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Sharing knowledge with society as a reciprocal process is an inseparable part of Open Science. We share the activities, results and outputs of scientific research with a broad audience in various ways. This is basically a two-way street, with the aim of benefiting both parties. We therefore invite people from outside the university to contribute to our education and research and look for opportunities for co-creation through sustainable collaborations. Building and working in reciprocal partnerships requires specific skills, including dealing with differing values, social media reactions and public scrutiny, as well as monitoring scientific independence. We support academics in developing and strengthening the necessary competences and ensure safe, effective conditions for public engagement.

OPEN WHERE POSSIBLE, CLOSED WHEN NECESSARY

We recognise that knowledge and information security are essential prerequisites for information sharing. Open Science does not mean unchecked sharing of all knowledge and data with everyone. Instead, we implement clear guidelines and measures to enhance safe accessibility and reusability. We provide adequate, strong data management and training and support for teachers, researchers and students so that they know how to handle information safely. In order to possess and maintain control and authority over our own work and research data, we plan to explore how to reduce our dependence on big tech in the coming period (see also Chapter 10).

STRATEGIC AMBITIONS

6 To facilitate making research data findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable by others (FAIR), while safeguarding knowledge security, we ensure that researchers have adequate infrastructure, knowledge and facilities.

7 In the coming period, we will ensure internalisation of the philosophy of Recognition & Rewards and the TRIPLE policy among all employees and guidance for managers on their application.

[2] Open access makes research results from around the world accessible to everyone online for free. Examples include scientific publications, research data and e-books.

[3] FAIR data stands for research data that is Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable by others.

CHAPTER 7

Engaged community

At Utrecht University, we strive for an engaged community of staff, students, alumni and cooperation partners, in which togetherness, equality and a common focus are central. This diverse and inclusive community welcomes staff and students from all walks of life. In a culture of academic freedom, all perspectives are heard, open and honest conversations are held, and leadership is a core competency. This is the foundation for the quality of our education and research; it promotes resilience and it increases work and study enjoyment. An engaged community is a source of strength and a prerequisite for achieving our ambitions.

OPEN CULTURE

Looking at issues from multiple perspectives encourages nuanced and critical reflection. Recognising and acknowledging everyone's input and strengths promotes equality and inclusion. Yet we also sometimes face challenges in our open culture, as differences in personal, social, economic and cultural backgrounds, views and experiences make it difficult at times to 'understand' each other properly. This even leads to polarisation in some cases. Tensions can then arise around sensitive issues, leading to feelings of insecurity among students and staff

SOCIAL SAFETY

Social safety is an important prerequisite for an engaged community. High workloads and an informal culture combined with hierarchical dependencies make us especially vulnerable in this respect. We have developed policies and measures to enhance social safety. Much has been done to raise awareness and remove barriers to reports and requests for help. Accessible guidance and support offerings have also been implemented for students and staff. In the coming period, we will focus

on more systematic monitoring of the effects of interventions through the employee satisfaction monitor and risk inventories and evaluations. Workload remains a key issue here.

STUDENT WELL-BEING

As part of the graduate attributes, students learn to behave respectfully with an open, appreciative attitude towards others and their environment. They learn to listen attentively and carry out open conversations with fellow students, teachers and society. Teachers and tutors are supported in monitoring student well-being, guiding and coaching students and promoting their welfare, within the framework of what is possible within education and the role of a teacher.

OPEN CONVERSATIONS

In a free academic community, it is important that there is always room for nuanced, open conversations, based on mutual respect and listening to each other. We therefore encourage an open culture of conversation. Staying in conversation, even when there is friction, brings us closer together as a community. Administrators, managers, staff and students are responsible for this individually and also collectively. The desired culture includes giving and receiving feedback. Key concepts in this are speaking out, discussing, making agreements and calling to account. This is not always easy, especially when it comes to appropriate/inappropriate behaviour and good manners in the workplace. An effectively developed open conversation culture helps prevent friction, contributes to productive collaborations and increases the quality and enjoyment of our work.

TEAM SPIRIT

Utrecht's TRIPLE employee development and rewards policy applies to all university staff, both at individual and team level. Team spirit and leadership are central to this. Team spirit is about connecting individual and joint goals, and fostering collegiality, cooperation, trust, exchange and mutual commitment. They are crucial elements for the open culture we strive for and for the way we work, as individuals and together.

LEADERSHIP

There are three dimensions to the Utrecht leadership profile: personal, organisational and strategic leadership. Good leadership provides direction, motivates and inspires staff and students, and creates connection. In an open culture, personal leadership is a core competency for everyone. For managers, leadership additionally includes managing a team, fostering team spirit, ensuring support and connection with surrounding people, and contributing to organisational goals. Managers pay attention to the well-being and professional and personal development of their team members, contributing to their sustained employability. We have invested heavily in leadership development and we will continue to do so.

STRATEGIC AMBITIONS

8 Equality, safety and inclusiveness remain the pillars of our community and we strengthen our culture by promoting open and honest conversations.

9 We invest in leadership development and ensure that all our managers develop strong leadership skills.

CHAPTER 8

Focus on sustainable transitions

Our planet is under pressure. We face complex challenges around environment, health and climate change. Ecological, social and economic interests must be balanced. Utrecht University has a great deal of knowledge about the health of plants, animals, people (including young people specifically, ecosystems and the planet, about cultures and how they influence and determine our dealings with nature, and about how institutions can contribute to necessary changes or transitions. Utrecht University sees the climate crisis as an urgent problem and takes responsibility for it from the perspective of its social mission.

SUSTAINABILITY RESEARCH

We take a comprehensive approach and keep the long-term prospects in mind. Both in the faculties and in the strategic themes, research is conducted and knowledge is developed from disciplinary, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches in order to contribute to sustainable transitions. For example, researchers are considering the future of agriculture with the aim of creating a food system that is more resilient to environmental and climate change. Some researchers seek solutions in technical developments, others focus on restoring ecological balance, and still others look at governance challenges. In doing so, we collaborate with many

community partners, locally, nationally and globally, and with knowledge institutions such as the University of Applied Sciences Utrecht and the EWUU alliance. We also encourage awareness in the broadest sense of the word, not only among our own students and staff, but also outside, among the general public.

SUSTAINABILITY IN EDUCATION

Sustainability is increasingly making its presence felt in education, aligning with the education model that explicitly includes community engagement. The university is training a new generation: future leaders and drivers of the sustainable transitions that can contribute to a healthy, liveable planet for future generations. We offer several majors, minors and electives on sustainability and several degree programmes have structurally embedded the topic of planetary health in their course offerings. The aim is for every student to come into contact with the topic of sustainability during their studies.

LIVING LABS

The campuses act as a living lab, a testing ground for sustainable development in which we unite research, education and business operations. We mobilise researchers, students, managers and community partners to experiment together and develop solutions to sustainability issues in co-creation. By this means, we provide students with learning experiences focused on solving real-world problems. They take the knowledge and experience they gain in this process with them when they become active in the community and society after graduation.

GREEN CAMPUS

In accordance with the motto ‘practise what you teach’, we also embed sustainability thinking in our own business operations. For example, sustainability plays an important role in the management of our campuses and buildings. We manage and maintain dozens of buildings on three campuses and are co-landowners of Utrecht Science Park where more than 30,000 people live, work and study every day. We are working towards a green, climate-resilient campus by increasing the sustainability of our buildings and energy supply, greening our sites, restoring and enhancing local biodiversity, reducing waste and improving animal welfare. In doing so, we are investing in a green campus for students, university staff and others.

CLIMATE-NEUTRAL BUSINESS OPERATIONS

We will achieve climate-neutral, circular business operations (carbon-neutral, natural gas-free and zero-waste) in the shortest possible time. However, we can’t do that alone and we can’t set the pace all by ourselves. We are making our buildings more sustainable, generating our own renewable energy and reducing our emissions through energy conservation.

With respect to our laboratories, we are pursuing LEAF certification. This international programme assesses laboratories on sustainability based on aspects such as energy efficiency, waste reduction and reuse of raw materials. A specific concern is the energy consumption for large-scale research data storage and AI, which is associated with a considerable environmental impact and high costs. We help researchers manage their data with the goal of not storing more data than necessary.

We encourage use of cycling, public transport and ‘green mobility’. Our policy on long-distance travel also helps employees make astute considerations and choose the most sustainable option. We adhere to local, socially responsible purchasing and avoid wasting food, water and raw materials. We burn or dump waste as little as possible and reuse it wherever we can. In construction projects, we are economical with materials, for example by reusing materials and construction waste.

MONITOR

We want to be able to monitor our progress. The European Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) provides good guidance for

this. While the university is not accountable to the CSRD, it is a helpful monitoring tool. We therefore take the CSRD guidelines as the basis for our sustainability strategy. In the coming period, we will mainly focus on the ecological domain.

STRATEGIC AMBITIONS

10 We invest in a green campus by making buildings more sustainable, greening sites and strengthening local biodiversity.

11 We are committed to a carbon-neutral and zero-waste university by 2030 and aim for a natural gas-free university by 2035.

We mobilise researchers, students, managers and community partners to experiment together and develop solutions to sustainability issues in co-creation.

CHAPTER 9

Organisation

At Utrecht University, everyone's contribution is recognised and rewarded. Work in education, research and business operations[4] all contributes to the organisation and our common goals. Over 40 per cent of university staff work in business operations. Team spirit in Utrecht is therefore not just about cooperation between academics, but about cooperation between colleagues throughout the organisation. This chapter describes a number of important developments in business operations that will require a lot of effort in the coming years. These developments imply change and are relevant to and impact the entire university.

BEING A GOOD EMPLOYER

The university wants to be and remain an attractive employer for local and international employees, providing an environment where people enjoy their work, where everyone's contribution is recognised, and where there is room for everyone's talent. We believe that providing space for and attention to personal and professional development is one of the core aspects of being a good employer. Collaboration and team spirit are the guiding principle in our work, stimulated and inspired by leadership at all levels. Team spirit also means individuals committing to the bigger picture, for example through participation in employee and student representation. We take good care of our people and invest in employee well-being. A safe social climate is the foundation for this. The principles of being a good employer are anchored in the Recognition & Rewards policy, which we will further embed in all our HR processes in the coming years.

DIGITALISATION AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Digitalisation and artificial intelligence (AI) affect just about everything we do – as citizens, as academics, as institutions and in our education, research and business operations. AI offers opportunities, but also poses fundamental questions as it changes the way knowledge is produced and shared. How do we ensure scientific integrity when AI takes on an increasing role in knowledge production? How does AI affect the content of our education, our teaching activities, and assessment in our education? How does AI affect the way we function as a university organisation? We are developing a vision for and an integrated approach to harnessing the potential of AI, taking into account potential risks.

We want to maintain control over our own work and our own data. That is why we want to reduce our dependence on big tech in the coming years. Pursuing greater digital sovereignty is a theme in our digitalisation strategy and part of our architecture principles. We are working with industry partners to find European alternatives to these technologies. In European tenders, public values are an unconditional part of the call for tender.

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

The five-year Asturias programme will replace our business system for the administration of human resources, finance, procurement, education and research. We make a virtue of necessity and use the opportunity to make our services more efficient and effective. Cooperation will be better facilitated by simplifying and unifying the administrative organisation and by standardising processes wherever possible. The processes and systems in scope affect everyone within the university. This makes this programme not only a major technical change, but also an organisational one.

FINANCIAL STRATEGY

The university is financially healthy and robust, but accumulating developments such as autonomous cost increases for staff and equipment, declining student intake and a shrinking government grant will force us to make financial adjustments in the coming years. We cannot avoid austerity measures and cuts to education, research and business operations. Accordingly, measures will be taken at department and faculty level, as well as at the university level. For example, we are reassessing the efficiency of our educational offerings, ensuring efficient educational logistics, making choices regarding investment in large-scale research infrastructure and pursuing rationalisation of the IT landscape. We want to become less dependent on input funding based on student intake and we also want to be able to continue to invest. We are therefore committed to a more robust balance between the government grant and income from other sources, such as contract education and research, and research grants from within Europe and beyond.

PROPERTY

The university has a major real estate task, entailing many renovation and new construction projects that need to be carried out in the coming years. This presents opportunities to make our buildings more sustainable and reduce our energy consumption, but it also requires large investments over a long period of time. In the coming period, we will reassess our property strategy so that we can carry out the task within the shrinking resource framework. The university will continue to invest in real estate and a green campus over the next 15 years, but we are downsizing our real estate portfolio, reducing square metres and making better use of the available space. This will affect the pace, phasing and level of ambition of the projects we undertake.

STRATEGIC AMBITIONS

12 We continue to work purposefully towards optimal digitalisation, increase our digital sovereignty and exploit the opportunities of AI in education, research and business operations.

13 We simplify and standardise our administrative business processes and their digitalisation, making service delivery more efficient and effective, and collaboration easier.

14 We are making our financial strategy more sustainable and reviewing our property strategy in line with this.

[4] *Business operations domains cover the direct and indirect support of education, research, impact and patient care, as well as Human Resources, Information Provision & IT, administrative Organisation, Finance, General Affairs (e.g. legal affairs and management support), Communication and Housing & Facility Management (classically referred to as PIOFACH or variations thereof). Some positions and/or work are at the intersection of education, research and business operations.*

CHAPTER 10

Creation and implementation of Strategic Plan 2030

To update our institutional strategy, a working group commissioned by the Executive Board and the deans collected input from staff, students, alumni, and other internal and external stakeholders between October 2024 and March 2025. The working group did this in coordination with a focus group. Colleagues and students in each faculty and department were able to provide input. This input was mostly collected through existing consultations and forums, including the faculty councils, and by using a questionnaire and sometimes additional activities.

In addition, discussions were held with cross-component groups such as students, international staff, early career academics, university professors and external stakeholders. Analysis of the input gathered shows relatively high consensus on who we are, what we stand for, what our direction should be and remain, and what internal and external developments are important in the coming period. This reinforces our decision to continue the current strategy and strengthen it.The input gathered was cyclically processed into a number of draft versions that were discussed with and by the working group, the focus group, the university council, directors, deans and the Supervisory Board. The final draft version was successively adopted by the Executive Board, received approval from the University Council and was approved by the Supervisory Board.

IMPLEMENTATION

We applied greater focus by means of more targeted choices and refining our priorities. The result is relatively few (14) strategic ambitions. We want to do what is important to perpetuate our strong position. And what we do, we want to do well.

Work plans will be drawn up both at the university level and at the level of faculties and departments, setting out how and at what pace the strategy, and in particular its ambitions, will be implemented. Faculties and departments can, where necessary and possible and in coordination with the Executive Board, apply their own emphases and determine their own pace.

The strategic ambitions will provide direction for the next five years. Where possible, they will be developed into result-oriented project or programme plans with solid outcomes that are also measurable, where possible.

MONITORING

Using portfolio management, we will monitor the implementation and achievement of ambitions in projects and programmes in the coming years. Three times a year, progress will be reviewed and discussed by the Board, deans and directors using the portfolio monitor.

Twice a year, the Executive Board will discuss progress and achievements with the University Council and the Supervisory Board on the basis of the management agenda and report (part of the budget and annual report, respectively).

Faculty boards will discuss their progress and achievements with the Faculty Council and the Executive Board twice a year on the basis of their work plans.

The Strategic Plan 2030
can also be found at
UU.NL/EN/SP2030

Utrecht
University

Sharing science,
shaping tomorrow